

Example of essay on homeland security agencies: federal, state and local levels

[Law](#), [Security](#)



1. Federal, State and Local Agencies

Federal: United States Secret Service (USSS)

The United States Secret Service (USSS) is an integral component of the Department of Homeland Security responsible for handling of financial crimes and the protection of national leaders and their families. Currently, the USSS has an estimated 6,700 employees and 4,400 sworn members dealing with problems on fraud concerning the financial institutions and transactions of the US. Yet, the death of President William McKinley by assassination in 1901 led to the expansion of the role of the USSS to include the provision of safeguarding mechanisms for national leaders and all those related to them (United States Secret Service, n. d.).

The Virginia State Police (VSP) is the state police force of the US state of Virginia. As of 2012, the VSP is composed of 18,603 sworn officers - 16,405 male and 2,198 female, and 5,014 civilian employees. Three bureaus support the overall structure of the VSP - Bureau of Field Operations (BFO), Bureau of Administrative and Support Services (BASS), and Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI), all of which unite to maintain overall security and order in all motorways and interstate highways within Virginia (Virginia State Police, n. d.).

Local: Atlanta Police Department (APD)

The Atlanta Police Department (APD) holds responsibility over law enforcement in the US city of Atlanta, Georgia. With close to 2,000 police

officers by the start of 2013, the APD is facing a significant increase in the population of its police officers. The estimated 2, 000-strong police force of the APD currently thrive within seven zones apart from the headquarters, from zones one to six and the airport zone. Primarily, the APD is responsible for reducing criminal cases in Atlanta through formidable enforcement of federal, state and local laws and ordinances (Atlanta Police Department, n. d.).

2. Roles in Homeland Defense

United States Secret Service (USSS)

Previously, the USSS was under the administration of the Department of Treasury, as it has the primary function of dealing with financial crimes. The Department of Homeland Security formally incorporated the USSS upon its formation in 2002. The USSS claims its position as integral to the homeland defense of the US through its indispensable expertise in financial protection, which is essential to the national economy. At the same time, political stability in the US is the key objective of the USSS in its role as a protector of national leaders and their relatives (United States Secret Service, n. d.).

The USSS is also engaged in cover-up operations made to capture financial fraudsters, as part of its goal to protect the well-being of the financial system of the US. Operation Open Market stands as among the most innovative cover-up operations the USSS has organized. The USSS used Operation Open Market to capture people using fake IDs and credit cards through the establishment of a mock online store manufacturing such items named Celtic's Novelty ID. As the operation ran on a four-year period between 2007

and 2011, Celtic's Novelty ID has gained positive acclaim from members of the underworld, citing it as a top-quality manufacturer of fake IDs and credit cards that offers great discounts. The USSS then used Celtic's Novelty ID as their front for capturing people who purchase fake IDs and credit cards, on the justified assumption that those people would use those for activities constituting financial fraud (Poulsen, 2013; United States Secret Service, n. d.).

Virginia State Police (VSP)

Primarily, the VSP is mainly concerned with the maintenance of security and order on all motorways and interstate highways within the state of Virginia. Having succeeded the Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles in 1932, the VSP treats with considerable regard the overall safety of all roads within Virginia, mainly in terms of preventing driving-related crimes and providing assistance to accidents and repairs on the road. The VSP therefore provides formidable contributions to maintaining homeland security in Virginia through the interception of criminals plying along the roads of the state. Maintaining the security of roads in Virginia through constant patrolling and provision of motorist assistance stands as a significant role of the VSP that formidably contributes to statewide homeland security implementation (Virginia State Police, n. d.).

Atlanta Police Department (APD)

The APD serves as the main implementer of homeland security mechanisms at the local level in Atlanta, Georgia. As the street-level bureaucracy dealing with the overall security maintenance of Atlanta, the APD has the mandate

to respond to terrorist attacks directly. Acting under the mandate of the Department of Homeland Defense and its equivalent agencies in both the federal and state levels, the APD is instrumental for maintaining homeland security at the surface rank in Atlanta, being a local-level agency. As with other local police agencies, the APD responds to threats to homeland security by dealing with terrorist attacks and coercions coming from terrorist groups and other criminal elements (Atlanta Police Department, n. d.).

3. Summary and Discussion of Homeland Defense Issues

The USSS is engaged in numerous cases that contributed to the overall well-being of homeland defense in the US. Secret service protection to national leaders, for instance, became limited to 10 years after office when the Cold War ended through a bill passed by Congress, citing lack of security concerns. However, the September 11, 2001 attacks and the rise of terrorist cases both at home and abroad made Congress reconsider their earlier decision influenced by the USSS itself. Hence, Congress eventually said bill in 2002 due to justified concerns brought forth by terrorism cases (Dinan, 2012).

