

# **Homeland Security and the Green Line Behind it**

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**How Fish and Wildlife Law  
Enforcement Officers are an  
important and critical layer of the  
United States' Homeland Security  
System**

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## I. Background

It is no secret that local and state law enforcement officers are our “Front Line” in Homeland Security. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the federal government has asserted that collaboration and communication among federal, state, and local governments are essential “if we are to maximize our ability as a country to prevent a terrorist attack, to reduce our vulnerability to an attack, or to be in the best position to respond to an attack if one comes.<sup>1</sup>”

To magnify that importance, the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) observed in a 2002 publication that the attacks of 9-11 “have added a new dimension to American policing.<sup>2</sup>” And those roles and responsibilities that state and local law enforcement agencies assume in this nation’s homeland security strategy will not diminish over time.

### The Role of State Law Enforcement in Homeland Security

When a critical incident occurs, even when it takes place in the jurisdiction of a large municipal or county police department, it is usually a state law enforcement agency that is called to render assistance and bring order to chaos. Hurricane Katrina is the best example that we all can remember and appreciate the role that law enforcement (and specifically Fish and Game agencies) played in the response. Katrina underlined the reality that when bad things happen, it is state law enforcement agencies that are first to cross the border to help because of their unique resources, jurisdiction, capabilities and pre-positioned locations.

As stated by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), State law enforcement agencies offer a broad array of police and homeland security services. These agencies are the primary providers or the sole sources in their state for such specialized services as emergency management, government security, executive protection, marine and aviation assets, canine, SWAT, explosive detection, and urban search and rescue. These services are integral parts of responding to, or recovering from, a critical homeland security event.<sup>3</sup>

To further illustrate this point, a 2005 study by the Council of State Governments (CSG) and Eastern Kentucky University found that the responsibilities of state law enforcement agencies had grown *more* than those of local agencies since September 11, 2001. For

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<sup>1</sup> White House news releases Aug. 18, 2003

<sup>2</sup> Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing, “*Local Law Enforcement Responds to Terrorism: Lessons in Prevention and Preparedness*”

<sup>3</sup> International Association of Chiefs of Police publication: *The Role of State and Provincial Law Enforcement Agencies in a Post-9/11 Era: The Demands and Capacities of Protecting and Policing the Homeland.*

example, about 90 percent of state law enforcement agencies played a lead or major role in the development of their states' intelligence fusion centers.<sup>4</sup>

And in another nationwide survey by the RAND Corporation, researchers found that state law enforcement agencies and larger local departments were more proactively engaged in terrorism preparedness, equipment acquisition, and training than their smaller local counterparts.<sup>5</sup>

To be sure, the state police community has been asked to do more. As mentioned in a release by the IACP, the CSG report indicated that the new homeland security role involved the following elements:

- Coordinating homeland security at the state level
- Collecting, analyzing, and sharing critical information and intelligence
- Protecting critical infrastructure and key assets
- Securing the nation's borders, airports, and seaports
- Collaborating with federal and local law enforcement on task forces
- Preparing new equipment, tactics, systems, and training

### **State Law Enforcement is “The Front Line”**

We have clearly outlined the importance of state law enforcement in the overall homeland security mission. And while the federal government agencies (FBI, USCG, DOD, DHS, etc.) focus on our international borders, state law enforcement agencies are the ones who look at our resources, our infrastructure, our citizens and our visitors. They man the highways and waterways as the gatekeepers of our protection, while the local law enforcement agencies are outside our doorway, protecting our neighborhoods. It is a true layered defense, which requires integration and mutual aid to be successful.

State law enforcement agencies are indeed, the front line for the homeland. At the State Fusion Center, they are most likely the first to detect or interdict an anomaly. At the State Emergency Operations Center, they are the Emergency Support Function that will be the first to deploy to the area of need when disaster strikes. And because of *where* they patrol, in the performance of their normal patrol duties they may be the first to identify a potential threat, interdict it, disrupt it, and prevent it.

Now let's talk about what happens in the next layer of defense and the capabilities that exist behind the front lines of state law enforcement. Let's talk about the “Green Line.”

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<sup>4</sup> Council of State Governments and Eastern Kentucky University, *“The Impact of Terrorism on State Law Enforcement: Adjusting to New Roles and Changing Conditions,”* by C. Foster and G. Corder (2005)

<sup>5</sup> RAND Corporation, *“When Terrorism Hits Home: How Prepared Are State and Local Law Enforcement?”* (2004), [www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org), September 16, 2007.

## **II. Fish and Wildlife: Working Behind the Lines**

We can all agree that state law enforcement is a critical component to our homeland's security. But if we look even closer at state law enforcement, we will discover a capability that is often forgotten and neglected in this specific discussion.

Fish and Wildlife (or Fish and Game) law enforcement agencies and their officers in the field are a critical layer of defense. Here's why.

### **It's their mission**

Fish and Game agencies have as their core mission, the protection and conservation of the state's vital resources. For Florida, its law enforcement mantra is "Patrol, Protect and Preserve." The protection of our resources means much of what is America. It is made up of resources. Our buildings, our transportation systems, our symbols, our infrastructure, our residents and our visitors. They are all vital to our overall success and our security. Any attack on our homeland that affects any one resource shakes and ripples throughout our entire foundation.

### **It's where they operate on a daily basis**

Wildlife officers are out in the woods and on the water. They are patrolling power lines and railway routes, and on the water around critical infrastructure like nuclear power plants, bridges and symbols of our nation. They are typically patrolling where other agencies are not. They are our eyes and ears in a domain that is not often travelled by other law enforcement agencies, but is a part of any landscape someone who wishes to do us harm wants to blend into.

