

MENDOCINO COUNTY SHERIFF'S COAST SECTOR SUB-STATION AND HOLDING CELLS IN FORT BRAGG

March 22, 2007

Summary

The Grand Jury conducted its mandated annual visit to the Coastal Sub-station. The inspection included holding cells, evidence rooms, budgets and staffing, and perimeter security fencing.

The station faces major problems due to unfilled Deputy positions and facility maintenance. The staff shortages would be partially alleviated by a county-wide prisoner transport system.

Background

California Penal Code §919 (b) states "The Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county." The 2006/2007 Mendocino County Grand Jury undertook their charge with a visit to the MCSO Coast Sector Sub-Station and Holding Cells.

Methods

The Grand Jury visited the MCSO Coast Sector Facilities, and interviewed Sheriff's Department personnel regarding operations of the facilities including Booking Area, Holding Cells, Evidence Rooms, and Parking Area. The Grand Jury also reviewed documents including inspection reports and evidence room tracking records.

Findings

1. The present staff consists of one Lieutenant, three Sergeants, 13 Deputies, one Detective, and one Secretary. A deputy acts as Bailiff; the Secretary serves as the Evidence Technician. At the present time there are three unfilled Deputy positions. Two others are seeking employment elsewhere.

Response (Board of Supervisors):

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with this finding per the Sheriff's response.

Response (Sheriff's Office):

I disagree partially with finding number 1. The Grand Jury incorrectly notes that Coast Sector staffing includes thirteen Deputies. There are only twelve Deputy Sheriff positions assigned to this sector, and of these only eight are currently filled. The civilian staff member is a Sheriff's Services Technician, not a Secretary.

2. Staff shortages place a burden on remaining officers to provide effective enforcement.

Response (Board of Supervisors):

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

Response (Sheriff's Office):

I agree with the findings numbered 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

**MENDOCINO COUNTY SHERIFF'S COAST SECTOR SUB-STATION AND HOLDING
CELLS IN FORT BRAGG**

March 22, 2007

3. Deputies are required to transport prisoners to Ukiah and may make two or more trips per shift.

Response (Board of Supervisors):

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

Response (Sheriff's Office):

I agree with the findings numbered 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

4. The Grand Jury determined there was no definitive budget for the Coast Sector operations.

Response (Board of Supervisors):

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

Response (Sheriff's Office):

I agree with the findings numbered 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

5. The two holding cells are clean and recently modified to prevent injury to prisoners. Both cells require painting to complete the modifications.

Response (Board of Supervisors):

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

Response (Sheriff's Office):

I agree with the findings numbered 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Response (General Services Agency):

The General Services Agency agrees with this finding. The cells were painted and completed earlier this year (2007).

6. The security gate controlling access to the rear of the sub-station is inoperable. It is intended to protect impounded vehicles, hazardous materials, an outside evidence room and the sallyport (prisoner intake/outtake). It has been intermittently inoperable for several years due to coastal weather conditions.

Response (Board of Supervisors):

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

Response (Sheriff's Office):

I agree with the findings numbered 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

**MENDOCINO COUNTY SHERIFF'S COAST SECTOR SUB-STATION AND HOLDING
CELLS IN FORT BRAGG**

March 22, 2007

Response (General Services Agency):

The General Services Agency agrees with this finding.

7. The barbed wire atop the perimeter fencing is in a state of disrepair.

Response (Board of Supervisors):

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

Response (Sheriff's Office):

I agree with the findings numbered 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Response (General Services Agency):

The General Services Agency agrees with this finding.

8. The MCSO Sector Sub-Station lacks a security alarm system which would further protect impounded property.

Response (Board of Supervisors):

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

Response (Sheriff's Office):

I agree with the findings numbered 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

1. the three vacant deputy positions be filled. (Findings 1 & 2)

Response (Board of Supervisors):

This recommendation will be implemented utilizing the hiring process within the next six months.

Response (Sheriff's Office):

This recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented in the near future. The Sheriff's Office is working aggressively to fill all of our vacant Deputy Sheriff positions, however it is impossible to project a time frame for filling these particular positions. Deputy Sheriff positions on the Coast have historically been the most difficult to fill.

**MENDOCINO COUNTY SHERIFF'S COAST SECTOR SUB-STATION AND HOLDING
CELLS IN FORT BRAGG**

March 22, 2007

2. the existing prisoner transport system be extended to the entire county. (Findings 2 & 3)

Response (Board of Supervisors):

This recommendation will be analyzed for feasibility and cost of implementation by September 21, 2007.

Response (Sheriff's Office):

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable at the current time. It appears that the Grand Jury is referring to the County Jail's transportation unit. Expanding this unit to provide countywide, 24/7 transportation of arrestees would require at least five additional, full-time Corrections Deputies. While I would support such a change, it is up to the Board of Supervisors to allocate and fund the additional positions.

3. a comprehensive and site-specific MCSO budget be developed for the Coastal Sector facilities and operations. (Finding 4)

Response (Board of Supervisors):

This recommendation will not be implemented as written. Maintenance and repair of Sheriff's facilities are addressed and budgeted for through the County Capital Improvement Plan and the General Services Agency operations budget on an annual basis.

Response (Sheriff's Office):

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. Facilities budgets are the responsibility of the County's General Services Agency. As to Sheriff's operations, while the identification of income and expenses by site is extremely valuable, a site-specific budget for one work unit is not practical. In July 2007 the County will begin using a new finance system, which allows revenues and expenditures to be coded by their location of origin. This will allow a level of detail not currently available.

4. the security gate be made operable and suitable to the coastal environment (Finding 6)

Response (Board of Supervisors):

This recommendation will be implemented by September 21, 2007.

Response (Sheriff's Office):

This recommendation requires further analysis, however facility maintenance and repair are the responsibility of the County General Services Agency.

Response (General Services Agency):

The Finding has not yet been implemented, but will be completed by August 1, 2007. Specialty Access Systems has been notified to prepare a proposal to upgrade this gate system. A proposal will be available in mid to late April 2007. Work to upgrade the gate will begin shortly thereafter.

**MENDOCINO COUNTY SHERIFF'S COAST SECTOR SUB-STATION AND HOLDING
CELLS IN FORT BRAGG**

March 22, 2007

5. repair of perimeter fencing and security gate be maintained on a priority basis. (Findings 6 & 7)

Response (Board of Supervisors):

This recommendation will be implemented by September 21, 2007.

Response (Sheriff's Office):

This recommendation requires further analysis, however facility maintenance and repair are the responsibility of the County General Services Agency.

Response (General Services Agency):

The Finding has not yet been implemented, but will be completed by August 1, 2007.

6. an alarm system be installed at the Sub-Station. (Finding 8)

Response (Board of Supervisors):

This recommendation will be analyzed for feasibility and cost of implementation by Sheriff staff by June 30, 2007.

Response (Sheriff's Office):

This recommendation requires further analysis. I have assigned it to my Field Operations Commander with instructions to report back to me within thirty days.

Comments

By filling the three vacant deputy positions, the Coastal Sector would be better able to provide enforcement services to the community. A recommended solution for the County would be to provide a 24/7 prisoner transport service. The problem with the security gate is one of continual deterioration due to a hostile coastal environment. The gate when operational provides an important security feature for the Sub-Station. It is considered imperative that it remain in operating order.

Response Required

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors:

Findings 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and Recommendations 1 through 6

Sheriff, Mendocino County Sheriff's Department:

Findings 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and Recommendations 1 through 6

Director, Mendocino County Department of General Services:

Findings 5, 6, 7, and Recommendations 4 and 5

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