

# Unified Police Service in the State of Florida

Greg Feldman

## *Abstract*

*This study proposes that the total law enforcement effort within the state of Florida be combined into one large multifaceted agency having statewide powers, and under the direction of a supervisor at the cabinet level. The study is divided into theory for discussion purposes, and into statistical and numerical groupings for data support. It is important to explore the concept of a combined law enforcement effort in this state for several reasons. The increasing burden of law enforcement on taxpayers could be significantly altered by the application of this theory.*

*Additionally, replication of work responsibilities could be eliminated; there would be a clearer and more concise viewpoint of management philosophy. Employees should enjoy this theory as it would allow them diversity of assignment; for many, it would mean a pay raise which might otherwise be unattainable.*

## Introduction

It is three o'clock in the morning and an officer on patrol observes a vehicle speeding in the opposite direction to him, on a road which is a border with a neighboring jurisdiction. He is within his jurisdiction. The speeding car is not. It is an infraction. He must ignore it.

A sheriff's deputy follows a traffic violator into the neighboring county. The violator is stopped and found to be in possession of a controlled substance. He must summon a deputy from the county he is in, and take the arrestee before a magistrate in the county where the substances are found.

A municipal police officer procures an arrest warrant affidavit for a subject based upon a long and protracted criminal investigation. That warrant directs the sheriffs of the state of Florida to apprehend the subject. If the sheriff is cooperative or sympathetic, the municipal officer may go along and observe.

Taxpayers cry out for more police protection. More personnel must be provided for line operations. These same taxpayers want no tax increases as they are taxed to the limit, yet law enforcement personnel must be found.

Automobile manufacturers spend thousands of dollars each year using personnel and resources to effectively compete for contracts to sell vehicles to agencies in Florida on state, county, and local levels. These monies could be saved and the savings passed on to the taxpayer in the form of reduced unit costs by using a single statewide bid process.

## Background

Historically, the law enforcement function has been divided into separate entities, usually based upon political subdivisions. During the latter part of the Anglo Saxon period in the ninth century, King Alfred established a "tithing system" in each county, or "shire." The chief judicial and law enforcement officer in each shire was the "shire-reeve", an appointee of the crown (Adams, 1973). Hence the title, sheriff, was created, and law enforcement became tied to political boundaries.

In the United States, early settlers were wary of a strong central government and cherished local autonomy. New England saw the establishment of villages with a municipal police officer, while the rural, agricultural South utilized the county form of government and the county sheriff (Adams, 1973).

In 1829, Sir Robert Peel, a member of Parliament, introduced a bill to found a centrally controlled system of law enforcement in the Greater London Metropolitan area. Law enforcement has long recognized the Peelian philosophy as the standard by which personnel allocations are made.

In the mid 1800's, administrative police boards were established. These boards were the epitome of political corruption and general incompetence. In response to this, state control of local agencies evolved. The prevailing theory was "that the new system would be free from local partisanship and that the citizens throughout the state would be assured of adequate and uniform law enforcement" (Adams, 1973, p. 64). Unfortunately, this failed because of lack of uniform enforcement, and control reverted to the local governments.

Under the current system of policing in the United States, enforcement agencies exist at the local, state, and federal levels. Some agencies at the state and federal level have been created to serve special interests, to remedy a lack of efficiency on the part of local police, or to carry out certain details "beyond restrictive jurisdictional boundaries" (Adams, 1973, p. 70). Thus, centralization of power may very well increase efficiency by pooling the best talent available. In addition, the various agencies would be inclined to work toward common objectives and goals with consistent policies.

The concept of merger is not a new one. In 1979 the Department of Justice, under the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, released a book entitled Small Police Agency Consolidation: Suggested Approaches (Koepsell & Girard, 1979). Although this research piece dealt primarily with small police agencies, many of the principles expressed are applicable at a larger scale. In fact, Van Meter and Conrad (1972) discussed the feasibility of consolidation of services in five Illinois counties in their treatise, "Pilot Study for Feasibility of Regionalization of Components of the Criminal Justice System in Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Pope, and Salina Counties."

