

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



When a new year begins, I, like so many others, contemplate the previous 12 months and what transpired in that time. NTOA achieved many milestones in 2016. This is largely thanks to our members, dedicated directors, outstanding instructors and staff. Their professionalism and dedication make NTOA the premier association for law enforcement. I would

usually recap the association's significant achievements for the year, but the current state of our country, and law enforcement's role in it, has pushed me instead to examine last year's events with the hope that some deliberate probing and discussion will yield changes in 2017.

Law enforcement was pushed to the limit in 2016, and scrutiny and criticism from the media, communities and politicians were relentless. We were injured both physically and mentally. We are scarred, yet we remain unbowed. This resiliency found in the law enforcement community is not something one learns about at the academy or through in-service training. It is an innate attribute that each and every one of you brings to the uniform – a passion for protecting our children, neighbors, community and nation. It is this commitment and dedication that provides the blanket of security over the foundation of our democracy.

The Pennsylvania State Police Call of Honor beautifully reflects this principle of dedication. As an officer of the law, "I must serve honestly, faithfully, and if need be, lay down my life as others have done before me, rather than swerve from the path of duty." These words epitomize the sacrifices we witnessed this past year in such places like Abingdon, Palm Springs, Orlando, Des Moines, Baton Rouge, Columbus, Berrien County and Dallas. The heroes included Palm Springs Police Officer Gil Vega, who, after 35 years of service, was only a few weeks away from retirement, a time to spend with his wife and eight children. Prince William County Officer Ashley Guindon had been sworn in the previous day and was working her first day on the street with her training officer when she was killed while responding to a domestic call.

The 140 officers who died in the line of duty last year left behind spouses, fiancés, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, parents, and grieving partners and departments. I remember standing at attention for hours in the snow, paying respect to fallen friends. To stand in the sometimes harsh elements seemed nothing compared to the pain that their families would have to endure for generations. And, as always, once the funerals are over and the marked units return to their agencies, the shifts continue. The calls still come

in. And the brave men and women in blue still respond to calls for help and to unknown and dangerous situations with unswerving passion, dedication and commitment. Sometimes, usually in times of trouble, we are revered for this devotion; other times, we become a scapegoat for actions or events we cannot control. We saw this phenomenon escalate in 2016.

Let's start this year considering last year's events and how we can learn from them while recommitting to the profession and looking forward to a new dawn. One of the most important tools an officer can have is *training*. In times of uncertainty, stress and danger, you will always fall back on training and experience. So, for 2017, whether it is a book, webinar, in-service, peer-to-peer, conference, workshop, or course, please hone your existing skills and learn new ones. A 40-hour block of training may come in handy during a half-second encounter.

In closing, please remember the cornerstones that I used during my 24 years of supervising law enforcement: You go home at the end of your shift, you keep your family intact, and you retire. All my managerial decisions were made based on these three commitments. I hope that you also will use, or at least consider these principles as an LE supervisor or officer while staying committed to your passion for the profession.

I look forward to 2017 and working with you to enhance and advance NTOA for the benefit of all of us. Thank you for your service to your community and for supporting the NTOA.

Be safe and God Bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Lomax".

Mark Lomax

NTOA ELECTION

Join me in welcoming Sgt. Jason Mudrock as our new Western Region Director. Sgt. Mudrock is a 22-year veteran of the Unified Police Department/Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office and is currently the department's SWAT team leader/supervisor. He recently served as president of the Utah Tactical Officers Association. Congratulations to Assistant Chief Bob Chabali (ret.), NTOA Central Region Director, and Master Police Officer Stephen Mescan, NTOA Eastern Region Director, on their re-elections. We say farewell to Capt. Kevan Dugan, PA State Police (ret.), who most recently served as a Western Region Director and did not seek re-election. We thank him for his many years of service.