

law enforcement letter of recommendation

Understanding the Law Enforcement Letter of Recommendation

A law enforcement letter of recommendation is a critical document for individuals seeking to enter or advance within the demanding field of law enforcement. This powerful endorsement can significantly influence hiring decisions, academy admissions, and even promotion opportunities. Crafting or requesting an effective letter requires understanding its purpose, the key elements it should contain, and who is best positioned to write one. This comprehensive guide will delve into the nuances of a law enforcement letter of recommendation, exploring how to obtain a strong one, what makes a letter stand out, and its vital role in a successful law enforcement career.

The Importance of a Law Enforcement Letter of Recommendation

In the highly competitive and integrity-driven landscape of law enforcement, a letter of recommendation serves as more than just a formality; it's a testament to an applicant's character, skills, and suitability for the role. Law enforcement agencies prioritize candidates who demonstrate not only the necessary technical abilities but also unwavering ethical standards, sound judgment, and a commitment to public service. A well-written recommendation can provide a nuanced perspective on an applicant that goes beyond what is captured in a resume or application form. It offers insights into an individual's work ethic, leadership potential, interpersonal skills, and ability to handle pressure – all essential qualities for those who wear the badge. Without strong letters of recommendation, even the most qualified candidate may struggle to differentiate themselves from the pool of applicants.

Why Law Enforcement Agencies Value These Letters

Law enforcement hiring committees and review boards meticulously scrutinize every aspect of an applicant's profile. A law enforcement letter of recommendation provides a crucial external validation of an applicant's strengths. It allows experienced professionals within the field to vouch for an individual's capabilities and character, offering a perspective that is directly relevant to the demands of the job. These letters can highlight an applicant's ability to work effectively under stress, their problem-solving skills in real-world scenarios, and their potential for growth and leadership within an agency. Furthermore, they can speak to an applicant's integrity and trustworthiness, qualities that are non-negotiable in law enforcement. The endorsement from a respected figure in law enforcement can carry significant weight, signaling to the hiring body that the applicant has been recognized for their potential by those who understand the profession intimately.

The Impact on Your Application Success

The impact of a strong law enforcement letter of recommendation on an applicant's success cannot be overstated. In many cases, it can be the deciding factor between two equally qualified candidates. A compelling letter can illuminate an applicant's dedication, resilience, and commitment to justice, painting a vivid picture of their potential contributions to an agency. It can highlight specific instances where an applicant demonstrated exceptional courage, critical thinking, or community engagement. Conversely, a generic or lukewarm letter can be detrimental, suggesting a lack of notable qualities or enthusiasm. For those seeking admission to law enforcement academies or applying for specialized roles, these letters are often a mandatory component, underscoring their indispensable role in the application process. Investing time in securing and facilitating the creation of high-quality recommendation letters is therefore a strategic imperative for any aspiring law enforcement professional.

Who Should Write a Law Enforcement Letter of Recommendation?

Selecting the right recommender is paramount to ensuring a powerful and impactful law enforcement letter of recommendation. Not just anyone can provide a credible endorsement; the writer should possess direct knowledge of the applicant's capabilities and character, ideally within a professional or academic context that is relevant to law enforcement. The goal is to obtain a letter from someone who can speak confidently and authoritatively about the applicant's suitability for the rigors of the profession.

Ideal Recommenders for Law Enforcement Applications

When seeking a law enforcement letter of recommendation, prioritize individuals who have observed you in situations that demonstrate relevant skills and traits. This includes:

- Current or former law enforcement officers who have supervised or worked closely with you.
- Instructors from accredited criminal justice or law enforcement academies who can attest to your academic performance and dedication.
- Supervisors from previous roles where you demonstrated leadership, responsibility, integrity, and problem-solving abilities.
- Professors in related fields who can speak to your analytical skills, research capabilities, and work ethic.
- Mentors or community leaders who have witnessed your commitment to public service and ethical conduct.

When a Personal Reference Might Not Be Sufficient

While personal references can offer valuable insights into an individual's character, they are often less impactful for law enforcement applications unless they can specifically address skills and attributes directly transferable to the profession. For instance, a close friend or family member, while knowing you well, may not be able to credibly assess your ability to handle high-stress situations, make critical decisions under pressure, or interact professionally with diverse community members. Law enforcement agencies seek endorsements from individuals who can provide an objective assessment of your professional capabilities and ethical standing. Therefore, relying solely on personal acquaintances is generally not advisable for a law enforcement letter of recommendation. The focus should always be on securing letters that speak to your professional preparedness and inherent suitability for a career in public safety.

