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FORMER POLICE CHIEF PAT LUNNEY TO LEAD INVESTIGATORS FOR MERCED COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Patrick Lunney, former Merced Police Chief and most recently the Director of the California Attorney General's Division of Law Enforcement, has been hired as the Chief Investigator for the Merced County District Attorney's office, District Attorney Larry D. Morse, II announced Tuesday.

"I've always considered Merced my home, and it's an honor to have the opportunity to return home and rejoin the local battle for public safety," Lunney said. "I am very impressed with the direction Larry is moving the District Attorney's office and I look forward to using my experience in Merced and Sacramento to make certain we are doing everything possible to fight crime," he added.

Lunney, 60, began his law enforcement career with the Merced Police Department in 1975. Eight years later, at age 35, he was appointed Chief of Police, one of the youngest police chiefs in the state. During his 15 year tenure as police chief, Lunney developed the Merced Police into a premier agency winning several awards, including the California Healthy City Project which recognized the department's leadership in establishing community based policing.

In 1999, former state Attorney General Bill Lockyer appointed Lunney as Deputy Director of the Division of Law Enforcement with the California Department of Justice. In this capacity, Lunney managed the three main law enforcement arms of the state: the California Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement and the Bureau of Forensic Services.

Two years later, Lockyer promoted Lunney to director of the Division of Law Enforcement. As director, Lunney was the Attorney General's primary representative to law enforcement agencies throughout California and the rest of the nation. He was responsible for the work of more than 1,200 employees in the state's crime labs, investigative bureau and drug enforcement programs. While director, Lunney assumed control of the newly created Criminal Intelligence Bureau which is involved with homeland security measures for the state.

After resigning as director of the Division of Law Enforcement in 2005, Lunney served as a senior adviser for Law Enforcement to the Attorney General.

“This is a tremendous coup for our office and the entire law enforcement community in Merced County,” Morse said. “Pat Lunney is one of the most talented, progressive and experienced law enforcement officers in California and respected from one end of the state to the other. I could not be more pleased to have a person of Pat’s stature join our office.”

Lunney replaces former Chief Investigator Daniel Murphy who retired earlier this year. The District Attorney’s Investigations Unit is comprised of 24 employees, including 10 peace officer investigators. They work with prosecutors in preparing cases for trial, conduct criminal investigations and manage the Witness Relocation and Assistance Program. One investigator is currently assigned to the recently created Merced County Gang Task Force, Morse said.

Lunney earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Sciences from the University of California, Davis and his Masters Degree in Public Administration from the University of Southern California. In June 2001, he participated in the prestigious “Senior Executives in State and Local Government” program at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government.

“Widely respected for his intelligence, Pat also has a network of law enforcement contacts at the federal, state and local levels that are unsurpassed,” Morse said. “With the many public safety challenges facing communities in Merced County, Pat is going to be an enormous asset in our efforts to fight crime effectively and efficiently,” he added.

Lunney will begin his new duties on July 1.