



NEWS RELEASE

Lakeport Police Department
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LAKEPORT POLICE DEPARTMENT STATEMENT REGARDING LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE TO VAGOS INCIDENT

May 16, 2011

From Chief of Police Brad Rasmussen

The Lakeport Police Department (LPD) is aware of community concerns regarding the allied Lake County Law Enforcement operation and significant deployment of personnel in response to the Vagos Motorcycle Gang meeting at the Clearlake Club in Lakeport, CA on Saturday, May 14, 2011 and we would like to address those concerns as much as possible.

On Friday, May 13, 2011, LPD Gang Officer Norm Taylor received intelligence information regarding an organized meeting of the Vagos that was scheduled to occur in our city on May 14, 2011. The LPD, as well as allied Lake County law enforcement agencies, have highly trained and dedicated staff who monitor and track organized criminal syndicates and street gangs. Based on our clear and verified intelligence we immediately began follow up investigation, incident response preparation and notifications to allied agencies in an effort to deal with a very serious and potentially violent and dangerous situation. In an effort to provide the highest level of public safety protection to the citizens of our community, LPD management made tactical decisions that we believed were in the best interest of our residents, businesses and visitors. We appreciate the allied agency Chief's and the Sheriff for their leadership and support in carrying out our tactical decisions.

During the ongoing and rapidly evolving events of the day last Saturday, law enforcement received credible reports that members of the Hells Angels, a rival of the Vagos, were in adjacent counties and moving in our direction. On April 16, 2011 LPD and LCSO responded to an incident in the City of Lakeport where a known member of the Vagos was involved in a confrontation with Hells Angels members or associates.

One of the local concerns was of the decision to close Lakeport's Main Street between First and Fourth, and 2nd and 3rd Streets between N. Forbes and Main Streets. The LPD realizes that our decision to implement the street closure did have an impact on the many businesses as well as residents and visitors who intended to shop or move about in the area. We do have sincere concern for the impact to these businesses that are such a vital part of our community. However

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Chief of Police

law enforcement does have to make quick tactical decisions that we believe are in the best interest of the entire community and we are not always able to provide prior notification to affected persons or businesses.

As the Chief of Police for the City of Lakeport, I believe that our decisions were in the best interest of the community and absolutely necessary for public safety. Similar meetings of outlaw motorcycle gangs in other communities in the United States have resulted in very violent encounters between rival groups. An example of this can be found in the small community of Chino Valley Arizona, when in August 2010 twenty-seven members of the Vagos and Hells Angels were arrested for serious felony crimes including attempted murder and participation in a criminal street gang after a shootout where at least 50 rounds were fired. Additional examples of these incidents can be found in other communities throughout the United States.

LPD and allied agencies mounted a significant response in order to deter any violent encounters and we will continue to pool resources and conduct proactive law enforcement to keep gangs out of our communities. In addition, we will conduct internal reviews in an effort to continually improve our response to these situations.

LPD would like to thank the many members of our agency who worked very hard in responding to this event. In addition, we sincerely thank Sheriff Frank Rivero and the staff of the Lake County Sheriff's Office, Chief of Police Craig Clausen and the staff of the Clearlake Police Department, Lieutenant Greg Baarts and the staff of the California Highway Patrol-Clearlake area, Superintendent William Salata and the staff of the California State Parks law enforcement division-Clearlake area sector, Lake County District Attorney Don Anderson and Chief Investigator Craig Woodworth and the staff of the Lake County District Attorney's Office, Lieutenant Loren Freeman and the staff of the California Department of Fish and Game-Lake County area, Fire Chief Ken Wells and the staff of the Lakeport Fire Department, Public Works Director Doug Grider and the staff of the City of Lakeport-Department of Public Works and City Manager Margaret Silveira of the City of Lakeport for her support of law enforcement during this incident.

Any person who may have additional questions or concerns may contact Chief of Police Brad Rasmussen by telephone at (707) 263-9650 or by email at brasmussen@lakeportpolice.org.

Brad Rasmussen
Chief of Police