Koepsell and Girard (1979) found that the two prime motivations for merger were demands for more and better quality law enforcement services, coupled with declining or increasingly limited local financial capability to meet this demand; and overlapping law enforcement jurisdiction, and/or associated disputes, jealousies, etc. Indirect influences, such as financial or manpower shortages, union pressures, and corruption, raised questions regarding the ability of the current system to meet future needs.

Conceptually, consolidation answers these questions by: 1) eliminating jurisdictional boundaries; 2) providing better training and supervision and therefore, higher quality personnel; and 3) offering more services for the same cost (Koepsell & Girard, 1979). In fact, consolidation generally does not result in a reduction in costs because any savings which might accrue are offset by service improvements or increases.

What prevents consolidation from occurring is the persistent view that local government can and must solve its own problems. Most localities continue to provide a broad spectrum of police services. Limited resources make them ineffective, and this is

compounded by externalities which a single local government can not control (Eastman & Chapman, 1976).

Norrsgard's (1969) work detailed the law enforcement mission:

*In a general sense, then, it may be said that local police agencies have responsibility for crime repression and prevention, traffic accident prevention and congestion relief, detection and apprehension of offenders, recovery and return of stolen property, enforcement of a variety of regulatory measures, and service to the public, often on an on-call basis. The proportionate amount of effort expended in each of these areas of responsibility arises locally on a basis of program emphasis policies promulgated by individual jurisdictions. Most of the work of a modern-day police officer is not related directly to criminal matters; instead, it has a preponderant service orientation...It should be noted that the responsibilities identified above -- the components of the police mission -- are largely exercised in the field. Thus, the essential reason for being of a police agency has a field orientation. Although police agencies should maintain sophisticated staff and auxiliary services, it should be emphasized that such services are provided solely to be directly or indirectly supportive of the field effort. (p. 19-20)*

This is a compilation of information which addresses the issue variously known as merger, consolidation, or regionalization in previously written documents. This writer found no documentation, or anyone with personal knowledge of an undertaking, addressing basic law enforcement needs reverted to a statewide level. Although the issues were explored, they seemed to have been explored on a localized level in agencies with common problems and goals indigenous to the region. Indeed, the largest identified initiative dealt with the merger of five rural counties. Next, the concept is explored on a statewide level.

### Discussion

The size of Florida makes the concept of merger even more foreign. Recently, there has been talk in closed-door political sessions of dividing this state, as well as states such as California and Texas, into two or more states so that there would be less diversity in the state government. Lawmakers have realized that in Florida, what is important to the residents of Dade County may very well be indigenous to Dade County, and therefore be deemed unimportant to a lawmaker from the Panhandle. The Panhandle may be viewed by the culturally diverse South Florida region as "backward." As long as this state remains the geographic unit that it is, there will be a necessity to work past these beliefs.

This writer does not support the notion that a unified police effort can be effectively administered from 500 or more miles away. Therefore, the first task is to break the state down into regions that are more easily administered. The Constitution of the state has divided it into 67 counties, each administered by a sheriff with the exception of Dade County, which has a director. He is the only sheriff's department head who is not elected. Placing the unified law enforcement effort in the hands of the sheriffs of the state would be an error as they are in a political office, subject to change every four

years. This would undermine the stability of the unified agency no matter how skilled and qualified the sheriff may be.

For purposes of this study, regions, as designated by the Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) as "districts," are utilized. [The Florida Department of Law Enforcement currently divides the state into 14 geographical regions for the purpose of field services.] Reasons for this choice include a lesser number of districts and the division, according to field services, appears to be based upon counties with similar ethnocentric and geographic makeup, as well as common political concerns.

