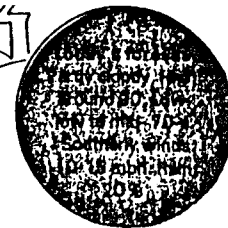


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Study critical of sheriff's department

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NEW PORT RICHEY — The National Sheriff's Association has criticized the way Pasco County Sheriff John M. Short runs his department in a 60-page report that recommends a host of changes.

Short requested the management study earlier this year in response to a series of *St. Petersburg Times* stories critical of the way he runs his department.

Although the report was issued in March, Short did not distribute it to others in the department until the *St. Petersburg Times* demanded copies of the report under the state's public records law. Short has repeatedly declined to be interviewed by *Times* reporters.

SHORT DISTRIBUTED the report Thursday to six senior officers and asked for their help in implementing the recommendations.

The report is filled with criticism of Short's attempts to single-handedly run the 360-man department, but notes that Short said he was willing to make changes during conversations with Lauren J. Goin, the National Sheriff's Association representative who made the study during a four-day visit in early March.

The study found problems in the organizational structure of the department and recommended that the sheriff hire a chief deputy who could handle problems when the sheriff is absent.

Goin said the department has not followed an overall plan or goal during seven or eight years of rapid growth, reacting instead to each need as it was perceived at the time.

He said the department has handled its growth like a "small residence to which has been added a room whenever there is an addition to the family."

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adoption of written directives, a personnel management manual, and formal goals and objectives for the department.

The study also found fault with Short's reliance on director of administration Donna Lewis and Roger Michels, who was deputy director of administration until earlier this week when Short made him director of data services.

Mrs. Lewis was Short's longtime secretary and Michels is a funeral director who has run the sheriff's election campaigns.

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OTHER SENIOR staff members complain that they have difficulty getting to see the sheriff, while Mrs. Lewis and Michels are located in adjacent offices, the report noted.

The study noted that Short orally delegated some responsibilities to others in early February, but said many of his commanders were still hesitant about making decisions when interviewed in early March.

Goin urged the sheriff to support his oral orders with written directives, saying the absence of written information about

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the operation of the department leaves employees "confused as to why the department takes certain actions."

In recommending the appointment of a chief deputy, Goin noted that Short has always operated on the theory that he "is available by phone." He said such a system leaves the department with senior staff members who are without direction and increases the civil liability of the sheriff.

"Organizations of this size cannot easily be managed on a daily basis over time by one person acting alone," the report noted.

THE REPORT said that a number of employees reported morale in the department at "rock bottom." It blamed the problem on a number of management factors and bad publicity about the department.

Goin's report was based on interviews with Short and a number of supervisors, a review of operational documents and some recent copies of newspaper reports about the department.

He said the study did not include an examination of the services provided to citizens of the county or the manner in which the department uses its resources.

Other problems cited in the report include:

- ✓ The absence of any kind of civil service or formal grievance procedure and a feeling among employees that they can go directly to the sheriff for redress.
- ✓ The existence of a special investigations unit that reports directly to the sheriff and bypasses other command personnel.

"This has the effect of cutting the commander of the operations bureau out of the chain of command and tends to leave the investigators with minimal supervision since the sheriff has many other matters with which he must contend on a daily basis."

✓ The failure of the sheriff to conduct organized staff meetings. The report noted that staff meetings are held on an ad hoc basis when the sheriff deems it important and without giving staff officers an opportunity to know what subjects will be covered.

✓ The mislocation of various functions, including the placement of the department's selective traffic enforcement unit under the direction of Mrs. Lewis, a non-law enforcement trained supervisor. (Short moved the unit to operations earlier this week.)

✓ A requirement that internal affairs investigators report directly to sheriff. The report said the department's operations director should control such investigations.

Currently the department has no internal affairs staff. The study concluded that the department was not large enough to need a permanently assigned staff for internal affairs investigation, but recommended the use of skilled investigators already on the payroll.

(In a similar study done for Monroe County in 1981 the association called its internal affairs unit "absolutely essential to the management of a department the size of Monroe County. Monroe County's department is about half the size of the Pasco agency.)

✓ The absence of organized training opportunities for employees.

✓ Personality conflicts among senior staffers that make the lateral flow of information "rare." The report noted a need to have senior managers that can work together as a team.