

MAY 4, 2021

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



RALPH M. TERRAZAS
FIRE CHIEF

March 17, 2021

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 21-034

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM:  Ralph M. Terrazas, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: REORGANIZATION OF THE ARSON COUNTER TERRORISM SECTION

FINAL ACTION: ☐ Approved
☐ Denied

☐ Approved w/Corrections
☐ Received & Filed

☐ Withdrawn
☐ Other

SUMMARY

During the Board of Fire Commissioners meeting on December 15, 2020, Fire Commissioner Jimmie Woods-Gray requested additional information related to the Department's plan for reorganizing the Arson Counter Terrorism Section (ACTS). The Department has carefully evaluated the proposed reorganization. The analysis of the Section's current structure included call load data analysis, career path opportunities, and budgetary implications.

The Section concluded that with minor adjustments made to the staffing make-up of the Section, the Department could realize a significant budget savings and potentially provide opportunities for career path growth, while not negatively impacting the ACTS' ability to perform its mission. Overall, the proposed reorganization will achieve the following objectives:

- Operational savings of approximately \$742,625 annually
- Improved supervisory oversight
- Standardized case management
- Improved performance and accountability
- Enhanced skills, communication and mentorship
- Potential creation of promotional opportunities within ACTS
- Better alignment with City partners that maintain regular business hours

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:
Receive and file.

CURRENT STRUCTURE/PROPOSED REORGANIZATIONAL PLAN

The ACTS is staffed with 19 members including 10 special duty members operating from a central office at the Frank Hotchkin Memorial Training Center (FHMTTC), and 12 platoon duty members staffing two 24-hour Arson Unit (AR) apparatus at Fire Stations 17 (AR1) and 78 (AR2). There are six Arson Investigators assigned to each platoon duty assignment (2 investigators per platoon). For the most part, special duty members are assigned to "Days,"

working from the office on normal business hours, and members working platoon duty assignments at AR1 and AR2 are assigned to "Nights."

The proposed plan reassigns six Arson Investigators to the "Day" schedule and closes the platoon duty assignments at FS 78. The changes from the current to proposed staffing models are delineated below.

Current Staffing Model (# members):

Platoon Duty (Arson Unit 1 at FS17)

Arson Investigator	6 (2 per platoon)
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Platoon Duty (Arson Unit 2 at FS78)

Arson Investigator	6 (2 per platoon)
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Special Duty (at FHMTTC)

Battalion Chief	1
Fire Captain II	1
Fire Captain I	1
Arson Investigator	7

Proposed Staffing Model:

Platoon Duty (Arson Unit 1 at FS17)

Arson Investigator	6 (2 per platoon)
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Special Duty (at FHMTTC)

Battalion Chief	1
Fire Captain II	1
Fire Captain I	1
Arson Investigator	13

CALL LOAD ANALYSIS

A review of calendar year 2019 was conducted through the Department's Fire Stat Section. The focus of the analysis was directed to the impact of closing one platoon duty unit, to appropriately handle the after hour calls for assistance. The proposed plan will increase the number of Investigators assigned to the "Day" schedule, so calls for assistance during business hours will be handled adequately. The analysis showed that, on average, the platoon duty assignments (AR1 and AR2) responded to less than one "after-hour" call per day. Additionally, the data shows that these units were assigned to an "after-hour" incident for just over one hour per day.

The majority of incidents for the ACTS were shown to be during business hours (0600-1800 hours). The reorganization will bring operations into alignment with LAPD Major Crimes Division and other partner agencies, as the Day schedule is most conducive to follow up investigations that occur during normal business hours (i.e. interviews, search warrants, district attorney, city attorney, laboratories analysis, etc.).

CAREER PATH OPPORTUNITIES

Investigators assigned to the ACTS develop a skill set that is unique within the LAFD. However, there are currently limited promotional opportunities within the ACTS for interested

members to utilize these skills at a higher rank and paygrade. The Department is committed to working with our labor partners to find ways to provide future promotional opportunities for members assigned to ACTS. This will enable the Department to take full advantage of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of our members, thereby increasing case oversight in order to reduce arson fires within the City. This will also create an environment that supports accountability, mentoring, coaching, and training.

COST SAVINGS

This proposal is estimated to reduce expenditures by \$742,625 per year from eliminated backfill costs resulting from the reassignment of six Investigators from platoon to special duty. Additionally, overtime attributed to IOD is expected to be reduced significantly under this reconfiguration.

There are no additional anticipated costs from implementation of this proposal. All members assigned to ACTS currently have their own cubical area, desk space and computer with all programs and equipment necessary to perform their duties at FHMTTC. No modifications or improvements are needed to the ACTS office to facilitate this request.

ENHANCED SUPERVISION AND OVERSIGHT

The Department believes enhanced supervision and oversight for a large majority of arson investigators who are currently working without supervision, will improve operational efficiencies, accountability and investigative outcomes in ACTS operations. The call for enhanced supervision and oversight within arson operations has been the subject of past audits, as follows:

- In 2009, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) conducted an audit of ACTS, *"It is recommended that LAFD Management establish formal supervisory review requirements for fire investigations..."* (LAPD Audit Division, Los Angeles Fire Department Arson Counter Terrorism Section Audit, William J. Bratton, 2009 pg. 11).
- In 2014, the Office of Independent Assessor (OIA) completed a second audit. Audit Objective No. 4: Supervisor Oversight. *"Some of the cases reviewed by the OIA demonstrated the need for supervisory oversight by ACTS captains..."* (Board of Fire Commissioners File #BFC-138, Sue Stengel, 2014 pg. 2).

"In light of the investigative issues identified in Objectives No. 2 and 4, the OIA recommends that before approving an investigative report a supervisor must ensure that investigations and reports are thorough, complete, and accurate..." (Board of Fire Commissioners File #BFC-138, Sue Stengel, 2014 pg. 19).

The Department will continue to seek out opportunities to enhance supervision and oversight within ACTS through continued analysis, collaboration and evaluation of pertinent metrics.

Board report prepared by Graham Everett, Chief of Staff, Administration, and Emilio Rodriguez, Acting Chief Administrative Analyst, Administrative Services Bureau.