<b>Table 1 Key to Rank Codes</b>	
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Police Officer, Patrolman, Deputy Sheriff, Trooper, Agent, Law Enforcement Officer
2	Corporal, Special Agent, Detective, Master Patrolman, Patrolman First Class
3	Sergeant, Investigator, Special Investigator, Field Investigator, Detective Sergeant
4	Lieutenant
5	Captain, Patrol Director, Personnel Director, Records Director
6	Major, Inspector
7	Assistant Chief, Chief Deputy, Chief Inspector, Deputy Chief, Lieutenant Colonel
8	Police Chief, Sheriff, Public Safety Director, Commissioner, Chief Administrator, Colonel

In researching this project, it became apparent there are a number of sworn personnel assigned to quasi-law enforcement duties. Some of these duties include line communications, computer programming, scheduling, and other functions that do not require the person performing them to carry a badge and gun. The study will include, as a goal, the increase of actual patrol and investigative staffing of the law enforcement effort in the state. In addition to reassigning those duties that do not require sworn personnel, the unification allows for the elimination of duplicate effort. The number of line and middle management personnel will decline, thus placing more emphasis on the basic police function. This will not be welcome news to those persons whose positions are in danger of elimination or reclassification. That hurdle will be addressed as part of the transition period.

An assumption that the general public and local governments will accept the unification proposal is essential to the presentation of this study. There must be a long and arduous procedure of convincing the public there is merit and benefit to this approach. Also, local politicians must be persuaded the need for their small, private

<b>Table 2 Personnel in Rank Code 3 or Higher as a Percentage of Total Sworn Personnel by Region</b>	
<b>Region</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	18.8
2	17.1
3	21.0
4	18.1
5	15.9
6	19.4
7	17.4
8	16.3
9	16.0
10	17.1
11	17.6
12	24.6
13	19.5
14	21.5

"armies" no longer exists. These hurdles are addressed in detail by Koepsell and Girard (1979) and shall be considered as completed.

In 1990, the rate of full time law enforcement personnel was 2.5 officers per 1,000 inhabitants (Florida Department Law Enforcement, 1990). In sheriffs' agencies, this rate was 2.0, and in municipal agencies, it was 2.3. The larger number of 2.5 is because the total number of sworn personnel in the state includes jurisdictions with sworn members but no defined population such as airport police, public school police, and university police, as well as state attorney's investigators. Under unification, this ratio will not shift per se, as the numbers of personnel, as well as population, shall not be changed. However, the number of personnel performing the previously mentioned line functions would shift, placing more sworn personnel "on the street". This would occur because to the elimination of assignments within the supervisory and administrative ranks. Table 1 reflects the rank codes that are used for this project, as furnished by the Department of Law Enforcement, Division of Criminal Justice Standards and Training, on December 15, 1992. Table 2 reflects the number of personnel assigned to rank code 3 or higher as a percentage of the total number of sworn law enforcement personnel within the region. The state average for the personnel filling category 3 or higher is 18.6%. As

**Table 3  
Sworn Personnel Allocation Under Unification Program**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Pop</b>	<b>Sworn Per Capita</b>	<b>Current Sworn Total</b>	<b>Proposed Sworn</b>	<b>Difference (Proposed Current)</b>	<b>Percent Difference</b>
1	551,581	1.58	1,190	1,578	388	25
2	242,520	1.44	690	694	4	1
3	287,797	2.00	994	823	-171	-21
4	1,036,556	1.53	1,138	2,965	1,827	62
5	1,034,227	1.76	2,503	2,958	455	15
6	446,094	1.65	1,103	1,276	173	14
7	2,027,987	2.11	5,385	5,800	415	7
8	540,985	1.79	1,407	1,547	140	9
9	2,201,224	1.92	5,233	6,296	1,063	17
10	897,568	2.30	2,323	2,567	244	10
11	379,324	2.20	1,191	1,085	-106	-10
12	893,305	2.58	2,574	2,555	-19	-1
13	1,269,807	2.55	3,557	3,632	75	2
14	1,984,862	2.83	5,728	5,677	-51	-1
15	NA	NA	4,424	NA	NA	NA
Total	13,793,837	NA	39,440	39,453	4,437	1.28

expected, there is a wide variation between the regions with regard to the ratio of supervisory and administrative personnel, with the highest at 24.6%, and the lowest at 15.9%. To compare the number of supervisory personnel in law enforcement in this state with private industry is a difficult task. One example, Ryder Corporation, Commercial Leasing Division, a successful multinational corporation employing approximately 11,000 people, has approximately 890 people (8.1%) in what they consider to be managerial/supervisory positions (G. Arseneau, personal communication, December 28, 1992).

