

# **Fulton County Courthouse Security Commission**

## **Security Evaluations Subcommittee**

### **Final Report**

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The Security Evaluation Subcommittee was formed by the Fulton County Courthouse Security Commission. It was charged with gathering all subcommittee reports issued by the Commission and by the National Center for State Courts related to courthouse security to determine what recommendations are yet to be implemented, assign priorities, and suggest a timeline for implementation.

This subcommittee recognizes and has relied upon the fine work of the Commission subcommittees, and notes that many of their recommendations are in the process of implementation or have been implemented as suggested. We thank the Fulton County Sheriff's Office for their cooperation in this process.

This report addresses only those recommendations not yet implemented for reasons such as funding, policy changes or the need for further research. This report is not a synopsis of all of the previously issued reports, but rather a prioritized recommendation for use by the Sheriff in the implementation process. If further details or clarification is required, the reports relied upon are available as follows:

1. Internal Affairs Final Report
2. Security Surveys Final Report
3. Manpower Allocation Final Report
4. Policy and Procedure Final Report
5. Marshal's Report
6. National Center for State Courts Final Report

There are 3 categories with needs that will be addressed: Manpower, Physical Plant, and Operations. Each category has various needs that must be prioritized to assist in maximizing the funding requirements. It is recommended that priorities be divided into 3 tiers to allow for budgeting and implementation over the next three years. The tiers should be implemented as soon as possible, but not later than:

1. Tier 1 – Recommend implementation 2006
2. Tier 2 – Recommend implementation 2007
3. Tier 3 - Recommend implementation 2008

There will be a need for future communications between all parties involved to ensure progress and a safe courthouse environment. It is recommended that the Fulton County Chief Judge of Superior Court Doris L. Downs (or her designee) and the chair of the Courthouse Security Commission Marshal Richard Mecum (or his designee) form a collective partnership. This partnership would then be referred as The Interagency Security Committee (ISC). The ISC would then prepare a memorandum of understanding and appoint task forces as needed to ensure the implementation process continues and that security in the courthouse is improved.

### Tier 1 Recommendation (2006)

#### **A. Manpower**

##### 1. Employment and Position Status Change

- The Sheriff's Courthouse Liaison Officer should move from a temporary position to a permanent position.
- The Courts should hire a full time Courthouse Security Manager at a level comparable to that of the Sheriff's Department employee. These two employees would then work together to see that courthouse security needs are met and necessary changes are implemented, and further communicate through their own chains of command. (It is also recommended that a Director of Interagency Security be hired along with an administrative assistant, to serve as staff to the ISC).

##### 2. Security Checkpoints

- All security checkpoints should be evaluated and improved as recommended in several reports.
- A security checkpoint should be placed in the General Services area to clear vendors before they enter the building.
- There are several recommended redesigns of the Slaton Building and the Justice Center Tower entry checkpoints which need to be researched and pursued.

### 3. Staffing Analysis

- Based on the staffing analysis outlined in several reports, 314 personnel are required to effectively operate the courthouse complex (3 courthouses). The courthouses appear to be significantly understaffed. There are currently 200 – 235 deputies assigned to courthouse duties.
- The utilization of civilian bailiffs is recommended to relieve deputies of administrative duties and allow them to focus on providing security in the courtrooms.
- Additional deputies in the courthouse complex would alleviate single deputy movement of prisoners and ensure officer safety.

## **B. Physical Plant**

### 1. Cameras and related equipment

- The cameras and related equipment should be installed as outlined in the recommendations contained in several reports. The recommendations include additional cameras and upgrading of surveillance equipment.
- The control room should be operated primarily as an Event Driven Monitoring Center. This is accomplished by integrating the access control, alarm monitoring, and CCTV systems. There also needs to be a protocol for the placement of cameras.

### 2. Alarms

- The installation of all alarms previously recommended in the reports should be promptly completed.
- Install an intrusion alarm on all exterior doors, including roof access doors on all buildings.
- Install delayed egress panic hardware at the ground level doors to provide an additional 15 seconds of response time.
- In the courtrooms, replace all kick plate duress switches with under-the-desk latching duress buttons. All duress alarms should cause a camera call up in the Sheriff's control room.

### 3. Access Card System

- Enhance the access card system to assist in securing limited access areas as outlined in several reports.

#### 4. Door Security

- All security doors should be secured at all times.
- The key card access should be available to court employees to ensure rapid and quiet entry and exit from every courtroom in the Justice Center Tower.
- Closing times in motion sensors should be reduced.

### **C. Operations**

#### 1. POST Orders

- Develop and implement current POST orders for specific position to provide consistency in operations.
- There should also be a review, with revisions and updates of court procedures on an annual basis. These would include such policies as the gun and screening procedures.

#### 2. Court Buildings

- Encourage the acquisition of the Atlanta Municipal Court Building
- Movement of all criminal and domestic relations courts to the Justice Center Tower.

#### 3. Training

- The training of judges and employees on security issues should continue on an annual basis. Lack of training is a major concern in courthouse security.
- A critical incident emergency plan should be developed and training conducted to ensure that all personnel know their roles and responsibilities. Refer to the National Center of Courts Final Report Volume 3 and The Courthouse Commission Policy and Procedures Subcommittee for additional information and recommendations.

#### 4. Magnetometers

- The Sheriff's Office should inspect and calibrate magnetometers regularly and make sure they are maintained in proper operating order.

#### 5. Security Personnel

- Security personnel should be on duty at the entrance to all judges' corridors from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

## Tier 2 Recommendations (2007)

### **A. Physical Plant**

#### 1. Alarms

- Install recommended intrusion alarms as indicated in listed reports.
- Install intrusion alarms on the ground floor windows.

#### 2. Doors

- Install a door in the hallway leading to the judge's corridor on the fifth floor of the Justice Center Tower.
- Repair the jury room doors as needed and remove the electronic lock release from outside the jury room doors in the Justice Center Tower (See National Center for State Courts Report, Volume 1, page 56).

#### 3. Monitoring Station

- Install a monitoring station in the security office at the top of the ramp near Mitchell Street in the sally port holding area.

## Tier 3 Recommendations (2008)

### **A. Manpower**

#### 1. Enforcement of Parking Ordinances

- Ban all vehicles parking on streets adjacent to the courthouse buildings and enforce parking ordinances.

### **B. Physical Plant**

#### 1. Lighting

- Enhance external lighting on outside of buildings with timers or light sensors with certain lights connected to generators.
- Install battery power emergency lights to provide for an escape route in courtrooms and other windowless public areas. The bailiffs should routinely check areas.

## 2. Perimeter Security

- Reevaluate all perimeter security access points as indicated in several reports.
- Increase to eight feet the height of the fence in the general maintenance area which could allow access to the courthouse building.

## 3. Courthouse Stairs

- The stairs in the Courthouse and Tower which exit to the outside should be monitored at each floor with heavy duty status switches. The switches should be connected to an alarm panel and to the matrix switcher.
- The fire exit from the unloading area to the ground level of the General Services Courtyard should have an optical beam installed at the bottom of the stairs for early warning.
- A camera should be installed at the top of the stairs.

## 4. Security Check Point

- Redesign the security check point on the second floor between the JCB and Administration Building.

## C. Operations

### 1. Command Structure

- There should be Command Structure reorganization within the Sheriff's Office. There are too many supervisors and not enough line officers to effectively provide courthouse security.

### 2. Operations

- Have security operations in place to insure that the courts can operate from 0900 – 1700 hours and to ensure a deputy is always in court when court is in session and during recesses when the public is present.