Key Elements of a Strong Law Enforcement Letter of Recommendation

A truly effective law enforcement letter of recommendation goes beyond generic praise. It is specific, detailed, and highlights concrete examples that illustrate the applicant's strengths and suitability for the demanding nature of law enforcement work. A strong letter acts as a powerful endorsement, providing hiring managers and academy admissions committees with compelling evidence of an applicant's potential.

Specificity and Concrete Examples

The most impactful law enforcement letters of recommendation are rich with specific anecdotes and examples. Instead of stating that an applicant is "hardworking," a strong letter would describe a particular project or situation where the applicant consistently went above and beyond, demonstrating exceptional dedication and effort. For instance, a recommender might recall a time when the applicant took initiative to resolve a complex issue, or how they skillfully de-escalated a tense situation. These concrete examples provide tangible proof of the applicant's abilities and character, making the endorsement far more persuasive than general statements of praise. Details matter; they transform a recommendation from a mere formality into a powerful testament to the applicant's qualifications.

Highlighting Relevant Skills and Traits

A superior law enforcement letter of recommendation will meticulously highlight skills and character traits that are critical for success in law enforcement. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Integrity and honesty
- Strong ethical compass

- Excellent communication skills (both verbal and written)
- Problem-solving abilities
- Decision-making under pressure
- Leadership potential
- Teamwork and cooperation
- Physical and mental resilience
- Commitment to public service
- Impartiality and fairness
- De-escalation techniques

The recommender should weave these attributes into their narrative, illustrating them with specific instances from their professional observations of the applicant. This ensures the letter directly addresses the qualities law enforcement agencies actively seek.

Professional Tone and Format

The presentation of a law enforcement letter of recommendation is as important as its content. It should maintain a consistently professional and objective tone throughout. This means avoiding overly casual language, slang, or personal opinions. The letter should be typed on official letterhead if possible, clearly stating the recommender's full name, title, contact information, and their professional relationship to the applicant. Proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation are essential, as errors can detract from the credibility of both the recommender and the applicant. A well-formatted, error-free letter demonstrates attention to detail and professionalism, further enhancing its impact.

How to Request a Law Enforcement Letter of Recommendation

Successfully obtaining a strong law enforcement letter of recommendation requires a strategic and respectful approach. It's not simply about asking; it's about providing your recommender with the information they need to write a compelling and relevant endorsement. A well-planned request significantly increases the likelihood of receiving a positive and impactful letter.

Choosing the Right Recommender

As discussed earlier, selecting the right recommender is the foundational step. Think about individuals who have had the opportunity to observe your work ethic, character, and relevant skills firsthand. Consider their position and how well they know you. A supervisor who has directly managed your performance is often a stronger choice than someone who only knows you in a more peripheral capacity. Before you formally ask, reflect on whether they can genuinely speak to your strengths in a way that aligns with the demands of law enforcement. If you are unsure, consider having an informal conversation to gauge their willingness and ability to provide a strong recommendation.

Providing Necessary Information to Your Recommender

To help your recommender write the most effective law enforcement letter of recommendation possible, it is crucial to provide them with comprehensive information. This includes:

- A clear explanation of what the letter is for (e.g., academy application, specific job opening).
- The deadline for submission.
- Any specific forms or submission instructions from the agency or institution.
- Your updated resume or curriculum vitae.
- A brief summary of your qualifications and why you are pursuing this career path.
- A list of key skills and traits you would like them to highlight, along with specific examples if you can recall them.
- Information about the agency or academy you are applying to, including their mission or values, if relevant.

This proactive approach demonstrates your professionalism and ensures the recommender has all the context needed to tailor their letter effectively.