This figure is significantly lower than the figures for law enforcement in this state, and even at the lowest number of 15.9%, there would still be a significant change in the number of supervisors currently reflected statewide.

As personnel is redistributed, some regions will have an increase in per capita personnel, while others will show a decrease. This writer postulates this redistribution will place more sworn personnel in line functions where the concentration of population is greatest.

As shown by the sworn personnel allocation table (Table 3), only two regions would experience significant changes in law enforcement personnel. Region III reflects the largest decrease at 21%. It should be noted Region III includes Tallahassee, the state capitol, where a significant number of key supervisory personnel are employed. While examining unification, it was interesting to note that consolidation would create a certain degree of decentralization, thus spreading personnel statewide. Although unification appears to be a move to place power in one central location, that power is, in effect, spread amongst the 14 regions with equality. Theoretically, the chief executive officer of the law enforcement effort is at cabinet level and would therefore civilianize many functions now performed in the capital by sworn personnel.

Certain regions which are currently below the state's per capita number would see a drastic change in law enforcement personnel, especially in numbers. This is most evident in Region IV, which would experience an increase in personnel of 62%, growing from 1138 sworn personnel to 2965. Only one other region would lose a number that can be considered significant. Region XI would lose 10% of its personnel.

The question now arises whether the regions losing personnel could afford it, and whether sufficient activity exists in those regions increasing personnel. This could only be addressed by careful examination of public demands, sentiment, calls for service, and the Uniform Crime Reports. Analysis would occur as the unification began to take place. The significance of this question should not be excessively emphasized. This is a unified law enforcement effort that now gives the police community statewide powers. Personnel may now be shifted to fill in gaps in manpower or to more fully utilize resources. This could be temporary assignments such as task forcing or saturation details, or permanent assignments.

The word, "resources," raises the inevitable question of cost. In 1990, expenditures for police protection in the state were \$1,574,483,000 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992). Using 39,450 for the number of sworn personnel (Table 3), this reflects an expenditure of \$39,911 per sworn member for police services. If this seems

<b>Table 4</b>		
<b>State Law Enforcement Expenditures</b>		
<b>State</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Per Capita</b>
Illinois	\$1,429,752	\$123.11
New Jersey	\$1,192,795	\$154.49
Texas	\$1,498,291	\$88.97
Source: <u>State Justice Sourcebook of Statistics and Research</u> , Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992.		

high, it should be noted that by using the total population in the same table, this translates into \$114.40 for each full time resident. Comparable states and their expenditures are shown in Table 4.

Many methods exist for determining the price of law enforcement in a consolidated agency. However, all data found examine costs based upon mergers of local and county agencies, or multiple municipal agencies. No data were located to suggest a method for statewide funding. Methods found included cost per capita and cost based upon such factors as population, roads (in miles), calls for service, and crime clearance (Koepsell & Girard, 1979). Koepsell and Girard concluded their section on financing a merger by stating:

*The first few years of a merged agency represent a highly capital intensive period. Because significant investments are needed to implement a merger and to improve previously substandard conditions, the effect frequently balloons total costs. Communities considering consolidation might well be prepared for this eventuality. Although future savings and economies may develop as the new system matures, initial investments to consolidate and to raise the level of law enforcement service to acceptable levels will not be inexpensive. (p. 36)*

This writer proposes that, as this is a statewide effort by regions, and because each region is comprised of specific counties, the amount of money currently expended by each governmental entity within the region can be pooled into a single fund. These regional funds shall be the basis for, and source of, revenues deposited with the cabinet level member's budgetary organization, said cabinet member being the person who directs the Florida unified law enforcement effort. By pooling all of the revenue, the cost per person should remain basically the same. In actuality, if the project is successful in the elimination of many higher paid administrators through reclassification or elimination of their positions, as well as by attrition, more money could be collected than is actually necessary to fund the agency. This could lead to either a reduction in costs, translating into a reduction in taxation, or an increase in revenues available to create more positions and even further enhance the law enforcement effort. This factor would be determined as the consolidation progressed and needs became more easily discernible.

