



A wall is needed

As law enforcement, we are in the security business. Our motto is to protect and to serve, and those protections should extend to our own employees. We can recount many stories of attacks on our officers, both within our own Department and nationwide. However, when those attacks cross the threshold of our own stations, it becomes an entirely different discussion. How do we best protect our personnel?



"Bandit barriers I don't believe are the answers." –
Assist. Chief Michel Moore

Three years ago, a lone male suspect walked into the lobby of West Traffic Division, engaged one of the two desk officers in conversation, then opened fire on them. One officer was struck seven times and, thankfully, survived. This on the heels of two detectives being ambushed as they drove into the station parking lot 10 months earlier.



LAPD front desk without protection for officers.

More recently, Central Division has experienced several incidents in which the vulnerability of our desk personnel was made more apparent. Given the proximity of Central to the largest transient and mentally ill population roaming the streets, it is sheer luck that we haven't had a tragedy ... yet. In the last eight months, suspects have thrown objects (including fecal matter) at the desk officers, knocked computers down in fits of violence and spat at officers. The most recent incident at Central is also the most alarming. In July, a male transient walked into Central Station and made threats to the desk officers. After escorting this individual out of the station twice, he vowed to return to "light this place up." True to his words, he returned and used gasoline to start a fire in a trash can near the front door of the station. This is an escalation of events, but it is nothing new.

Going all the way back to the '80s, a Pacific desk officer had his gun taken away when a 5150 jumped halfway over the counter and yanked the gun right out of the officer's holster. Nationwide, there have been countless incidents of suspects showing up in police station lobbies carrying guns, clearly with a death wish of "suicide by cop" that goes along with the very strong likelihood of taking one of us down with them.

We have recently mandated that all desk personnel wear their vests. Why? Because of the increase in these types of incidents that threaten station personnel. But there are other means by which we can protect our employees. Bulletproof barriers are commonplace in most customer service business environments, yet our own command staff will not consider it. Banks, medical offices, even my dentist office has some form of protection. Many law enforcement agencies across the country have recognized the need to install barriers, but not ours.



Most police departments provide protection to their desk officers.

I approached Assistant Chief Michel Moore about the concerns of our membership and got the typical response of “happy to talk with you about this. Bandit barriers I don’t believe are the answers.” Then what is the answer, chief? How do we secure our station lobbies when we are under attack now more than ever before? Please don’t tell me it makes us less accessible to the public or looks too “fortified.” I’m only asking for a 2½ -foot-high Plexiglass wall around the front desk with openings to talk to the public. Even the Dallas Police Department has a barrier to protect its officers. Isn’t that the same place that you were a finalist for the top cop position, Chief Moore? And don’t tell me we can’t afford it. We can’t afford not to.

And let’s examine how our stations are configured. We have security measures for every aspect of each facility with the notable exception of the front desk/lobby areas. And who staffs those areas? Police officers, of course. The captains and the rest of the command staff are safely behind secured doors with a staff of personnel between them and anyone wishing to cause them harm. And unless someone drops from a helicopter down onto Chief Moore’s balcony on the 10th Floor of PAB, I’m sure he’s relatively safe ... thanks to the rest of us.

Heck, even the Police Commissioners recognize the vulnerability of non-secure spaces. At one Commission meeting, the lieutenant in charge of Commission Investigation Division advised the Department employee I was sitting next to, to move forward. The Commissioners wanted our personnel to sit near the front and leave the back rows for the members of the public so that our personnel are between them and the Board members. Since when do we sit with our backs to anyone? Needless to say, she refused to move, considering those meetings have turned into chaotic sideshows. But the underlying message is not lost on anyone.



Dallas Police Central Patrol Division front desk.

The Commission wants a “barrier” between them and the openly hostile crowd that disrupts nearly every meeting. They fear for their safety and recognize the threats posed by unvetted and openly hostile members of the public. And that barrier? Our own personnel. Yes, the command staff presenters sit up front following their marching orders, with Commission Investigation Division personnel lining the walls to provide security. But our station lobbies do not have this luxury. Our only line of defense is a desk officer or two, with no protections. This is not only tactically unacceptable but morally reprehensible.

Our upper command is woefully out of touch with the very real challenges we face daily. Until they stop playing the politically-correct game of telling the Chief and Mayor what they’d like to hear versus what they need to hear, we are going to continue to suffer. Ignoring the very real threats we face to appease a political agenda is not a risk worth taking. But you may rest assured that I, along with your other Directors, will continue to advocate for you and bring your message out. Your safety is our number one priority, and we do everything in our power to give you the tools you need to safely get the job done.

Watch your back and be safe.

If you have any questions, feel free to email me at JamieMcBride@lappl.org or contact me at (805) 208-3103.