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Notes from Director's Meeting with the  
SAAC Executive Council

September 28, 2004

The Council met with Director Mueller, Chief of Staff Charles M. Steele, Deputy Director John Pistole, EAD Jonathan I. Solomon and Special Assistant to the Director, Drew S. Parenti. The Council began by voicing concerns about the FBI's very obvious shift in focus from criminal investigative matters in leu of Counterterrorism. The Councils stated that the field would like to reiterated the importance to not down play criminal investigations and continue to aggressively work those cases even though terrorism is the number one priority.

The Director stated that the 9/11 Commission report is now officially closed. The FBI will show our independence from the CIA and other law enforcement agencies. He stated that he understand the fields frustration with terrorism's rise as far as caseload and he understands this argument. The fact is, the FBI cannot do anything about this. Some criminal cases will not be focused upon as greatly because we are trying to prevent a terrorism attack. We have to prioritize and re-focus. The Director does understand that some terrorism cases will overlap with the criminal side and the field will continue to use their investigative skills.

The council stated their appreciation of the work done by AD Joseph Ford in his exploration of the Agent accelerated pay raise suggestion (grade 13 in 3 years) The Council re-stated that most new agents entering New Agent Training at the Academy have taken a significant pay cut to become part of the FBI and their starting salaries are not enough support for them and their families, especially in many major cities where the living costs are very high. The Council suggested that a grade GS-13 be available for qualified Special Agents after three years of full-time status. The Council stated that it is understood that this is a temporary fix, but it will add an incentive for new agents to begin their careers in these high cost areas.

The Director stated that he has concerns about leadership responsibilities that would fall upon the new agents as they rapidly increase in grade. He stated that he would continue to look at this, as we have a chance to become part of the "Intelligence Community". With that, the pay band would also come and it could help in this regard.

Regarding the proposed term limits for field office Stationary Supervisors requiring periodic rotation, the Council asked the Director if rotation every three years will be possible, with the great number of agents being hired over the next few years. Will the divisions be able to support the influx?

The Director stated that this question was the kind of profile needed for new policy. He agreed that this needs to be explored, and that the Council's concern makes a very good point. The Director went on to say that a great deal of planning will go into this to see that the experience is spread properly and that the divisions can support it.

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The Council stated that as an institution, the FBI does not have a formalized and effective procedure for documenting the operational and administrative lessons that we learn. We can, and often do, make the same mistakes again and again at the expense of Agent safety and operational efficiency and effectiveness. The Council stated that the FBI needs to develop and implement a formalized "Lessons Learned" approach to doing business which assures that both operational and administrative lessons that are learned are identified, documented and distributed to all relevant parties for future use. As an example, the Council used the continuing TDYs of Special Agent teams to Iraq, stating that no after action debriefings are conducted after the conclusion of each TDY to Iraq. Mission statements were unapproved upon deployment. Lessons learned are imperative to move forward and improve and the FBI does not seem to be learning from failures or success.

The Director stated that he is not aware of the scope of the conditions in Iraq, but agreed that we do need to learn and improve. He stated that the FBI looked at a very extensive operational plan before deployment which addressed everything. There were some lessons learned but we could have done more. The Director agreed that this is a problem and that the Council presented very good points that are absolutely on target. He then thanked the Council and said that he would follow-up and have someone address this issue with them.

The Council asked if the Director had any updated information to provide regarding the VCF project, stating that they wanted to express the fields frustration, but sought the opportunity to relay the news any progress that is being made.

The Director stated that the FBI will have an initial operating system that is up and running in the New Orleans Division in December. He said that he is frustrated with the time frame and the delays but we are on the right track. He encouraged the Council to have a discussion with CIO Zal Azmi to receive a more complete update and to answer additional questions. The Director said that he is as frustrated as everyone else, but he believes that in time we will have a top of the line search engine and the technology will be head and shoulders above the rest. The Director said that he takes responsibility for the delays.

The Council conformed their support of the Executive Development and Selection Program (EDSP), however, still wished to voice concerns about the possibility of losses to the management program due to the rotation concept.

The Director stated that he wants to remove the disincentives to the management program. EDSP will give credit to those who have special skills and capabilities. He stated that the FBI will enhance the EDSP and there is still a lot of work to be done. He said that he understands that some people will step down as a result of the rotation cap. He took this into account, saying that in the end the Bureau will benefit still. Some personnel will go from management back to the field. However, those persons were in management in the first place because of their field performance and experience. The Director stated that he does not see this as such a bad thing.

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The Council stated that there is still great concern regarding the high number of mandatory, revolving Special Agent TDYs.

The Director stated that the Counterterrorism Division is looking into establishing squads and making the TDYs a permanent thing. He understands that the TDYs are disruptive but most participants have said that the experience is valuable. The FBI has to be much more flexible today than we have been in past years.

The Council voiced concerns regarding the Quick Hire Program and the effect on agents who are spending their efforts doing support background investigations, only to have the candidates disqualified. The Council believes that a large amount of valuable time is wasted. The Council then stated that they were scheduled to speak with a representative from the Human Resources Management Section of ASD about this issue later in the day.

The Director stated that the percentage is a low one based on reports he has received. He then stated that he has put so much more pressure on the Administrative Division to hire all of the new people. This issue is a result of that and its partly his responsibility. The FBI will take a closer look at this.

The Council reminded the Director of an issue brought to his attention in previous meetings regarding the opportunity to improve the efficiency of our operations by eliminating Time and Attendance (T&A) slips in favor of an automated system.

The Director stated that he would follow-up on eliminating the time sheet forms.

The Council thanked the Director and asked if he had any messages for the field.

The Director stated that for the next 6 months, the FBI's top priorities are #1 technology improvements, #2 our efforts to increase our intelligence capacity to become an agency within the agency, #3 the need for the administrative support arm of the Bureau to be changed and transformed into a service mentality, and #4 efforts to meet our growing operational support needs such as equipment, supplies, funding, etc.

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