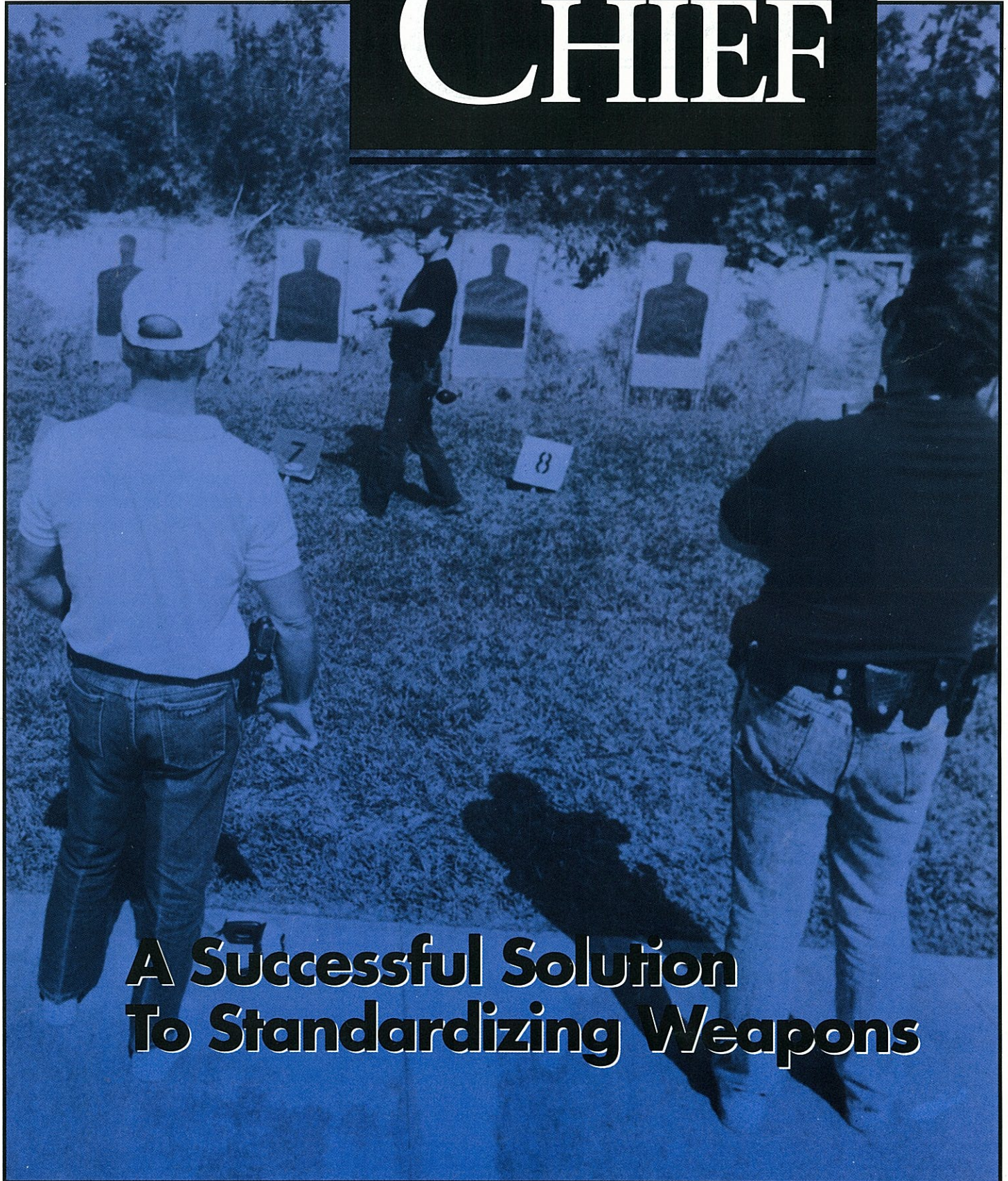


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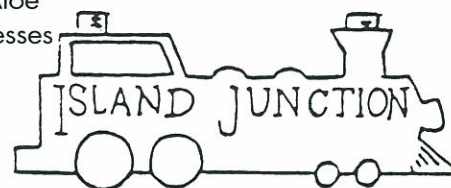
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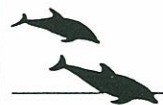
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# Model Policy

# The Implementation Of a Criminal Investigator

*Position in a small municipal police agency*

by Stephen M. Ramirez

It has been said that the State of Florida today is fast becoming a window into the future condition of our nation's communities. The simple times of quiet rural hamlets and sleepy coastal villages have given way to a population of ever increasing density and complexity. This dynamic evolution of our state's population, and the increased mobility and sophistication of those persons committing criminal acts, has greatly changed the climate which its small municipal police agencies face.

