



## Inland News

# Grand jury urges more cameras for jails

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10:00 PM PDT on Friday, July 13, 2007

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The Press-Enterprise

A grand jury report recommends more cameras to help security at Riverside County jails, which are struggling with crowding and a shortage of deputies.

The recently released study stated that the county should use all technology available to maintain supervision. It cited inmate complaints and jail areas not under camera surveillance as reasons to add more.

The county is trying to fill 54 new positions for correctional deputies at the five jails throughout the county, which together confine more than 3,500 inmates a day, said Sheriff Bob Doyle.

The jails are required by federal court order to begin releasing inmates once they reach 98 percent capacity. That leaves much of the county's jail system filled with people accused of violent crimes who are awaiting trial and those convicted of crimes who are waiting to be transferred to the state prison system, which is even more crowded.

For Doyle, that's all the more reason to have more cameras.

"It's good to have visibility wherever we can in the jail," Doyle said.

On Tuesday, the Board of Supervisors is expected to ask the Sheriff's Department to respond to the report. The county is required to respond to a grand jury report within 90 days.

The grand jury's recommendations included putting cameras in all jail kitchens and day rooms as well as in transportation areas that do not already have them. Other suggestions include putting three cameras in a holding tank in the Blythe jail that houses 54 inmates. Most of the room is not visible from the entrance.

The sheriff is working with the county administration and the Facilities Management Department to find

the \$725,000 the report estimated is needed to pay for cameras.

Once that happens, it could be another six months before the cameras and recording equipment are installed, Doyle said.

While the cameras can act as additional eyes, the recordings are also important for identifying problem inmates and conducting investigations, said Daniel B. Kennedy, professor of criminal justice at the University of Detroit Mercy.

That can in turn prevent future problems, he said.

Many jails are improving their camera quality and recording capacity, he said, because they have proven so useful. The recordings can more easily resolve a dispute over something that happened between a deputy and an inmate or between inmates, he said.

But while the cameras are important in main areas and deserted passageways, the cameras can't replace the interaction of a deputy with inmates, which is why hiring remains key, Kennedy said.

Human interaction provides more normalcy to inmates and can help curb emotional instability and depression, he said. With constant communication with inmates, deputies can also keep a better sense of what is going on in the jail, he said.

"Cameras can't hear and they can't smell and they can't talk," he said "You need corrections officers to do that."

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