Following Up and Expressing Gratitude

Once you have made your request, it is important to follow up politely and professionally. A gentle reminder a week or so before the deadline can be helpful, especially if the recommender is busy. After the letter has been submitted, always express your sincere gratitude. A thank-you note, whether handwritten or via email, is a professional courtesy that acknowledges their time and effort. Keeping your recommenders informed about the outcome of your application is also a good practice; it allows them to feel invested in your success and may be beneficial for future recommendation requests.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid in a Law Enforcement Letter of Recommendation

Even with the best intentions, there are common mistakes that can undermine the effectiveness of a law enforcement letter of recommendation. Awareness of these pitfalls is crucial for both the applicant seeking the letter and the recommender writing it. Avoiding these issues ensures the letter serves its intended purpose: to strengthen the applicant's case for entering or advancing in law enforcement.

Generic or Vague Statements

One of the most significant detriments to a law enforcement letter of recommendation is the use of generic or vague praise. Phrases like "highly motivated," "good work ethic," or "dedicated individual" are overused and lack impact unless substantiated by specific examples. Agencies are looking for concrete evidence of these qualities, not simply assertions. A recommender should aim to illustrate these traits through observable behaviors and accomplishments, providing specific scenarios where the applicant demonstrated these attributes. Without this specificity, the letter risks sounding like a form response, failing to distinguish the applicant.

Lack of Relevance to Law Enforcement Duties

A letter of recommendation, however positive, will be less effective if it does not connect the applicant's skills and character to the specific demands of law enforcement. A recommender needs to understand the nature of the profession and highlight attributes that are directly transferable. For example, praising an applicant solely for their artistic talent, while positive, is irrelevant if it doesn't tie into any broader skill that law enforcement values, such as attention to detail or creative problem-solving in a non-traditional context. The focus should always be on how the applicant's observed abilities and character make them a suitable candidate for roles that involve public safety, critical decision-making, and community interaction.

Negative or Overly Critical Language

Even if a recommender feels compelled to mention a minor weakness, the overall tone of a law enforcement letter of recommendation should be overwhelmingly positive. If a recommender cannot provide a strongly positive endorsement, it is better for them to decline writing the letter. Introducing negative or overly critical language, even subtly, can raise significant red flags for hiring committees. The purpose of the letter is to advocate for the applicant, not to provide a balanced critique. Any perceived criticism, no matter how well-intentioned, can be interpreted as a lack of full support and may lead to the applicant's disqualification.

The Role of a Law Enforcement Letter of Recommendation in Your Career Journey

The law enforcement letter of recommendation is not just a stepping stone for initial entry; it plays a continuous role throughout a professional's career in law enforcement. As officers seek promotions, specialized assignments, or even transitions to other public service roles, these endorsements remain valuable tools for showcasing their continued growth and dedication. A well-maintained network of professional relationships can lead to strong recommendations at various career stages, each contributing to a more robust and continuously developing professional profile.

Beyond Academy Admission: Promotions and Specializations

Once an individual has entered the field of law enforcement, a well-written letter of recommendation can be instrumental in advancing their career. When applying for promotions to leadership positions such as sergeant, lieutenant, or captain, supervisors and senior officers can provide critical insights into an individual's readiness for increased responsibility. Similarly, for specialized units like SWAT, K-9, narcotics, or internal affairs, recommendations from experienced personnel within those divisions can attest to an applicant's suitability for the unique demands of such roles. These letters demonstrate not only past performance but also the potential for future contributions and leadership within the agency, showcasing a sustained commitment to excellence and professional development.

Maintaining Professional Relationships for Future Endorsements

The network of professional relationships built throughout a law enforcement career is a valuable asset, especially when considering future career moves. Maintaining positive and respectful relationships with supervisors, mentors, and colleagues can pave the way for future opportunities, including the need for new letters of recommendation. Regularly demonstrating competence, integrity, and a collaborative spirit ensures that when a recommendation is needed, there are individuals readily available and willing to provide a strong endorsement. This proactive approach to professional networking is essential for sustained career growth and for securing the necessary endorsements that can open doors to new challenges and responsibilities within the broader public safety sector.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the most important qualities a recommender should highlight for a law enforcement letter of recommendation?

Key qualities to emphasize include integrity, honesty, strong work ethic, problem-solving abilities, communication skills (both written and verbal), leadership potential, teamwork, adaptability, sound

judgment, and a commitment to public service and community safety. Specific examples demonstrating these traits are crucial.

Who is the ideal person to write a law enforcement letter of recommendation?

