

Submitted to the Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform

Hearing on “Criminal Aliens Released by the Department
of Homeland Security”

April 28, 2016

Testimony of Ralph Martin, Police Chief for the City of
Santa Maria, California

Good morning,

My name is Ralph Martin and I am the Police Chief for the City of Santa Maria, California. Santa Maria is the largest city in Santa Barbara County, and one of the largest on the Central Coast. It has a population of over 100,000, is a few minutes from the coastline, and is surrounded by agriculture. We are halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco.

I am here today to share with you an event that occurred just nine months ago. It is about the brutal and vicious attack of 64 year old Santa Maria resident, Marilyn Pharis.

At the time of this attack, Ms. Pharis was gainfully employed at nearby Vandenberg Air Force Base where she worked the night shift as a Satellite Tracker Civilian Contractor since 1974. She is also a four year veteran of the U.S. Air Force.

On the morning of July 24, 2015, at approximately 9:45 a.m., while Ms. Pharis was sleeping, two suspects broke into her home, sexually assaulted her, strangled her, and beat her about her head and face with a hammer.

But despite the incredible beating, Marilyn would not give up. She fought back with all the strength she could muster, even while receiving repeated blows.

The suspects left her for dead. But somehow, with her eye socket shattered and a broken neck bone, she called 9-1-1.

As the suspects made their escape, one of them, identified as Victor Martinez-Ramirez, broke into another home on West Donovan Street, entering through a sliding door. There, he encountered three young children and their mother. The mother called 9-1-1, and the suspect fled.

As officers were responding to Ms. Pharis' home, additional officers were now responding to the West Donovan Street home.

Suspect Martinez starts jumping backyard fences, but the officers set up a solid perimeter around him. Within minutes, one of our K-9 officers finds Martinez hiding underneath a tarp on the patio of a home on Cox Street, three blocks from Ms. Pharis' home and one block from the Donovan home. He was arrested for burglary, sexual assault, and attempted murder.

During the fourth day of the investigation, detectives identified and arrested the second suspect, Jose Villa Gomez. He was subsequently charged with the same crimes as Martinez.

Eight days after Ms. Pharis was attacked, she died in her hospital bed, unable to recover from her brutal injuries.

Victor Martinez-Ramirez is an illegal alien from Mexico. He had been arrested by the Santa Maria Police Department six times in the previous 15 months. He was released from the Santa Barbara County Jail 96 hours before he attacked Ms. Pharis.

Villa Gomez is a U.S. Citizen. He had one previous arrest.

Both are currently in custody awaiting trial.

Whenever the federal or state government fails to do its job, it falls on the shoulders of local government, which is not equipped to deal with the issues, either financially or in dedicating personnel.

The arrest sheet on Martinez is a glaring example of federal and state failures. On one occasion in 2014, ICE filed a form I-247 Immigration Detainer – Notice of Action. However, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department does not recognize this as a lawful hold based on the Miranda-Olivares v. Clackamas County, Oregon Federal Court ruling.

Two weeks before the attack, Martinez was "cited" as opposed to arrested for possession of meth, because of California's Prop 47 which I'll address in a moment.

On July 16, 2015, eight days before assaulting Ms. Pharis, Martinez was arrested for felony possession of a dirk or dagger, as well as possession of drug paraphernalia. He was additionally charged with two misdemeanors, two \$10,000 warrants, failure to appear, and violation of probation. There was no ICE detainer submitted during this detention. Four days later in court, the weapon charge was dismissed, a "No Contest" plea entered for drug paraphernalia, and he was released that day. Four days later, he assaulted Ms. Pharis.

The State of California passed Prop 47 in November 2014. It was a complete con job pulled on the people. Titled "Safe Schools – Safe Neighborhoods" sounds like a fine title. But it was only a title. In the fine print it reduced felony drug possession like heroin, cocaine, meth, etc. to a misdemeanor citable offense. Thousands of arrestees petition the courts to reduce their convictions. So did Martinez.

The City of Santa Maria, as well as other cities throughout California, are seeing an increase in homeless persons that have high drug dependency. Many of these persons would have been removed from our streets, been required to appear in court, and referred to drug rehabilitation/treatment programs. But, the numbers have substantially decreased in these programs because of California's Prop 47.

As our U.S. Marine makes a wrong turn at the border in Tijuana and ends up in a jail cell for months, we in the U.S. are running catch and release programs for criminal aliens.

I've been in this business for over 40 years, and every time I hear the term "senseless tragedy" or "terrible accident", I cringe. When our federal and state laws are not enforced, all we really have is predicable consequences.

This concludes my statement. Thank you for your valuable time.



Ralph Martin
Chief of Police
Santa Maria Police Department



Chief Ralph Martin is a 40 year law enforcement veteran, beginning his career in Los Angeles in 1973. Has served as the Santa Maria Police Department's Chief of Police since August 6, 2012.

Chief Martin is a 35 ½ -year veteran of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, holding the ranks of Deputy, Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, and Division Commander. As a Division Commander, he was responsible for the Department's Region II, which encompasses the stations and communities of Compton, Century, Carson, Lomita, Lennox, Marina del Rey, West Hollywood, and Avalon Station on Catalina Island. His responsibilities also included overseeing the security for Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), as well as all Metrolink trains.

Additionally, he oversaw four major bureaus:

- OSS Bureau (Operation Safe Streets) which consisted of 200 gang investigators.
- CLEPP (Community Law Enforcement Partnership Program) providing assistance through community based policing.
- COPS Bureau, which assisted communities with extra uniform patrol.
- CCS (Community Colleges Security), providing security for all nine junior college campuses in L.A. City.

The region consisted of approximately 2,400 personnel with an annual operations budget of \$225 million.

For more than four years, Chief Martin was also the contract Police Chief for the community of La Canada-Flintridge.

Chief Martin is recognized as a Use of Force expert, and has testified in numerous hearings. During 2005-2009, Chief Martin's division handled 118 officer involved shootings. During the years 2010-2012, Chief Martin was a private consultant and expert witness in police use of force cases.

Chief Martin holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from California State University, Los Angeles, and a Master of Arts Degree in Communications from Pepperdine University.