## MEMORANDUM

TO:	Kent Carlson and Michael Wishnie, Co-Chairs, Task Force to Study the Use of
	MOS Specialty Training as a Substitute for State Licensing Requirements
FROM:	Law Student Interns, Veterans Legal Services Clinic, Yale Law School
DATE:	November 2, 2013
RE:	Licensing Requirements for Police Officers in Connecticut

## I. Recommendations

- The existing POST waiver currently allows Connecticut police departments to hire police officers trained in other states. The waiver should be modified to include some or many of the basic and field training requirements for military veterans based on Military Police or other relevant training.
- POST should direct police departments to expressly solicit applications from veterans.

# II. Relevance to the Task Force

The latest IAVA Report<sup>1</sup> identified police officer positions as a potential site for license streamlining. According to the report, police officers in Connecticut have a median annual income of \$63,200 and the field is projected to grow by 140 openings per year over the next decade.

There are both pros and cons to focusing on transitioning veterans to the Connecticut police force licensing. On one hand, the job is relevant to the most highly represented military occupational specialties (MOS) in the state. About 20% of Connecticut Army veterans have infantry or military police backgrounds; 24% of Connecticut Marine Corps veterans have infantry training; 8% of Connecticut Air Force veterans served in the Security Forces. The job thus has the benefit of coverage and relevance across several different military branches.

However, in spite of a considerable number of projected openings each year, relative annual job growth over the next decade is projected to be negative, at -1%. In addition, becoming a police office is among the most requirement- and time-intensive careers listed in the report.

Nonetheless, the high number of veterans with relevant backgrounds, generous annual salary and benefits, service orientation of the profession and steady demand for the service (even if annual growth is slightly negative) makes this vocation worth examining further. Police officers are the single highest paid profession included in the report's lists, and anecdotal evidence indicates that a large number of veterans, whether military police or in other specialties, would have a high level of interest in pursing careers as police officers.

# III. Licensing Requirements

The operative policies governing the certification and recertification of Connecticut police officers are primarily administrative and are set by the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST).<sup>2</sup> As such, the Executive could unilaterally enact many of the reforms

necessary to streamline this licensing process. By statute, the legislature delegates broad responsibilities to POST, including the authority to "develop . . . a comprehensive municipal police training plan," to "set minimum courses of study and attendance requirements," and to "require that all probationary candidates receive the hours of basic training deemed necessary before being eligible for certification."<sup>3</sup>

POST establishes that "admission to the Connecticut Police Academy is restricted to either gainfully employed police officers or "probationary candidates" in the position of police officer, who have already been hired as such."<sup>4</sup> Thus, the first step toward certification as a police officer in Connecticut is to be hired a local police department. POST further directs that local police departments administer several entry-level tests to potential hires to determine eligibility for the job. These requirements are that the candidate:

- 1) Be a US citizen
- 2) Be at least 21
- 3) Be a high school graduate (or have GED)
- 4) Have a driver's license
- 5) Pass a validated written entry test
- 6) Satisfy an oral interview panel which contains at least one POST certified police officer
- Not have been convicted by a court of any felony, any class A or class B misdemeanor or have committed any act which would constitute perjury or false statement
- 8) Have been the subject of a background and polygraph investigation (by POST approved polygraph examiners only)
- 9) Undergo a psychological examination
- 10) Pass a drug screening
- 11) Have been examined and certified by a Council accepted method as fit to perform the duties of a probationary candidate police officer
- 12) Meet physical fitness requirements.<sup>5</sup>

At the department level, the minimum entry requirements are thus dictated by POST and assessed locally. Job openings are listed on POST's website by police departments and municipalities. In October 2013, several of the postings expressly solicited female and minority applicants. However, none of the postings expressly solicited veteran applicants.

Once a department hires a potential police officer, she must then complete basic training at the Connecticut Police Academy as well as an additional field and departmental training program.<sup>6</sup> Basic training at the Connecticut Police Academy is 22 weeks long. Recruit officers reside at the Academy from Monday through Friday. Recruit officers are required to pass each of 17 different academic areas, as well as 12 practical skills areas. This 818-hour curriculum includes modules on police and the law, practical policing skills, criminal investigation, and patrol procedures.<sup>7</sup> In addition, recruits must complete a field and departmental training program consisting of a minimum of 400 additional hours.<sup>8</sup>

An administrative mechanism already exists for waiving some or all of these requirements. POST may grant certification of "Comparative Compliance" if: 1) the local police department recommends that POST consider an alternative route or waiver to satisfy the basic training requirements 2) the candidate has completed at least 2 years of full time employment with a law enforcement unit, and 3) the candidate has not had more than three years separation from a law enforcement unit. In making its waiver determination:

[POST] shall evaluate in comparison to current requirements the quality and extent of the candidates': (1) previous basic training and certification as a police officer; (2) formal, professional and in-service training and education in law enforcement or criminal justice, and (3) length of service and field experience as a police officer. The council may waiver those portions of the police basic training program for which a candidate demonstrates (a) the satisfactory completion of a substantial equivalent training or educational program in another state of jurisdiction, or (b) a length of service with field experience sufficient to establish a practical mastery of the required skills, or a satisfactory combination of both.<sup>9</sup>

Here, too, a department must have already hired a candidate in order to petition for such exceptions to the basic training requirements.