The ideal recommender is someone who has directly supervised or worked closely with the applicant in a professional capacity and can attest to their skills, character, and suitability for law enforcement. This could include former supervisors, colleagues, instructors in relevant fields (e.g., criminal justice), or mentors who have witnessed their capabilities firsthand.

How can a recommender make a law enforcement letter of recommendation stand out from others?

To make a letter stand out, the recommender should provide specific, quantifiable examples that illustrate the applicant's strengths. Generic praise is less impactful than detailed anecdotes that showcase the applicant's actions, decisions, and positive outcomes. Tailoring the letter to the specific role or agency is also highly beneficial.

What information does a recommender need from the applicant to write an effective letter?

The applicant should provide their resume, a copy of the job description or application requirements, any specific instructions for the letter, and a reminder of key achievements, projects, or responsibilities they want highlighted. Sharing personal goals and why they are pursuing law enforcement can also help the recommender contextualize their support.

Are there any common pitfalls to avoid when writing a law enforcement letter of recommendation?

Common pitfalls include being too generic, relying solely on clichés, failing to provide specific examples, writing a letter that is too short or lacks enthusiasm, and not proofreading for errors. It's also important to avoid making definitive statements about the applicant's future success that cannot be guaranteed.

How long should a typical law enforcement letter of recommendation be?

A strong letter of recommendation is usually between one to two pages in length. It should be concise and to the point, offering substantive details and examples without being overly verbose. A shorter letter might be acceptable if the instructions specify, but conciseness with impactful content is key.

Should a recommender address potential weaknesses or

concerns in a law enforcement letter of recommendation?

Generally, it is best to focus on the applicant's strengths and positive attributes. If there's a minor, easily explainable weakness that the applicant has overcome, it might be addressed briefly and framed as a learning experience, but significant concerns should typically be avoided unless specifically requested or if the recommender feels it's crucial for transparency and can be framed constructively.

Additional Resources

Here are 9 book titles related to law enforcement letters of recommendation, each with a brief description:

1. *The Art of the Compliment: Crafting Persuasive Letters of Recommendation*

This book delves into the psychological aspects of writing effective recommendation letters. It provides strategies for highlighting an individual's strengths and achievements in a way that resonates with law enforcement hiring committees. Readers will learn how to move beyond generic praise to specific, impactful endorsements that can significantly boost an applicant's chances.

2. *Behind the Badge: A Recruiter's Guide to Identifying Top Candidates*

Written from the perspective of those who review applications, this guide offers invaluable insight into what law enforcement agencies look for in new recruits. It specifically addresses the importance of strong letters of recommendation and what elements within them signal a promising candidate. Understanding the recruiter's mindset is key to tailoring your letter for maximum impact.

3. *Keys to the Academy: Essential Skills for Law Enforcement Success*

While focusing on the broader skills needed for a law enforcement career, this book dedicates significant sections to the application process. It emphasizes how to present oneself effectively on paper, including the crucial role of letters of recommendation. It guides recommenders on what specific skills and character traits to articulate that will impress academy admission boards.

4. *Ethical Guardians: Demonstrating Character in Law Enforcement Applications*

This title explores the paramount importance of integrity and good character in law enforcement. It provides frameworks for recommenders to showcase an applicant's ethical compass, decision-making abilities, and commitment to justice. The book helps writers pinpoint and articulate examples that illustrate these vital qualities.

5. *From Applicant to Officer: Navigating the Hiring Process*

This comprehensive guide walks aspiring officers through every step of the law enforcement hiring journey. A key component covered is the strategic importance of obtaining and submitting compelling letters of recommendation. It offers advice on who to ask for a letter and what information would be most beneficial to include.

6. *The Recommender's Edge: Boosting Your Candidate's Chances*

Designed specifically for individuals writing letters of recommendation for law enforcement positions, this book offers practical, actionable advice. It breaks down the process into manageable steps, providing templates and examples for powerful opening and closing statements. The focus is on creating letters that stand out and clearly advocate for the candidate's suitability.

7. *Building Trust: The Foundation of Law Enforcement Service*

This book examines the core values of law enforcement, with a strong emphasis on trust and public confidence. It guides recommenders in articulating how an applicant has demonstrated trustworthiness, reliability, and a strong work ethic in past roles. The aim is to help writers convey the candidate's potential to be a trusted member of the community.

