

# Chief Ronald Olin, IACP Terrorism Committee

A 33-year veteran of law enforcement, Ronald Olin rose from patrol officer to chief of the Lawrence (Kan.) Police Department. He has been a member of the Terrorism Committee of the International Association of Chiefs of Police since 1998 and also serves on the InterAgency Board on Equipment Standardization and Inter-Operability. Olin has a master's in justice administration and a doctorate in developmental psychology, but also impressive are his overseas law enforcement studies: in Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain, France, Ireland and Israel.



**HPP:** What are the major obstacles to law enforcement really engaging with its post-Sept. 11 responsibilities?

**Olin:** Some of those responsibilities have been addressed, for example, through the Joint Terrorism Task Forces. I believe the first one was in New York City, and it's my understanding that every FBI field office has one now.

The one in Kansas City has dramatically increased the amount of information-sharing, by pulling the heads of major organizations into a conference room on a fairly regular basis. It's very important to have contact with other agencies before an event, and JTTFs have been a real success story.

The National Incident Management System is a good step to have us educated in what we need to do, but the real challenge is at the local level. We need to change the police officer from a community resource to a national security resource. This is a generational thing. It's not something we can do in five years.

In Northern Ireland, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (the national

police agency) estimates that 80% of their intelligence was coming from street police officers. We have not integrated that kind of training at the recruit level.

**HPP:** Is that changing?

**Olin:** We now have handouts for police officers from the FBI and DHS. I have one right here called "Vigilance: Patrolling in the New Era of Terrorism." That comes with a video. I'm probably going to send that straight over to my training officer.

I've also seen this new publication "Protecting Emergency Responders, Vol. 3" from Rand Corp. and NIOSH. [Ed.: To be reviewed in an upcoming HPP.] These subjects were not on the minds of police chiefs five years ago.

**HPP:** You mentioned a generational problem. What can be done now?

**Olin:** It is very difficult to change the police officer. There's a lot of independence that goes with the police officer on the street.

**HPP:** Is there more pressure on law enforcement agencies for interagency cooperation?

**Olin:** At least in the Kansas City area, we've had a series of FBI special agents in charge who pushed cooperation way before 2001.

Also, we're in a university town here in Lawrence. Way back in 1969 and 1970, we had campus riots and even had martial law declared. We've had a long history of law enforcement agencies working together. It's been a joint effort for 30 years.

**HPP:** What about cooperation between police and other emergency agencies?

**Olin:** The cultural differences sometimes impede close cooperation, particularly when agencies see themselves as competing for tax dollars. NIMS is a good introduction, because it clearly

delineates who does what. I know police chiefs who in the past wouldn't have participated in something like that.

**HPP:** How much of an obstacle is funding?

**Olin:** For the nut-and-bolts things we need to do, education is as important as money. There's a tremendous push now for equipment to respond to a terrorist incident, but it's too late if there's already an incident. We need to put more emphasis on prevention.

I am very excited about the discussions in Washington about improving the intelligence agencies and their products. This should have been done a long time ago. However, there is an issue about getting intelligence down to the local level.

The average police officer thinks nothing of talking in a coffee shop, but now they need to realize that they can't necessarily do that. Police Chief magazine just had an article by a chief or deputy chief from Los Angeles about infiltration of police departments.

**HPP:** In the sworn ranks?

**Olin:** Yes. He had a couple of examples.

**HPP:** Do you have any final comments on education?

**Olin:** It needs to be developed and disseminated in a different way. Let me give you an example. We had a local officer, not from my agency, call the dispatcher the other day and ask about an "international drivers license." It was a traffic stop based on suspicious behavior.

I overheard the call and contacted the officer. The officer had already let the individual go, and it was obvious that a falsified identification had been used. If he had been better trained, the outcome might have been different. If the officer had known the ID was false, he would have had probable cause to at least ask some more questions. **HPP**