



## Senate Judiciary Committee Testimony

as given by Colonel Audie Holloway, director of Alaska State Troopers in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee on January 16, 2008 in Juneau



Greetings Honorable Senators

Overall, the Alaska State Troopers continue to see an increase in calls for service of all types, especially white collar crimes, computer and identity theft type crimes, domestic violence calls and property crimes. This of course can be attributed in part to population growth and the education of the criminally inclined regarding computers and the internet. It can also be attributed in part to the inefficiency of our system. Of course, Alaska is still number one for over 10 years in the Uniform Crime Report's Forcible Rape category. The definition of that category does not include all of Alaska's sexual assaults or sexual abuse of minors, as our statutes encompass more than the UCR definition of the category. This would, if it could, make us even higher than number one if that is possible.



We are also seeing many more Search and Rescues. In 2007 we responded to 721. That is about two per day. SAR's are very time consuming and expensive in manpower, effort and money. These will likely continue to increase due to greater access to the wilderness, more tourists, more citizens without proper training or precautions and the proliferation of more big boy outdoor toys

AST continues to make significant illegal drug and alcohol cases every day. There are many interdictions at the airport and mail facilities. There is still plenty of work in this area of criminality which is of course the basis for several of our other social and criminal problems that affect urban and rural Alaska. This is an excellent restriction point that diminishes downstream work and



## AST does very well in three areas;

- ✓ Very complicated and very serious crimes like homicides and sexual assaults. And you may have noticed that our cold case squad has recently been very successful in a number of cases. These are examples of being able to devote the needed time to a case.
- ✓ Immediate response to emergencies and calls for service; and
- ✓ Search and rescue.



AST faces significant challenges in four areas as far as quantity and quality of work is concerned:



1) Investigative and follow up capabilities from uniformed patrol such as on DV's, burglaries and injury motor vehicle collisions. Troopers make an immediate response and then make another immediate response to the next call, one right after the other. So we do well on the immediate response, but we do terrible on follow-up. It is completely analogous to an emergency room triage situation, but whereas the ER doctor or a nurse will return, we do not have the time in many cases to get back to the initial patient for follow-up or referral in a timely manner. Many people do not understand how complicated a call or service can be and that it is usually not completed in one visit.

2) The amount of work in the area of judicial services, prisoner transportation and court security continues to increase as more courtrooms are added and population increases. There are almost 10,000 un-served arrest warrants in the state. Here is a copy of the Frontiersman which has a listing of over 2,100 arrest warrants in the Mat-Su Valley and Glennallen. This type of problem causes the system to move in fits and starts rather than smooth production of work and services.



3) Lack of investigative services for felony crimes such as white collar crimes, identity theft, internet crimes and property crimes-not to mention sexual assaults and sexual abuse of a minor offenses. We have three white-collar investigators in our Alaska Bureau of Investigations.

4) Presence on Alaska's Highways. Right now, unless we are working using grant funds, AST does not have a dedicated highway safety plan that significantly modifies aggressive and poor driver behavior in order to prevent or diminish collisions. AST also does not have an adequate presence to check on drivers during poor weather conditions on many stretches of highway. Our current response is to conduct highway traffic law enforcement when we have no calls for service to answer or we have no follow-up to finish. In other words, almost never. We conduct highway patrol when we are on our way to another call for service, not as a directed task.



There are two areas where I have significant concerns for the safety of our troopers:

- Single rural troopers answering serious calls by themselves and
- Judicial services/court security officers.

AST still, along with law enforcement around the country, faces significant challenges with recruitment and retention. Law enforcement just does not seem to be as attractive a career to these recent generations. AST has been able to fill authorized positions, but not as quickly as we would like. After this next academy and lateral hire interval, we will be close to having all the authorized positions filled. It took approximately three years to make a net gain of three positions, and this includes the 19 out of the last academy that are still in field training.

We suffered through several recent years of high numbers of separations and we anticipate approximately 12 to 15 retirements and separations per year in the coming years. We are in the process of conducting a staffing study to determine hiring and staffing needs for the next five years. The average experiential age of a trooper is at 7.5 years and this drops every year. AST had an exceptional recruitment year in 2007 and was able to graduate 19 AST and three AWT in the last academy. This is not holding true for 2008 so far.





