

**Testimony of
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**Firearms and Terrorism
U.S. Senate Committee
On
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Honorable Joseph L. Lieberman, Chairman
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Chairman Lieberman, Senator Collins and Distinguished Committee Members, thank you for holding this hearing on Firearms and Terrorism.

I am representing the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Police Department. I have been an LAPD officer for over 30 years and am now an Assistant Chief of Police. During the 30 years I have served, the LAPD has dealt with extraordinary violence in the streets of Los Angeles involving hard core criminals, gangs and weapons. We have also been the target of terrorist threats, including threats to our airport and threats by domestic terrorist groups. Our experience with responding to and investigating such violent crimes helped us define how to most effectively stop such violence through prevention efforts. Our efforts allow our City today to boast of crime rates not seen in LA since the 1950's. This has not occurred by accident, rather by using our experiences and continuously improving our policing efforts. Today, I will address three issues of interest to this committee:

- First, the belief that it is **Not a Matter of “IF, but When”** one of our national urban communities is attacked by either a foreign or domestic terrorist in the form of gang members, hardened criminals, Islamic terrorists or the lone wolf.
- Second, to understand the scope of the term “prevention” and what the Los Angeles Police Department has incorporated into first responder training to address a terrorist incident or multiple location attack.

- Third, the role legislation can play in support of local law enforcement's fight against terrorism and violence.

In February 1997, two armed gunmen held over a hundred LAPD officers at bay for nearly an hour in the infamous North Hollywood Bank of America Robbery. They utilized high powered rifles and expended hundreds of rounds of ammunition, similar to the weaponry utilized by terrorist cells. It was local law enforcement that finally ended the confrontation.

In May of 2005, four Muslim radical suspects – armed with shotguns – went on a crime spree in Southern California. Eleven times they robbed or attempted to rob gas stations. It was the work of local law enforcement that discovered during a search warrant body armor, knives, and other evidence of the crime. Additional evidence led these well trained detectives to quickly understand they were dealing with a homegrown terrorist organization. As a result the Los Angeles Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), comprised of local law enforcement officers and FBI special agents working together, uncovered a larger and greater conspiracy and prevented the suspects planned attacks "to maximize the number of casualties" using long guns and homemade explosives in Southern California.

In November 2008 the world watched in horror as terrorists executed multiple attacks in Mumbai, India, utilizing long guns, explosive devices and grenades. It was local law enforcement that were the first responders to the incident. The question immediately came to mind, "Was the LAPD prepared to handle a Mumbai-style attack?"

The potential for another North Hollywood shootout, continued threats from domestic terrorist groups, or a Mumbai-style attack is a real danger in the United States. There are radical prison gangs throughout the country that direct gang members not incarcerated to target individuals, law enforcement and government entities for violence. Individual extremists such as Timothy McVea demonstrated just how violent and devastating one angry, deranged individual can be. And, of course, the concern of a terrorist attack since 9/11 is very real. The LAPD has studied, and continues to study, all of these and similar events in an effort to evolve the first responders' capabilities to defend the City of Los Angeles. These and other experiences provide law enforcement with many lessons. For example, the North Hollywood Bank Robbery Shootout caused the LAPD to reevaluate the weapon systems that were provided to first responders. At that time the Department introduced the Patrol Rifle to the street officer on a very limited basis. The key is to prepare officers to respond and to uncover these extremists before they inflict harm. Local law enforcement is the first line of defense to prevention and to responding to violent or potentially violent events.

The LAPD has a strong history of working toward preventing crime. The LAPD has employed a number of strategies including enhanced community outreach and a tip-line in order to uncover crimes before they occur. The iwatch program, which allows citizens to report suspicious terrorist-related behaviors, is the latest program developed by LAPD to prevent violent crimes. We understand that prevention is far greater than simply preventing a crime from occurring. It is a given that violent events will occur and prevention includes the mandate that during a violent event an officer must

prevent further mayhem and/or loss of life. We are known throughout the world for having created the first Special Weapons And Tactics (SWAT) team in the nation, concentrating our tactical and weapons expertise into a highly trained unit that is able to respond on a moment's notice to handle highly volatile, potentially violent incidents and prevent such incidents from escalating. SWAT has been extremely successful. However, today we now know that the average patrol officer is key to preventing violent incidents from escalating into events that end in mass casualties such as Mumbai.

As a result of the Mumbai attacks the LAPD realized that much more needs to be done in the area of routine patrol tactics to prepare our front line officers so that they can respond to, defend, and prevent casualties during a violent attack within the City.

To address this gap in tactical patrol capabilities we embarked on a multi-agency, regional effort to evolve our first responder tactics so that when such an incident occurs we are able to provide a rapid response to react and neutralize the incident, thus preventing mass casualties. We understand that our ability to react in minutes rather than hours saves lives. Traditionally, street officers responding to an incident will attempt to neutralize the threat, and in many cases contain it and request the assistance of a SWAT or specialized tactical team who are experts in de-escalating incidents in progress. Violent criminals and terrorists have studied law enforcement tactics and adjusted their violent actions accordingly. We now understand that our officers must respond, assess, and act immediately to prevent further violence in many terrorist-type events.

The result of our multi-agency efforts is new patrol tactics we refer to as our Multiple Assault Counter-Terrorism Action Capabilities or MACTAC.

These tactics are similar to our military's tactics that have been perfected and are currently in use in our fight against terror overseas. My team and I have presented the MACTAC concepts at various conferences including the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Police Executive Research Forum and the National Tactical Officers Association. Both Police Executives and Tactical Experts believe this is critical to contemporary law enforcement. To date we have trained over 6000 of the LAPD's 9960 sworn police force and approximately 200 officers from around the country. This training can standardize local law enforcements' tactics and allow seamless support in the event that a city has the need to call in mutual aid to resolve an incident. These 21st century policing tactics are key to the successful prevention of and response to casualties during a violent encounter with a hardened criminal or a terrorist. This training provides us with the ability to engage indiscriminate shooters, respond rapidly to an unfolding violent incident and has significantly raised the tactical competency of our street level officers.

Training is costly and governmental support for such training is important in prevention and the fight against terror and violence. This training has the potential to standardize the tactics used by over 700,000 local law enforcement officers throughout the country. The nation's 12,000 FBI Special Agents are indeed some of the best investigators in the world, and the training they receive sets the benchmark for law enforcement. Their training is standardized. However, the first several hours of a violent

terrorist incident will be the responsibility of local law enforcement. It will be the more than 700,000 local law enforcement officers in the U.S. on the front lines fighting crime on a daily basis that will be placed in harm's way and expected to neutralize the attack and restore peace. Providing these 700,000 front line officers standardized tactical training will transform these first responders into a coordinated team, able to prevent further violence; a true force multiplier against domestic or international terrorism. The cost of providing that training is well worth the lives that are certain to be saved.

Finally, the suspects in all of the examples I have provided today have continuously demonstrated that their weapon of choice is a long gun. They are very well equipped with long guns, homemade explosive devices, and enough ammunition to keep the incident fluid for an extended period of time. It is of paramount importance that our governmental leaders understand that the tools we use to prevent weapons from getting into the hands of convicted felons, persons convicted of committing domestic violence or those who have been committed to a psychiatric hospital must be applied to those who are believed to be potential terrorists. We have the appropriate tools. Please allow law enforcement to utilize them to keep our cities safe.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to speak today. I am ready to answer any questions you may have.