8. Law Enforcement Readiness: Preparing for a Successful Application

This resource provides a holistic approach to preparing for a law enforcement career, including the critical application phase. It highlights how well-crafted letters of recommendation can significantly influence the outcome of an application. The book advises on how to frame an applicant's experiences to align with the specific demands and expectations of the profession.

9. Impactful Endorsements: Writing Letters That Open Doors

This book focuses entirely on the power and best practices of writing impactful letters of recommendation across various professional fields, with a dedicated chapter on law enforcement. It teaches recommenders how to use strong action verbs, quantify achievements, and tailor each letter to the specific requirements of law enforcement roles. The goal is to equip writers with the tools to create letters that truly advocate for their candidates.

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Law Enforcement Letter of Recommendation

By: Sergeant Michael Davis (Retired)

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Law Enforcement Letter of Recommendation: A Comprehensive Guide

Finding the right words to advocate for someone in law enforcement is a significant responsibility. A compelling letter of recommendation can be the deciding factor in a candidate's success, helping them secure promotions, gain entry into specialized units, or land coveted jobs in other agencies. This guide provides a comprehensive approach to writing impactful letters of recommendation for individuals within the law enforcement field, navigating the nuances of this specialized profession.

Chapter 1: Preparing the Recipient for the Letter of Recommendation Request

Before even beginning to write, it's crucial to have a conversation with the individual requesting the letter. This isn't merely a formality; it's an essential step to ensure you're both on the same page and can accurately represent their capabilities and aspirations. This pre-writing discussion should cover several key points:

The specific application: Understanding the target position (e.g., SWAT team, detective, promotion within the department) is crucial. This allows you to tailor the letter to the specific requirements and highlight relevant skills.

The applicant's strengths and weaknesses: A frank discussion about the applicant's strengths, achievements, and areas for potential improvement helps you craft an honest and balanced letter. Knowing their weaknesses allows you to address them strategically or choose to focus solely on their considerable strengths, depending on the situation. It is important to emphasize positive aspects while providing a balanced perspective, never mentioning anything negative.

Specific examples: Gathering concrete examples of the applicant's performance, showcasing their skills in action, is vital for credibility. These anecdotes bring the letter to life and provide tangible evidence of the applicant's capabilities.

Deadlines and submission methods: Clarifying deadlines and understanding the preferred submission method (email, postal mail, online portal) helps ensure a smooth and timely process.

Access to relevant documents: Requesting access to the applicant's resume, performance evaluations, and other relevant documents provides context and ensures accuracy.

Chapter 2: Crafting a Compelling Narrative: Highlighting Key Skills and Attributes

The core of a strong recommendation lies in its ability to paint a vivid picture of the applicant's skills and attributes. Avoid generic statements; instead, use specific examples and anecdotes to illustrate their competence. Key areas to focus on in a law enforcement context include:

Problem-solving abilities: Showcase instances where the applicant demonstrated effective problem-solving skills under pressure, particularly in challenging or high-stakes situations. Provide concrete examples, outlining the problem, the applicant's actions, and the successful outcome.

Leadership qualities: Highlight the applicant's leadership abilities, whether through leading a team, mentoring junior officers, or taking initiative. Use specific examples to demonstrate their effectiveness in leading and motivating others.

Communication skills: Law enforcement requires excellent communication skills. Showcase the applicant's ability to effectively communicate with diverse populations, including suspects, witnesses, and colleagues. Examples could include successful de-escalation tactics, clear and concise report writing, or effective public speaking.

Integrity and ethics: Emphasize the applicant's unwavering commitment to integrity and ethical conduct. This might involve describing instances where the applicant demonstrated honesty, fairness, and adherence to departmental regulations.

Physical and mental fitness: Depending on the position, highlight the applicant's physical and mental fitness, especially their ability to handle stress and remain calm under pressure.

Chapter 3: Structuring the Letter for Maximum Impact: Format and Content

The structure of your letter is as important as its content. A well-organized letter is easy to read and highlights the applicant's strengths effectively. Consider the following structure:

Heading: Begin with your name, title, contact information, and date.

