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# CHAIRMAN'S MEMORANDUM

## NO. 14-98

### June 29, 1998

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TO: SHERIFFS, JAIL ADMINISTRATORS, COMMISSIONERS OF CORRECTION

RE: SECURITY RISK GROUPS IN LOCAL CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Since I assumed Chairmanship of the Commission in January 1997, I have been approached by corrections executives wherever I have traveled in New York and have been asked for assistance with the growing problem of gangs in our jails. Last winter, I asked my staff to begin planning a major conference designed to enable corrections personnel at the local level to identify and effectively manage groups that pose a serious threat to the welfare of these facilities.

On June 16, 1998, the Commission of Correction held its "Security Risk Groups in Local Correctional Facilities" conference at the Century House in Latham, New York. Local, county and New York City corrections personnel from throughout the State were in attendance. The conference was a resounding success as evidenced by the response from more than 100 county and New York City corrections and juvenile justice professionals who attended from throughout New York State.

Lou Jordan, a detective with the Monmouth County, New Jersey, Prosecutor's Office, delivered an outstanding keynote address. As a former gang member, and a leader in gang intelligence in law enforcement, Mr. Jordan offered practical insight into the perception vs. the reality of gang organization and behavior, and how to use this insight to understand the activities of such groups. A skillful use of humor to carry a serious message made Mr. Jordan's presentation an excellent introduction to the topic. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of the participants rated Mr. Jordan's presentation "excellent," proof that just about all were duly impressed.

Detective Lieutenant Thomas Breslin and Investigator Jay Gerace from the Colonie Town Police Department were the featured luncheon speakers. Recently faced with an upsurge of gang related crimes in the Capital District, Detective Breslin and Investigator Gerace offered the keys to their success in identifying and apprehending members of gangs, and the skills that allowed them to be successful.

The afternoon panel discussion featured three experienced correction personnel who are well-known for their efforts in managing security risk groups in correctional settings.

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Alan J. Croce, Chairman/Commissioner

Thomas J. Goldrick, Commissioner  
Patricia R. Tappan, Commissioner

Officer Stephen Nowakoski of the Westchester County Department of Correction's Intelligence Section described the effort of his Department to identify and manage security risk groups, while keeping both inmates and officers safe within the confines of a facility.

Captain Herman Pyatt of the New York City Department of Correction explained in detail the problems that began on Rikers Island when gangs became more prevalent in the Department. Captain Pyatt has been instrumental in offering practical and effective methods of dealing with inmate gang members, helping to significantly reduce inmate-on-officer and inmate/inmate attacks.

Joseph Smith, Director of the New York State Department of Correctional Services' (DOCS) Crisis Intervention Unit, outlined DOCS' policy on managing security risk groups within state facilities. He also offered suggestions for local facilities in dealing with such groups.

Peter Hines, Dawn Ferrer, and Rich Kinney of my staff were instrumental in putting this program together. Overall, the conference was given a 92% "excellent" rating by participants. I am sure that all who participated brought back to their respective agencies a new perspective and a wealth of knowledge on management of security risk groups in correctional facilities.

"Security Risk Groups in Local Correctional Facilities" exemplifies my policy as Chairman/Commissioner of this agency to assist correctional administrations in addressing serious and compelling problems by facilitating cooperation and communication at all levels of the correctional establishment. I view the Commission as ideally positioned to serve as the conduit for important technical exchanges such as this and I intend to pursue other initiatives in that vein.

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Alan J. Croce  
Chairman/Commissioner