Although there have been some significant upgrades to APSIN in the last few years that include a more modern operating system and greater interoperability, AST is approx 25 years behind where we should be on the technology front. An example of a success in this area is ALEISS, wherein agencies across the state share information via their records management systems. AST is a user but not a contributor because we, the

state law enforcement agency does not have an electronic records management system. Adequate and current technology could significantly impact our work in a positive way (i.e., more work output with the same number of personnel and faster response to the public). Our technology support staff is significantly under-resourced. The public does not understand and cannot comprehend how backward AST is regarding technology. This provides inadequate and antiquated services to the public because of our outdated business processes, i.e. citizens should be able to report on-line and receive copies of reports on-line rather than an in-person request that may require two trips to AST.

Many of AST facilities are seriously out-of-date. Although there has been significant progress in recent years to provide new trooper housing which is extremely helpful in the recruiting efforts, this does not address the aged, dilapidated and expensive business and office structures. We also do not have adequate regional shooting ranges. Confidence in one's professional abilities, be they with weapons or with interview techniques, helps to lower the number of complaints and lawsuits.



Kotzebue post



Bethel state housing



Palmer firing range

With these problems and the youthfulness of our work force, we will begin to see even more citizen's complaints; lawsuits for a myriad of reasons from excessive force to inadequate response; and orders from the court to show cause as to why AST did not produce those services that are mandatory by law. As this increase in dissatisfaction grows, AST will spend more time in self-examination and internal investigations to explain the shortcomings. This will create a negative feedback spiral, which will impact employee morale and citizen services and eventually recruitment and retention.



The answer to these problems is not necessarily to throw money at them. In fact, an unplanned infusion of money or capital could divert resources away from priorities. More importantly, the answer is to develop a plan for infrastructure replacement and upkeep, staying apace with current technology, and adding personnel in the correct areas at the correct time. In other words, we need to improve services according to a well-thought out business plan that is coordinated with other division and agency plans based upon common priorities.

At AST we have a new 10-year plan in place that will guide us in making two five-year plans. We will focus on four areas simultaneously:

**Services      Internal Capability      External Relations      Growth**

The fourth one, **Growth**, does not necessarily mean an increase in personnel or costs, but rather planned development according to increases in populations or changes in the business of public safety. It also means “development” as in a maturation of the agency which includes succession planning and employee training. And it means “development” as in systemic inter-relations and interoperability using current and modern business practices, technology, and services. AST will be working on two fronts, internal and external. Internally, we will be focusing on our main assets, our employees. Externally, we will be trying to modernize our facilities and our business practices. This means we must be more communicative so we can educate and inform all our partners and the public we serve as to what our problems and our plans are. All this leads to better services.

The best thing that could happen to AST is to be able to run our operation in a prospective manner rather than a reactionary manner. We need to be planning for five years in to the future. That also gives us the capability to adjust or correct our course if necessary to fit in with system-wide priorities. Right now we operate our infrastructure in a mostly “break-fix” manner and our annual operating plans and budgets can be upset by one major disaster or lawsuit. In our current budget proposal and 10-year plan, you will see that AST is working to provide some factual assessment of our technology, our facilities, and our manpower capabilities. When we get that information, we want to look forward with it.



To be successful in these endeavors, we need to cause you the legislature and the public to look at us in a different manner. The need for law enforcement will never go away, but the need and the cost can be diminished if it is efficient and effective. AST can be neither, if current practices continue. Now is the time to think of your public safety agency as an investment. We could actually save the state money on many of the social ills facing us if we were able to run AST in a pragmatic, business-like manner. Government should seldom take over individual or familial responsibilities, but there are many out there who would victimize others if they thought there were no consequences. We need to make those consequences believable and real.



The best thing that could happen to the Alaska criminal justice system is for it to be thought of in a global and systemic manner. The disparate parts of the system need to be integrated and standardized and to do that; we need system-wide oversight and direction. For example, there is the capability out there to create a technological system that has the accounting ability to determine how much work product moves from one part of the system to the other, what program was productive and what was not, which employees are productive and which are not, and subsequently which agency is productive and which is not. Right now it is very difficult to hold any agency or part of an agency responsible for anything because they can always look to the inefficiency of the system as their excuse. There should be a formalized Criminal Justice System governance committee, with appropriate subcommittees, such as technology, that is mandated to plan, organize and provide deliverables such as goals, schedules, and issue focus at least five years out in to the future. This would give the system underneath the direction that is sorely needed for planning.

I know that this looks like a daunting task with unimaginable amounts of money required, but that is just not so. We need a system-wide focus and tenacity on priorities and we need to look at the timing of this solution in terms of decades. This cannot be fixed overnight or just with money. It needs to be fixed with planning that requires incremental and affordable change. That requires a clear goal and a clear direction. The goal is easy: we need a balanced, coordinated, and up-to-date criminal justice system. The direction is forward, one step at a time. The impediment to all this is in our collective head not our pocketbook.

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