

Association of Orange County Deputy Sheriffs
1600 N. Main Street, Santa Ana, CA 92701

January 29, 2016

Sheriff Sandra Hutchens
Orange County Sheriff's Department
550 N. Flower Street
Santa Ana, CA 92701

HAND DELIVERED

Sheriff Hutchens,

There has been much discussion regarding the way inmate counts are conducted in the Central Men's Jail which you yourself told the press you found "extremely troubling." I recently obtained information that deputies and sergeants assigned to the Central Men's Jail were ordered by your management to completely ignore Department policy on conducting inmate counts nearly a year ago, thereby putting their safety, the safety of other inmates and the safety of the public in jeopardy. Given the current security breach and the significant safety risk, I felt it was imperative to bring this information to your immediate attention.

It is my understanding that previous attempts to voice concerns by my members regarding the discrepancy between the way inmate counts were being conducted and Department policy on how inmates should be accounted for received push back from jail management with the justification that "this is the way we have always done it."

My members became so concerned that inmate counts were being conducted contrary to Department policy and endangering officer safety that they drafted an internal Department memo intended to be distributed to all staff at the Central Men's Jail as a reminder inmate counts are to be conducted in accordance with Department policy.

Instead of distributing the memo to jail staff, one of your managers emailed the sergeants in both the Central Men's Jail and the Women's Jail on February 24, 2015 addressing the discrepancy between the way inmate counts are conducted at the Central Men's Jail and Department policy as laid out in the Custody and Corrections Operations Manual (CCOM).

From your manager's email to my members:

"The CCOM states that both the Module and Statistical Body count require an actual physical body count to (sic) conducted by the deputy. It was discovered that this was not a common practice in the CMJ and has not been done this way for many years.

After discussions it was determined that we will continue to conduct the counts as we have been doing in the past. The CCOM will either be changed to reflect the way the count is being conducted now or a decision will be made to adapt to the current CCOM county policy."

It is my understanding that the directive to ignore Department policy came directly from Capt. Chris Wilson.

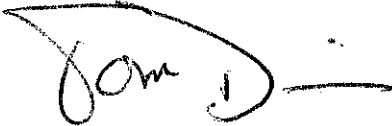
The safety and security of the men and women who work in your jails, the inmates and the public depend on policies and procedures being followed. It is unconscionable that Capt. Wilson appears to have abdicated his sworn responsibility to ensure the safety and security of the Central Men's Jail by allowing Department policy to be deliberately and willfully ignored. This directive essentially nullified every Department policy on inmate counts and allowed for the jail facility to function for at least a year – including during this recent jail escape – without a written policy on inmate counts.

The decision to flaunt such a critical Department procedure calls into question whether other vital Department procedures were ignored, putting the safety of the men and women who work in the Central Men's Jail, the inmates, and the public who depend on us in jeopardy.

It is essential that all of our personnel have clear and concise policies in place to ensure my members can properly perform their vital public safety functions.

We are requesting the immediate removal of Capt. Wilson from his command of the Central Men's Jail. We cannot afford to risk the safety of our members for one more shift. We are also requesting a comprehensive review of jail management by an independent outside entity in order to expose other potential management directives which may be endangering the safety of the staff, the inmates and the public.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this very serious officer safety issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Dominguez". The signature is stylized, with a large, sweeping "D" and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Tom Dominguez

President

Association of Orange County Deputy Sheriffs

CC: Lisa Bartlett, Chair of the Orange County Board of Supervisors