Thus, to become a police officer in Connecticut, a candidate must first be hired by a local police department, pass POST determined entry-level tests, and successfully complete basic training at the Connecticut Police Academy and further field training at her home department. However, a waiver mechanism to excuse part or all of this required training is in place.

### IV. Analysis

This licensing process presents both challenges and opportunities. Licensing requirements for becoming a police officer are extensive and public safety demands that rigorous standards be upheld. However, the extensive and costly nature of this training means that even partial credit toward the requirements holds the potential for significant time and money savings, which would incentivize hiring veterans. Moreover, the relevant standards are mostly administrative in nature and established by the state agency. While the legislature could compel action through statute, it appears that the desired outcome could be obtained by executive action alone.

There may be several ways to streamline this process for veteran applicants. First, the POST waiver allowing Connecticut police departments to hire police officers trained in other states could be modified so as to waive some or many of the basic and field training requirements for military veterans based on relevant training. The military occupational specialty (MOS) for which this would be the most relevant would be Military Police (all branches) and potentially Air Force Security Forces personnel. The Task Force could compare the curriculum of each branch's Military Police training school to the Connecticut Police Academy Basic Training syllabus and field training requirements. A military police-trained veteran who was able to waive out of some or all of the basic training requirements would be a much more attractive hire as she would be available to fill vacancies sooner and would not draw a salary and training resources for as long of a period before being able to assume her duties at the unit.

Military police aside, many members of the combat arms community receive extensive weapons and other training that might be creditable, if only in part. In addition to basic training requirements, any credit that can be granted toward home-unit field training would further enhance the utility of hiring military veterans to Connecticut police departments. Finally, it may be the case that re-training a veteran as a police office would require considerably less effort in terms of socialization and adaptability to a rigorous training environment than for an average civilian without military experience.

This approach could be supplemented by use of the Montgomery GI Bill to attend school to study criminal justice, which would further enhance a candidate's attractiveness to both the state and hiring units by further reducing the training burden on these entities. More work should be done to determine how such academic training is credited toward basic training and field training requirements.

In addition, departments could be encouraged to expressly solicit applications from military veterans. Veteran hiring preference might already exist at Connecticut police departments, but this should be made clear on job postings. A *Vets to Cops* effort currently provides information to interested veterans about the departmental hiring process and would be an excellent platform on which to build further efforts.

In sum, there is the potential for a highly streamlined police academy program for former Military Police, and the potential for the satisfaction of some basic weapons handling and fieldtrained requirements for other veterans. It could be argued that the number of returning military police is too low to warrant the effort. However, the potential for increased veteran hiring and both state and municipal budget savings make this set of licensing requirements worthy of continued investigation. Finally, a successful program could become a national model, which could produce significant veteran hiring increases and budget incentives for states and municipalities nationwide.

#### **REFERENCES & NOTES**

<sup>2</sup> Connecticut statute grants this authority to POST. See CONN. GEN. STAT. § 7-294a-e (2013).

<sup>3</sup> CONN. GEN. STAT. § 7-294a 1, 3, 5 (2013).

<sup>4</sup> Council Policies and Practices Relative to Original Police Officer Certification and Recertification (2013), http://www.ct.gov/post/cwp/view.asp?a=2058&q=291942.

<sup>7</sup> See the basic training curriculum enclosure, which was submitted to the Task Force along with this memo.

<sup>8</sup> Police Office and Training Standards Council, http://www.ct.gov/post/cwp/view.asp?a=2058&Q=291946& postNav=|42935|, 2013

<sup>9</sup> POST's power to grant waivers of any of the standards set forth by the statute is articulated within the same statute, CONN. GEN. STAT. § 7-294d19 (2013), but the standards quoted for doing so are set by POST. Police Office and Training Standards Council, http://www.ct.gov/post/cwp/view.asp?a=2058&q=291946, 2013

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Veterans Legal Services Clinic (VLSC) at Yale Law School drafted a report on veterans' employment for IAVA in October 2013. The draft report, which is titled *Transitioning Troops: Aiding Gulf War II Veterans in the Passage from War to the Workplace*, contains statistics on military occupational specialties and the Connecticut labor market. Copies were distributed to the Task Force at the first meeting. Please contact the VLSC law student interns if you would like another copy or more information: matthew.blumenthal@clinics.yale.edu; emma.kaufman@clinics.yale.edu; ryan.podolsky@clinics.yale.edu.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Police Office and Training Standards Council (2013), http://www.ct.gov/post/cwp/view.asp?a=2058&Q=291946 &postNav=|42935|.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Police Office and Training Standards Council (2013), http://www.ct.gov/post/cwp/view.asp?a=2058&Q= 291946&postNav=|42935|.