Of that amount which is expended on law enforcement police services, a certain, albeit unknown, portion is spent on facilities maintenance, proprietorship, and creation.



This amount would change as facilities were consolidated, land and buildings sold, and buildings were modernized. The exact amount is not calculable with existing data.

According to a survey conducted by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (1990), the average entry level base salary for police officers in the state of Florida, is \$20,843. In the survey of 411 police agencies, the entry-level annual salary ranged from \$5200 per year to a high of \$30,858. Salary standardization is a goal that may be largely unattainable because of the diverse costs of living that prevail across the state. It may be necessary to examine the cost of living in each region and establish a differential for certain areas of the state. However, one must also consider that the \$20,843 figure above would represent an improvement for half the agencies in Florida.

Consideration must now be given to the disposition of the vast array of personnel merged into one agency. The most obvious problem that occurs is that of the numerous chief executive officers whose positions would no longer exist. Although this concept has never been tried on a statewide level, applications of the theory do exist. The Minnetonka (Minnesota) Public Safety Department example demonstrated the principles that may be utilized in this project:

*In a move to minimize competition between the former local agencies, a chief was selected from outside the area. The chiefs of the abolished agencies were retained at the rank of sergeant. This resulted in no loss in salary or benefits...In summary the problem of too many chiefs has not proven to be a common issue in small agency consolidations. In cases where the issue arises, the key to its resolution has been the assurance that the former executives would face no salary or benefits decreases. (Koepsell & Girard, 1979, p. 39)*

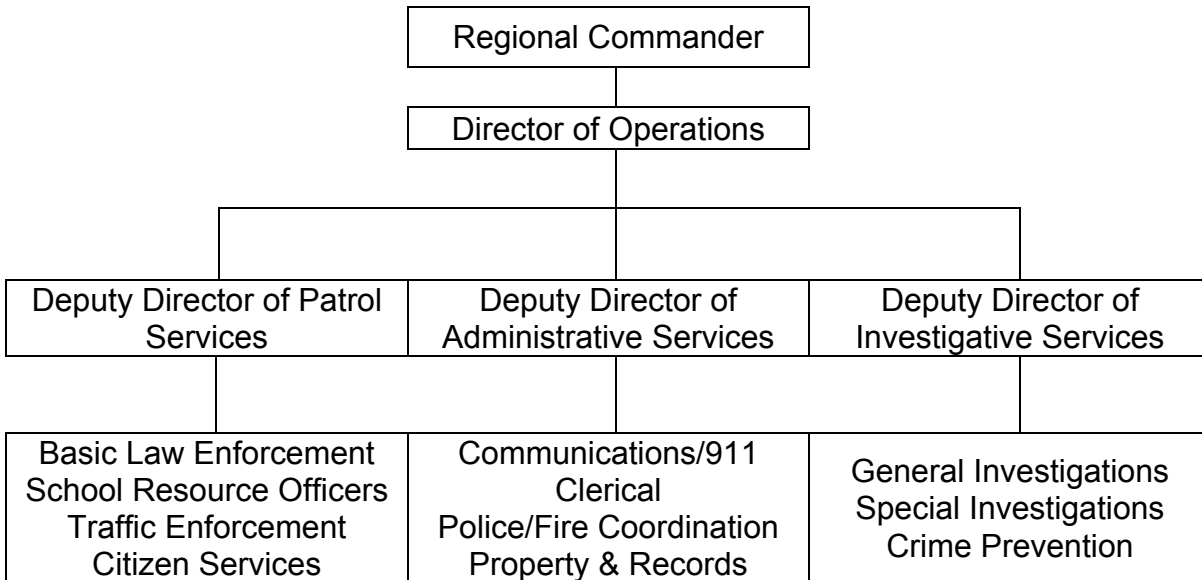
As there would definitely be a large contingent of law enforcement executives statewide faced with the prospect of unemployment or rank reduction, it is postulated that any move at consolidation would be a phased operation involving a substantial period of time. This would allow for personnel in the respective agencies to retire, apply out of state, or establish themselves within the new agency. It would also allow line personnel to consider their options and govern themselves accordingly. Although some higher level positions would be, as previously discussed, abolished, a certain number of managerial/supervisory personnel would still be needed in the newly created agency. Depending upon such characteristics as experience, training, and desire, the vast majority of sworn personnel in this state would retain a job in law enforcement at some level. Koepsell and Girard (1979) made the following suggestions regarding the consolidation process:

