September 1, 2015

Board of Supervisors
Kern County Administrative Center
1115 Truxtun Avenue
Bakersfield, CA 93301

PROPOSED RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT ENTITLED
KERN COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE EMERGENCY SERVICES
Fiscal Impact: None

Your Board is required by Penal Code §933 to respond to the findings and recommendations of the Grand Jury on matters within its jurisdiction. The 2014-2015 Grand Jury issued the above entitled report. As required by statute, the Sheriff has responded directly to the Grand Jury. The Sheriff’s response is attached.

The Grand Jury’s report provided a review of the Kern County Sheriff’s Office Emergency Services. The Grand Jury gave one (1) recommendation: 1) The Bomb Squad should continue to search for grants that may provide for a much needed updated vehicle and other equipment.

A proposed response is attached for your Board’s consideration.

Therefore, IT IS RECOMMENDED that your Board approve the response to the 2014-2015 Grand Jury report entitled Kern County Sheriff’s Office Emergency Services and authorize the Chairman to sign a letter transmitting the Board’s response to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

John Nilon
County Administrative Officer

Attachments

cc: Sheriff
The Honorable John S. Somers, Presiding Judge  
Kern County Superior Court  
1415 Truxtun Avenue  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Judge Somers:

Transmitted herewith is the Board of Supervisors’ response to the 2014-2015 Grand Jury’s Final Report entitled Kern County Sheriff’s Office Emergency Services.

The Board of Supervisors appreciates the Grand Jury’s review and input.

Sincerely,

David Couch, Chairman  
Kern County Board of Supervisors
Kern County Board of Supervisors
Response to Grand Jury Final Report
Kern County Sheriff's Office Emergency Services

Response to Findings:

The Board of Supervisors notes that the Grand Jury’s findings are substantially correct.

Response to Recommendations:

R1: *The Bomb Squad should continue to search for grants that may provide for a much needed updated vehicle and other equipment.*

We concur with the Sheriff’s response that they will continue to explore the possibility of securing grants for the purchase of an updated Bomb Squad vehicle and other equipment.
July 6, 2015

The Honorable John S. Somers, Presiding Judge
Kern County Superior Court
1415 Truxtun Avenue
Bakersfield, CA. 93301

On June 11, 2015, the Kern County Grand Jury published the County of Kern 2014-2015 Grand Jury Final Report: Kern County Sheriff’s Office Search and Rescue (SAR), Air Support Unit (ASU), Bomb Squad, and K-9 Unit.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Grand Jury for its efforts in reviewing the Kern County Sheriff’s Office Search and Rescue (SAR), Air Support Unit (ASU), Bomb Squad, and K-9 Unit.

The objective review provided by the Grand Jury helps to strengthen the foundation of trust between the community and the Sheriff’s Office. As always, the Sheriff’s Office appreciates the valuable insight the Grand Jury has provided.

GRAND JURY FINDINGS:

F1. The Bakersfield Search and Rescue Team are currently in the process of establishing the SAR Medical Team and it should be operational within the next 6-12 months.

F2. The Indian Wells Mine Rescue Team is currently suspended due to insufficient staffing to perform mine/confined space rescue. Team members have been absorbed by other teams (Tehachapi and Kern Valley).
   • The feasibility of reestablishing the team will be discussed at a future SAR Captains’ meeting

F3 New Bomb Squad equipment is budgeted and distributed on an as-needed basis. Future years’ acquisitions will depend on the budget.
Response to Grand Jury Final Report on the Kern County Sheriff’s Office Search and Rescue, Air Support Unit, Bomb Squad, and K-9 Unit.
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F4. The Bomb Squad has worked with vendors to design a truck that will meet
desired specifications. The current vehicle appears to have inadequate space
with little room once all equipment is loaded.

F5. Funding for a new vehicle has been sought through OES. Unused grant funds
from previous fiscal years across the State have also been sought. This has
been unsuccessful.

F6. Maintenance on the robot is performed by Bomb Squad Technicians who are
self-trained for most repairs. The manufacturer is used as required for parts and
service.

F7. Physical skills tests are conducted in and out of the bomb suit along with an oral
interview after having been recommended by the deputy’s supervisor to join the
bomb squad.

F8. Once accepted, the deputy is referred to as a "Bomb Para-Tech", a temporary
position. The squad begins training and evaluating the deputy for the next year,
until accepted into the FBI Hazardous Devices School. Upon completion, the
deputy becomes a Bomb Technician, capable of rendering explosives safe.

F9. As a member of the IABTI, Bomb Technicians maintain a close working
relationship and share information with other bomb technicians from
approximately 60 countries throughout the world.

F10. The Bomb Squad has received over 52 call-outs this year.

F11. A part of the K-9 training includes training “agitators.”
   • Agitators are deputies who have not received training as a dog handler
   • An agitator acts as a decoy by wearing protective gear and allowing the K-
     9 team to search for and apprehend them

F12. Using deputies as agitators has proven to be beneficial in giving the deputy the
opportunity to learn about the K-9 program and the role of the handler. This
creates a group of qualified candidates for future handler positions.

F13. The K-9 stays at the deputy’s home, is fed and trained by that deputy. The K-9
accompanies the deputy to all assignments.

F14. Though the City Police Department and the County K-9 Units do not consistently
train together; at least twice a year joint training sessions are conducted. This
allows for the two units to work better together in the field, as well as allowing the
teams to learn from one another.
F15. Coverage times for the K-9 Unit have at least one team on duty from 5 PM until 6 AM seven days a week. If a K-9 team is needed between 6 AM and 5 PM all of the teams are available to be called out.

F16. At this time, the K-9 Unit does have a "cadaver" dog. According to the deputies, it can be confusing for a K-9 to be cross-trained in search and rescue and finding cadavers.

F17. The budget expense towards purchasing and training is only used in the event a K-9 is retired from service and needs to be replaced during the fiscal year.
   • The salary for the deputy is paid out of the Sheriff’s general budget

F18. The Probation Department’s K-9 has been trained in narcotics detection, tracking, obedience and protection. This team is also active in community events and various school activities, e.g., school carnivals.
   • The team does not train with the KCSO K-9 Unit
   • The K-9 Deputy Probation Officer is paid out of the Probation Department’s general budget

KERN COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE RESPONSE TO FINDINGS:

The Kern County Sheriff's Office concurs with each and every one of the Grand Jury’s findings (F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7, F8, F9, F10, F11, F12, F13, F14, F15, F16, F17, and F18).

GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATION:

R1. The Bomb Squad should continue to search for grants that may provide for a much needed updated vehicle and other equipment. (Finding 3, 4 and 5)

KERN COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION:

This recommendation is continuously explored. The Sheriff's Office continuously explores the possibility of securing State and/or Federal grants for the purchase of a new, updated Bomb Squad vehicle. The Sheriff's Office also continuously evaluates its annual budgets for the possibility of including the purchase and/or lease of a new, updated Bomb Squad vehicle into the annual operating budget.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Donny Youngblood
County of Kern
Response to Grand Jury Final Report on the Kern County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue, Air Support Unit, Bomb Squad, and K-9 Unit.
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cc:    Undersheriff RoseMary Wahl
Chief Deputy Shelly Castaneda
Chief Deputy Curtis Cornelison
Chief Deputy Brian Wheeler
Chief Deputy Kevin Zimmermann
Clerk of the Board
Kern County Grand Jury Foreman
Assistant CAO Teresa Hitchcock