Salutation: Address the letter to the appropriate recipient (e.g., hiring manager, selection committee).

Introduction: Briefly introduce yourself and your relationship with the applicant, emphasizing the length and nature of your experience working with them.

Body paragraphs: This section forms the heart of your letter. Dedicate separate paragraphs to different aspects of the applicant's skills and experience, using specific examples to support your claims.

Concluding paragraph: Summarize your overall assessment of the applicant and reiterate your strong recommendation.

Closing: Use a professional closing (e.g., "Sincerely," "Respectfully") followed by your signature.

Chapter 4: Addressing Specific Requirements: Tailoring to the Application

Each application will have unique requirements. Carefully review the application instructions and tailor your letter to address those specific needs. This might include highlighting particular skills or experiences mentioned in the job description or answering specific questions posed by the selection committee.

Chapter 5: Examples of Strong and Weak Letters

Analyzing examples of strong and weak letters can be incredibly beneficial. A strong letter will use vivid language, concrete examples, and a clear structure, while a weak letter might rely on clichés, vague statements, or lack organization. Studying these examples will help you understand what to do and what to avoid.

Chapter 6: Proofreading and Seeking Feedback

Before submitting your letter, thoroughly proofread it for any grammatical errors, typos, or inconsistencies. Consider seeking feedback from a trusted colleague or supervisor to ensure the letter is clear, concise, and impactful.

Conclusion: Final Thoughts and Best Practices

Writing a strong letter of recommendation for a law enforcement officer requires careful consideration, attention to detail, and a commitment to accurately portraying the applicant's qualifications. By following the guidelines outlined in this guide, you can create a letter that effectively advocates for a deserving candidate and contributes to their success in the field.

FAQs

1. How long should a letter of recommendation be? Aim for one to two pages, focusing on quality over quantity.
2. What if I haven't worked directly with the applicant? Only write a letter if you can genuinely speak to their capabilities based on firsthand experience.
3. Can I write a letter if I have some reservations about the applicant? It's best to decline if you cannot wholeheartedly recommend the individual.
4. How can I make my letter stand out? Use specific, quantifiable examples and avoid generic statements.
5. What if the applicant asks me to exaggerate their skills? Never compromise your integrity; be truthful and accurate in your assessment.
6. Should I mention any disciplinary actions against the applicant? No, focus solely on positive attributes and accomplishments.
7. How should I handle sensitive information in my letter? Avoid including any information that

could compromise the applicant's privacy or security.

8. What if I don't know the specific requirements of the job? Contact the applicant or the hiring organization to obtain more information.

9. Can I use a template for my letter? While templates can be helpful, always personalize your letter to reflect the specific applicant and the position they are applying for.

Related Articles:

1. Writing Effective Recommendation Letters for Any Profession: A broader guide on crafting compelling recommendations across various fields.

2. How to Request a Letter of Recommendation: Guidance for applicants on approaching potential recommenders.

3. The Importance of Networking in Law Enforcement: Explores the role of professional connections in career advancement.

4. Resume Writing for Law Enforcement Professionals: A guide on creating a strong resume tailored to the law enforcement field.

5. Interview Preparation for Law Enforcement Positions: Tips and strategies for successful interviews.

6. Common Law Enforcement Interview Questions: A compilation of frequently asked questions during interviews.

7. Navigating the Law Enforcement Hiring Process: A comprehensive overview of the steps involved in securing a job in law enforcement.

8. Maintaining Professionalism in Law Enforcement: Discusses ethical conduct and best practices.

9. Leadership Skills for Law Enforcement Officers: Focuses on developing and showcasing leadership potential.

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Hope for Today Strength for Tomorrow When your husband is a police officer, you experience a unique set of challenges and fears that others may not understand. Rest assured that you can still find peace and joy every day with God by your side. Proud Police Wife is the perfect resource for any police wife or future wife in need of hope, encouragement, comfort, and strength. Each devotion includes · applicable Scriptures, · relatable stories, · empowering action steps, and · uplifting prayers. Strengthen your relationship with God and gain confidence in your role as the heart behind the badge. Wait patiently for the Lord. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord. Psalm 27:14 NLT

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cited for current and recently retired law enforcement officers. Helpful web sites are listed in this edition, and more than 100 law enforcement insignia patches are illustrated.

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