- 1. Insure that common uniforms, badges, patches, identification, vehicles and other equipment are available to all personnel at the earliest possible time. Nothing mitigates against assimilation more than the presence of different uniforms at roll call, or different colored vehicles on patrol.*
- 2. Assign personnel formerly from one community to patrol other portions*

of the consolidated agency's service area.

3. *Forced mixing should also be encouraged wherever possible; i.e., in cases where two person patrol units are still used; on various patrol shifts; in locker assignments; in roll call seating. (p. 40)*

**Table 5  
Proposed Regional Organization**



Personnel in each region would depend on the numbers of line officers assigned to the area. The typical regional organization is displayed in Table 5, below. Only management is displayed, as organizational charts would vary depending upon size and strength of the region. Each of the regional commanders would report to a cabinet level entity, as previously stated, most typically titled Secretary of Law Enforcement or a comparable designation. That person would maintain only the sworn staff necessary to administer the agency. The majority of the chief executive's staff would be comprised of civilians skilled in personnel management, labor relations, budgeting, and purchasing. Routine personnel matters, crime trends, manpower needs, and other comparable requirements would be handled on the regional level, allowing the cabinet member the time and resources to deal directly with the overall statewide picture, i.e., state budget, legislation, liaison with other state agencies.

Summary

Implementation of the unification of police services in Florida would be a process necessitating long range planning and administering by executive level personnel not afraid of innovation. It would most assuredly be a process lasting as long as a decade, allowing for adjustments in personnel strengths and rank classifications through attrition, for no one wants to unduly place more people, and certainly not skilled professionals, on the unemployment roster.

Unification of police services in Florida is not offered as a cure for all that ails the criminal justice system or more specifically, for law enforcement. Rather, it is a proposal of an alternative to the current and traditional methods and approaches to law enforcement organization and management. By applying principles indigenous to corporate America, and by demonstrating a willingness to give the citizens whom we serve the most service for their tax dollar, the police of this state can reap the benefits now enjoyed by private sector: career enhancements, the best fringe benefits, a salary commensurate with the risks and professionalism of the job, and, perhaps most importantly, the safety and security of public respect.

Greg Feldman is a Captain with the South Miami Police Department, currently in charge of Criminal Investigations. He has commanded uniform patrol and services for that agency, and has over 23 years in law enforcement. Greg also serves as an instructor in assets forfeiture for the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Oklahoma.

### References

Adams, T. F. (1973). Law enforcement - An introduction to the police role in the criminal justice system (2nd ed.).

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (1992). State justice sourcebook of statistics and research. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.

Eastman, G. D., & Chapman, S. G. (1976). Short of merger. New York: Lexington Books.

Florida Department of Law Enforcement. (1990). Criminal justice agency profile. Tallahassee, Florida: Author.

Koepsell, T. W., & Girard, C. M. (1979). Small police agency consolidation: Suggested approaches. Washington, D.C.: Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

Norrgard, D. L. (1969). Regional law enforcement: A study of intergovernmental cooperation and coordination. Washington, D.C.: Public Administration Service.

Van Meter, C. W., & Conrad, J. J. (1972). Pilot study for feasibility of regionalization of components of the criminal justice system in Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Pope, and Salina Counties. Macomb, Illinois: Western Illinois University.