When the theft of copper becomes an increasing trend, it is wildlife law enforcement officers that are in the areas where these communication towers are. When intelligence suggests that our transportation systems may be targeted, it is a wildlife law enforcement officer that is in the woods where the rail lines transit, and an officer on the waterways where ferries and cruise ships transit. When the nation's power grid may be targeted, it is those wildlife law enforcement officers that are on patrol alongside those power lines or power plants.

### **It's the capabilities that they provide**

These conservation officers are professionals at identifying an anomaly. A vehicle that has never operated in the woods before or a vessel that has never been in that port before, and with people on board that don't appear like they are tourists or recreational boaters. They are therefore a critical component to our intelligence and information sharing network.

For Florida, our officers represent over 700 highly sophisticated and technologically advanced "sensors" located in critical areas throughout the state.

Conservations officers also provide an amount of resources (boats, ATVs, aircraft, trucks, personnel, etc.) that become deeply needed in response to a catastrophic event. It was Fish and Game officers that went into Mississippi and Louisiana when Katrina struck. It was their boats and trucks that provided vital transportation and connectivity to isolated and devastated areas throughout the gulf coast.

### **It's their unique jurisdiction**

Fish and Wildlife law enforcement officers have state authorities to go places local law enforcement officers can not. In coastal states, they are deputized with federal authority that goes beyond the 3 mile state limit and out to 200 miles<sup>6</sup>.

This combination of unique jurisdiction with specialized training and equipment that makes conservation agencies the ones often charged with protecting the state's waterways and critical infrastructure during times of heightened security threat levels.

### **It's their spirit of cooperation**

It is their proficient and effective response capabilities to emergencies and critical incidents that makes them an invaluable partner in our nation's emergency response network. And it is their continuously demonstrated multi-partnership that enhances existing state assets and capabilities. Conservation law enforcement agencies leverage core mission performance and ensure a standardization of training and execution across the entire state.

It is this capability, training, resources and spirit of cooperation that is often underutilized or recognized at the federal level. Now is the time to change that.

## **III. Some examples of Fish and Game Homeland Security efforts in Florida.**

### **Waterborne Response Teams**

Following Florida's Domestic Security Strategy, Florida's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) developed a plan to maximize existing personnel, equipment and expertise as a foundation for building capacity and capabilities to address waterborne threats.

Working with the Coast Guard and subject matter experts throughout the maritime law enforcement community, FWC led the development of a protocol, the training curriculum and typing that has been since been recognized as a national model. Through the establishment 41 Waterborne Response Teams throughout the state, a multi-partner tool

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<sup>6</sup> NOAA Office of Law Enforcement has Joint Enforcement Agreements with 27 states and territories.

is now able to respond immediately to any arising threat and protect Florida's coastline and critical infrastructure. This is a key force multiplier for the United States Coast Guard, the agency primarily responsible for port security. Especially when it becomes evident to the local Coast Guard Captain of the Port, that it is the partners on the water that possess the resources and capabilities to truly secure the port when disaster is eminent.

### **Operation Sturgeon**

In 2008, the US Navy recognized that federal resources to protect a high value asset over an eleven week period at a Florida port were limited. They came to FWC and to perform the protection mission. FWC as the coordinators of the State's Waterborne Response Teams, led the operation and deployment of multiple teams from around the state. This became the template of high value asset protection that the Navy is using in other states around the country.

### **Intelligence**

When a South Carolina deputy made a traffic stop on a Florida registered vehicle just outside of Charleston, it was the intelligence resources and information sharing made by FWC that led to the ultimate conviction of the two individuals in the vehicle. It was an officer patrolling the Florida Keys that discovered refueling drums on an uninhabited island that indicated evidence of an eminent smuggling event. And it was a Hunter's Education trainer that alerted federal partners to suspicious activity by a student looking to learn how to shoot a high-powered rifle.

## **IV. The Future, and Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement Agencies as Part of It**

As the federal government recognizes and accepts that homeland security should not be federally centric, and the states accept that their role is important and increasing, both have to recognize that a key component to the state's security capabilities rests in the hands of those wildlife officers.

Fish and Wildlife agencies across the country are widely lauded for their proficient and effective response capabilities to emergencies and critical incidents. They are an invaluable partner in the nation's emergency response network. And because of their unique jurisdiction and specialized training and equipment, they are the agency charged with protecting the state's waterways and critical infrastructure during times of heightened security threat levels.

### **It's about partnership**

Because of these extensive capabilities and demonstrated experience in the maritime domain, the United States Coast Guard and the United States Navy have looked to Fish

and Wildlife agencies to multi-partner in the maritime response, protection and prevention components of domestic security. Multi-partnership enhances existing marine assets and capabilities, leverages core mission performance and ensures a standardization of training and execution.

### **It's about leveraging resources (and protecting them)**

By leveraging this capability and resources of Fish and Game law enforcement agencies across the country, the United States will enhance their security and protection of its vital resources. It is by reaching out and connecting these agencies to the homeland security framework and the intelligence network that will make us work better and go farther.

### **It's about recognition and support**

State Fish and Wildlife law enforcement agencies need to be recognized as a significant partner and provider of resources in the homeland security mission. They need to be recognized at both the state and the national level. And they need to be supported. As outlined in the first pages of this document, the homeland security mission has increased the responsibilities of the states and the respective law enforcement agencies.

Support to this one group of law enforcement, the “green line” that operates literally and figuratively “behind the lines” will always remain a critical element of our nation’s layered defense. It is time that they are included in the discussions of funding, planning, preparedness, and training.