Apart from reinforcing protection to national leaders, the USSS further enhanced its counterterrorist efforts through shifting from using tabletop models portraying terrorist attacks to computerized models equipped with gaming technology. Said project took place in 2011 with the help of the Science & Technology Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security, as a bid of the USSS to enhance its response to terrorist attacks (Science Codex, 2011).

The VSP is also involved in countering threats to homeland security through

the Virginia Fusion Center (VFC). The VFC, as with its equivalents from other states, notes the importance of information distribution in preparing against impending terrorist attacks. Toll-free lines and a website link for reports characterize the main communication lines the VFC supports, as part of its efforts to provide efficient information sharing to prevent terrorist attacks. The VFC also includes a list of terrorism signs, which amounts to seven items namely surveillance, elicitation, security tests, supplies acquisition, suspicious persons, trial runs and assets deployment. Surveillance mainly refers to activities that involve recording of events through drawings, video camera usage, and monitoring schemes that usually concern equipment that improves vision such as binoculars and night-vision goggles. Elicitation refers to the use of various communication lines to obtain information pertaining to information on operation, security and personnel of any target agencies. Security tests point to the measurement of various security lapses that can find use in penetrating obstructions against terrorist attacks. Supplies acquisition suggests the procurement of equipment useful for terrorism, including firearms, explosives and instructional manuals. Suspicious persons are those whose intents appear suspicious mainly due to their weak association in groups and unusual behavior. Trial runs attributed to potential terrorist attacks and consequent assets deployment serve as another indicator of the VFC that a terrorist group is present within the area. Given the foregoing terrorism signs, the VFC has encouraged residents of Virginia to send reports to its communication lines in case there is sufficient justification on the presence of any one of those (Virginia Fusion Center, n.

d.).

4. Core Values of Agencies

United States Secret Service (USSS)

The Strategic Plan of the USSS mentions the core value of said agency based on the five spokes of its star-shaped logo. The five core values of the USSS include justice, duty, courage, honesty and loyalty. The USSS regards the importance of maintaining high standards of integrity in upholding its five core values, which is highly related to its roles as a protector of both the financial system and national leaders and their relatives of the US. Without integrity, the USSS would not be able to support the fulfillment of its five core values properly, given the sensitivity of matters involving the US financial system and the safety of its national leaders and their relatives. The financial system, which is highly susceptible to fraud due to the lucrative nature of money, has to find proper safeguards under the USSS through fulfilling its five core values in order to secure economic safety. The protection of national leaders and their relatives also serve the national interest of the US; the USSS rationalizes its mandate to do so on the basis of preserving political stability (United States Secret Service, n. d.).

Virginia State Police (VSP)

The VSP bases its core values on its name abbreviation “ VSP”, namely Valor, Service and Pride, perhaps as a manner of making those easier to remember. Valor translates to the need of every person under the employ of the VSP to exhibit courage in fulfilling his duty well. Service points out to the commitment of the VSP to conduct law enforcement to the highest level.

Pride is somewhat the motivational component of the core values of the VSP, in that it encourages the derivation of satisfaction from the accomplishments of the agency (Virginia State Police, n. d.).

Atlanta Police Department (APD)

The APD specifies four items under its core values, namely professionalism, integrity, commitment and courage. Professionalism requires the presentation of outstanding pride in terms of fulfilling duties through proper decorum and appearance. Integrity stresses the importance of moral integrity in carrying out tasks. Commitment demands excellence in carrying out duties. Courage serves as an enhancing factor in service delivery through the importance of upholding justice and maintaining trust (Atlanta Police Department, n. d.).

Comparison to the Core Values of Saint Louis University (SLU)

Saint Louis University (SLU) mainly contains core values related to its religious heritage coming from the Jesuits. Although the religious aspect of the core values of SLU does not hold resemblance to the neutral nature of the USSS, VSP and APD, the rest strikes a themed similarity. The USSS, VSP and APD all rest their core values on the importance of integrity, which relates mainly to the character of the actors within and without their respective agencies. Integrity in said aspect also lies towards the importance of meeting the greater good, which is the maintenance of homeland security for the benefit of US citizens. Value building also emanates from the emphasis on integrity by the USSS, VSP and APD, with the understanding

that the internalization of the roles required by the three agencies results to the formation of necessary values. SLU, with its emphasis on character building and value formation within and without the campus and maintaining the “ higher purpose, greater good”, thus bear similarities with the core values presented by the USSS, VSP and APD (Saint Louis University, n. d.).

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