



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on September 25, 2012

## Police Consolidation: The End of Local Law Enforcement?

From Bergen, New Jersey, to St. Louis, Missouri, to Salt Lake City, Utah, the merging of law enforcement moves along, applauded by a coterie of city leaders and well-meaning citizens.

Nationwide, towns and cities are jumping on the consolidation bandwagon. According to the latest data, there are about 18,000 state and local law-enforcement agencies in the United States. Of those, more than 150 have undergone some level of consolidation.



Those pushing for the consolidation of police forces into regional or metropolitan agencies typically cite budget shortfalls as the best reason for closing down local forces and combining resources to form a consolidated force.

Typically, the austerity argument goes like this: If Town A spends \$1 million on police services, Town B spends \$1 million, and Town C spends \$2 million, wouldn't it make more sense to streamline those services by creating a combined force that is smaller and costs less?

Sounds good, but the hypothetical doesn't live up to the hype. Take the story of Louisville, Kentucky, for example. Beginning with a referendum in 2000, city administrators began singing the cost-saving serenade, and on January 6, 2003 city police merged with the unincorporated areas of Jefferson County. After reassigning the responsibilities and reassessing needs, the number of patrol divisions was reduced from 10 to eight, and the number of beats fell from 51 to 44. Additionally, key management positions in the new department were taken from officers and given to newly hired civilian employees.

Those numbers would seem to prove the fulfillment of the money-saving promises made by the consolidation cheerleaders. Sadly, the ledger tells a different story.

According to Steve Conrad, current chief of the Glendale, Arizona, police and former assistant chief of police in Louisville, the savings they were promised never materialized. At a conference on police consolidation held in 2011 at Michigan State University, Conrad recalled that although the metro mayor touted "the synergy of merger: ten people here, ten people there, they could work more efficiently together," the department actually ended up hiring "15 or 20 here, and 15 or 20 there."

In fact, the merger was a budgetary disaster. Conrad estimated that consolidation cost about \$85 million. New communication equipment cost nearly \$70 million and allowances for new healthcare plans and other benefits ended up costing another \$10 million. Hardly a windfall.

The consolidation math doesn't add up, but the harsh economic realities don't appear until years after the consolidation is bought and paid for — literally.

That isn't to say every consolidation will be as big a boondoggle as Louisville. Certainly there will be cases when the consolidation saved money in the long run, but these cases will be few and far between. Everything will cost more than promised, but local governments will have already surrendered their control over the costs of contracts made for the outfitting of a force.



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Another fiscal fact is that upfront costs are usually prohibitive. It doesn't take a CPA to realize that for the one-time cost of new branding, new uniforms, new vehicles, new training manuals, etc., a town could pay for its own police force for years.

Often, in support of their plans for consolidation, politicians will point out that smalltown budgets prevent them from fully staffing a police department and from providing citizens with the services of specialty units like SWAT or K-9.

This might be true. A more relevant question needs to be asked in response, however: How many of the crimes committed within the jurisdiction of a local police force require the participation of one of those specialized units? Very few.

Furthermore, if such a crime is committed, what prevents the local police chief from calling his colleague from a larger nearby jurisdiction and asking for the assistance of this bigger town's SWAT team?

Besides, there is the competing concept of ad hoc consolidation. Under this theory, several local police forces combine resources long enough to train a select number of officers from each department to serve on a SWAT team or bomb squad who are deployed only when an extraordinary situation arises in one of the participating jurisdictions. This way, chiefs cede no power to politicians or bureaucrats, townspeople save money by not having to pay to staff and train their own specialized unit, and on those rare occasions when they are needed, a specialized unit will be available.

### **Law Enforcement as a Business**

Even if consolidation did lower costs, there are other considerations more important than money.

The story of the transformation of law enforcement in Salt Lake County to one "unified" police force illustrates some of the harmful consequences of consolidation.

In a widely reprinted article entitled "The Sheriff Who Sold His County," Clint Richardson recounts the "evolution" of law enforcement in this Western ski haven. According to Richardson, on January 1, 2010, Salt Lake County "became a police state" when the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Department was officially dissolved and in its place a corporation took over all law-enforcement duties. The private company that was given control of police functions is called the "Unified Police Department of Greater Salt Lake" (UPD).