The Juno Beach Police Department, like many other small law enforcement agencies in the state, has found that it must consistently evaluate current methods of achieving the departmental goals of providing professional service, respect to all individuals, and to search for excellence in law enforcement. The challenges of law enforcement are ever changing. Our approach to meeting these challenges must be innovative and dynamic.

Prior to the implementation of the criminal investigator position in 1990, citizen complaints were taken and investigated by the road patrol officers. These officers were frequently too busy answering complaints, calls, and dealing with patrol functions such as traffic control and pro-active crime prevention to effectively investigate the crimes. Furthermore, patrol officers were restricted in their ability to complete complex criminal investigations because they often had

*(Continued on page 32)*

**Model Policy**  
(Continued from page 31)

to remain within jurisdictional boundaries while on duty. The high profile status of uniformed patrol officers precluded their availability for undercover operations. The summary of the limitations on uniformed patrol officers in the investigation of complex criminal activity led to cases not being solved, suspects not being arrested and prosecuted, and restitution not being made to victims. One proposed solution to this problem was the creation and implementation of a dedicated criminal investigator position.

Based on problem analysis, objectives were established:

- a. to increase the efficiency of the criminal investigation process, and to thereby increase the number of cleared criminal cases;
- b. to increase the level of recovered stolen items and/or the payment of restitution to victims of crimes within the jurisdiction of Juno Beach;
- c. to develop improved community relations between the police department and victims of crime that come into contact with it;
- d. to create a support structure which will aid the investigator in the successful clearance of cases;
- e. to develop pro-active investigations into areas such as illegal drugs, vice, fraud and white collar crimes.

With our objective established, we set out to create and implement the investigator's positions.

**Creation and implementation**

The first question which probably comes to mind with most police executives when attempting to create a new position within their department is one of budgeting: How will the position be paid for? In our case, we recommended creating a new sworn officer position without any loss of personnel to other areas of our agency. The criminal investigator position was proposed to be a lateral entry at the current patrol officer pay grade. The position and its subsequent cost to the citizens was justified by virtue of the projected productivity as well as the various benefits which would be enjoyed by the achievement of the objectives.

If the creation of a new police officer position is not an option for your agency, another approach would be to conduct a study of the levels of activity which are experienced during each particular shift. You may find it possible to redistribute manpower by transforming one road patrol position into an investigative officer.

**Selection and training**

The selection techniques used by this department included a letter of application from each interested patrol officer, and an oral review board. We did not require a formal written test which would measure projected performance, intelligence, aptitude or personality, however these may be options that your agency may wish to consider.

The letter of application which was submitted by each interested officer

**As a result of this intervention, numerous arrests were made of offenders who would have otherwise escaped prosecution.**

was to be a formal request that the officer be considered for the criminal investigator position. Furthermore, each applicant was to include in this letter their reasons for being interested in the position as well as their relative qualifications. These qualifications included experience, investigative training, applicable aptitudes and overall attitude toward the position. Overall investigative experience and training was an important consideration; however, we found that even more vital attributes for the initial investigator were the ability to manage and organize the position with a minimum of supervision.

It is unlikely that any small police agency will have one patrol officer who has *all* of the investigative train-

ing and experience necessary for complete competency in the position at the time of entry. It is a given element that some amount of training will be necessary throughout the investigator's tenure in position. What is truly necessary are such attributes as honesty, integrity, the ability to manage time, organization ability, and an intuitive ability to gather the facts relative to any particular investigation. Finally, the officer chosen for this position must have a strong desire to succeed as well as a vision of what can be accomplished by the success of the project.

Training the small agency's criminal investigator is no small task. A large police organization will usually have investigators divided into various specialties such as homicide, sex crimes, robbery, arson, narcotics and vice, internal affairs, etc. The investigator for a small agency must be a "Jack of all trades". The goal is to eventually establish in your investigator a general competency in all of the necessary areas of expertise.