First, the UPD became the "new police force" for all of the cities and unincorporated area within Salt Lake County. As Richardson says, this abolished "the only true lawful protective body within the county, the elected Sheriff's 'Department.'"

At the time of the consolidation, a report published by the county mayor declared that the man the people elected as sheriff, Jim Winder, was appointed by the County Council to be the chief executive officer (CEO) of the UPD, a private company that would be handling the county's crime prevention duties and running the "day-to-day police operations."

This reassignment and relabeling seems to turn the man who was once the duly *elected* sheriff into an *unelected* personal commissar of the politicians who run the county.

All concerned police chiefs nationwide, proud of their noble profession and their responsibility to protect and serve their fellow citizens, who are facing the hard press from local politicians to cooperate with the move toward consolidation, should learn from Salt Lake County.



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Without simplifying the situation too much, the plain fact is that a business now runs law enforcement in Salt Lake County. Local police chiefs, if they still exist, no longer have any control over policy or procedure. In Salt Lake County, control right now belongs to an unelected and unaccountable board of directors that is driven not by a zeal for the fighting of crime or the well-being of officers, but by an obligation to mind the bottom line and keep the profit margin wide.

For their part, the people can't turn to a man who lives in the community and benefits from the protection and safety he maintains. Police chiefs and the public will have their control, their autonomy, and their dignity co-opted by a corporation.

In the case of Salt Lake County, Clint Richardson ably sums up the sad situation:

A corporation is always designed to make a profit, even in a so-called non-profit structure. Therefore the Sheriff, as CEO of the UPD Corporation, has been catapulted into a position that now directly conflicts with the lawful purposes for which the voters elected him into office. As the corporate president of this police corporation, he must ensure a profit is made for the company. Therefore, the people of the county will suffer the consequences of their Sheriffs [sic] conflict of interest.

### **The Federalization of Local Police**

By incorporating this new company, the UPD, county officials dissolved the bands that attached police to the people of a city, and forever robbed the people of their constitutional sheriff — the last line of defense against the encroaching federal government and its mission to arm a national police force.

Self-serving bureaucrats inside the U.S. government are tirelessly trying to obliterate local police forces answerable to local citizens and promote the consolidation movement as a step toward federalization of law enforcement. These proponents of regional and national police forces desire nothing less than the eradication of all local police departments and sheriffs' offices, the surrender of state and municipal sovereignty, and the conversion of cops into federal security agents sworn not to protect and to serve their neighbors, but to protect the prerogatives of politicians.

Take for example the information contained in a White Paper presented earlier this year to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. In that report, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is encouraged to embark on an "evolving mission" away from its ostensible purpose of fighting terrorism, toward becoming the administrators of an enormous domestic intelligence agency resulting from an integration of the country's local and state law-enforcement agencies.

This report was written by the Aspen Institute Homeland Security Group, co-chaired by former DHS chief Michael Chertoff. The blueprint promoted in the White Paper pushes Congress toward green-lighting the growth of DHS and the dissolution of local police and sheriffs.

The organization described in the paper, entitled "Homeland Security and Intelligence: Next Steps in Evolving the Mission," is reminiscent of more draconian governments. For example, one section of the report calls for a transition in the mission of DHS away from protecting the country from the "terrorism" of foreign militants and toward "more specific homeward focused areas." Additional sections of the report lay out the plans for building a DHS/police hybrid agency that can monitor Americans in any town and prevent threats from fellow citizens.

In order to achieve their ultimate aim, the globalists demand that DHS or some other federal agency take control of the personnel decisions currently made by local police chiefs and county sheriffs. "As the



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threat grows more localized,” the report claims, “the federal government’s need to train, and even staff, local agencies, such as major city police departments, will grow.” Put another way: The federal government will run your local police department and sheriff’s office.

A key component of this proposal is the establishment of “fusion centers.” The following information is taken from a fact sheet on fusion centers posted on the DHS website: “A fusion center is a collaborative effort of two or more agencies that provide resources, expertise and information to the center with the goal of maximizing their ability to detect, prevent, investigate, and respond to criminal and terrorist activity.”

A description of the functioning of these incubators for the forthcoming federal police force is also provided on the DHS site:

State and major urban area fusion centers (fusion centers) serve as primary focal points within the state and local environment for the receipt, analysis, gathering, and sharing of threat-related information among federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners.... Fusion centers conduct analysis and facilitate information sharing, assisting law enforcement and homeland security partners in preventing, protecting against, and responding to crime and terrorism.

The literature promoting the acceptance of fusion centers lists several ways the new federal agency will impose its will on the formerly autonomous and accountable police chief or county sheriff.

First, the feds will decide where and when to deploy local police department personnel. The chief, if he still exists, will be no more than a functionary required to make sure that the orders of the federal government are carried out. More likely than not, these new missions, in addition to preventing crime in the city or county, will engage in the collection of information about and apprehension of those local citizens identified by a committee in Washington as posing a threat to national security. Consider the revelation in 2009 that Homeland Security’s Office of Intelligence and Analysis released a document entitled “Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalism and Recruitment,” which listed war veterans, anti-abortion activists, small-government advocates, and those concerned about immigration as terrorist risks.

Second, DHS (or whichever one of the federal agencies eventually takes over law-enforcement duties) will train new recruits. Policies, procedures, and purposes will not reflect traditional (and constitutional) goals of law enforcement, but will be tailored to training officers to perform those duties associated with the new, national emphasis of the force, with a slant toward federalism.

Finally, funds for this conversion from local police department to outpost of the federal law-enforcement agency will be provided by the bureaucrats on Capitol Hill. This carrot will be tied to the stick of federal control.

### **PPP as a Tool of Tyranny**

Another weapon in the arsenal of the local police abolitionists is a concept known as Public-Private Partnership (PPP).

PPP is often defined as “a contract between a public sector authority and a private party, in which the private party provides a public service or project and assumes substantial financial, technical and operational risk in the project.” As in the case of the Unified Police Department created in Salt Lake County, a private company is given control over some public function typically provided by government. It is a tactic very much in vogue in internationalist circles and is considered an effective way to sneak



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the influence and the control of the UN in the back door.

Regardless of the rhetoric, the true purpose of PPP is to consolidate government and private corporations, giving them joint control over public entities such as law-enforcement agencies. The result is the elimination of local sovereignty and the insidious replacement of police chiefs, county sheriffs, and elected local councils with a board of directors of a company whose mission statement calls for the creation of an executive governing body that is neither fish nor fowl, but is obliged to enforce international treaties and regulations written by the apparatchiks at the UN.

Given the UN's role in promoting PPPs, it is likely that those administering these centralized partnerships will come from a coterie of managers accustomed to looking to the international body or federal agencies for guidance, if recent initiatives such as Agenda 21 are any example. If the UN passes, for example, the currently proposed Small Arms Treaty that calls for the confiscation of privately owned firearms in high-crime areas, then officers deployed in local jurisdictions will be ordered to go door-to-door in communities rounding up the "offensive" weapons. Thousands of police chiefs and sheriffs who understand their role as public servants and protectors of the Constitution will be powerless to oppose these edicts, and if they dare, they will simply be fired by the federal or international body that has already assumed control of personnel decisions. The Second Amendment would be dead. Which amendment would be next?

As envisioned by the UN and the internationalists in the U.S. government, PPP will dissolve local police departments and county sheriffs' offices, replacing them with pseudo-private agencies made up of a mish-mash of federal agents and bureaucratic overseers adhering to global government regulations.

### **Last Line in the Defense of Liberty**

In many cities and towns there is still time to stop the march toward consolidation, merger, and PPP. State and local sovereignty is the solution to consolidation. Constitutional sheriffs and conscientious police chiefs are the last line of defense of the traditional mission of American law enforcement and should be jealous of their responsibilities, and should never permit politicians to hand those duties over to companies, cabals, or federal agencies.

Citizens should be concerned because they will lose direct control over their neighborhood law enforcement through the right to elect their sheriff, and because every large law-enforcement agency divorces itself from the local community. The further away a government bureaucracy is from the direct involvement of the local citizen, the less responsive it becomes to the local citizen.

— Photo: AP Images

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