This level of overall ability can be reached through the use of both formal training and on-the-job experience. Neither one should take the place of the other. This investigator is a valuable human resource and your agency must make a strong commitment to invest in it. This means that the chosen investigator should be actively receiving formal training in all related areas of expertise. Without that certificate of completion your investigator loses some of his credibility when it comes time for deposition or trial.

Experience may be gained by allowing your investigator to "loan out" to other agencies, so that he can see how they manage the various resources and duties which are an inherent part of the investigative function. This also allows your officer to gain fresh new ideas and concepts. Furthermore, your investigator will be able to establish personal contacts that may become vital to the success of any particular investigation. This process of exchanging knowledge between neighboring agencies should be continual. If your investigator's approach to the challenges of the position is not dynamic, then full potential will not be reached. There is no substitute for a diversity of experience. Setting limitations on your

investigator based on such tired philosophy as "we've never needed that before," or the ever popular, "we've always done it that way," is a great error.

**Case management and support systems**

Once the investigator was established, we then had to deal with creating a system of case management in order to facilitate the solving or clearance of cases.

The initial complaint was taken generally by the road patrol officer, who in turn completes an incident report. The road patrol officer who initiates the gathering of basic information relative to a reactive investigation then turns a completed copy of the report to the investigator. The investigator then reviews the patrol officer's report and inspects any known evidence or witness statements.

In the case of more serious or unusual reactive investigations such as homicide, sexual battery, or armed robbery, the investigator may be called into the crime scene on a twenty-four hour basis via a department issued digital pager.

Once the investigator has reviewed each road patrol incident report, they are prioritized by the investigator based on the severity of crime and solvability. The solvability of the case is rated based on evidence obtained from the crime scene, witnesses or suspects, and the presence of clues or leads. By priority, each case is then followed up by the investigator until either the case is cleared or all leads have been exhausted.

In the course of implementing the investigator position various support systems were established. These included investigative files, criminal intelligence files and files containing teletype information which was received and could have some bearing on criminal acts committed within our jurisdiction.

The investigative filing system was established in two distinct parts. The first of these were created so that active cases were filed by way of priority. The second part consisted of records of cases which had been cleared by arrest, exceptionally cleared, unfounded or inactivated.

**Summary of data collection and results**

These results illustrated the degree of success which was achieved relative to the stated objectives of the implementation of the criminal investigator's position at the Juno Beach Police Department.

**Comparative analysis of felony arrests**

1990—Average number of felony arrests per patrol officer—(10) officers .....	4.6%
1990—Total felony arrests (1) investigator .....	54%

The second objective of this implementation was to increase the level of recovered stolen items and/or the payment of restitution to victims of crimes within the jurisdiction of the Juno Beach Police Department. Data collection showed that a total of \$27,730 in recovered stolen property and restitution was collected during the year 1990 as a direct result of the creation of the investigator's position.

**Conclusion**

The implementation of the criminal investigator position at the Juno Beach Police Department has proven to be advantageous to the effective investigation of criminal acts which occur within its jurisdiction. Each state goal has been achieved with a measure of success. As a direct result of this intervention, numerous arrests were made of offenders who would have otherwise escaped prosecution. Furthermore, large amounts of stolen property were recovered and restitution was paid to the victims of crime. The overall prestige and credibility of the Juno Beach Police Department was enhanced among the citizens and professional peers. The investigator position has been found to be a valuable and necessary resource for the Juno Beach Police Department and perhaps for similar law enforcement agencies elsewhere.

*Stephen M. Ramirez is a Sergeant with the Juno Beach Police Department, working as a road patrol supervisor and as supervisor of criminal investigations. He was the first investigator for the Town of Juno Beach. He was chosen as Officer of the Year for 1991 for Palm Beach County Crime Solution by the Palm Beach Post*

*Newspaper. He has been in law enforcement for over five years, after having served in the US Marine Corps, Marine Embassy Guard duty. He is married and has a two-year-old daughter.*

*Editors Note: This new "Model Policy" column is presented to you as a membership service. It is written by law enforcement managers. These model policies should serve as a guide and management tool, but do not constitute "Official Policy" by your Board of Directors or FPCA.*

**FPCA Needs Your Model Policies**

During the business meeting at the 1993 Mid-Winter Conference in Orlando, Chiefs of Police from every region of the state discussed their preferences for topics and services included in our magazine. In response to their needs, we are introducing this new column which will be written at least on a quarterly basis called Model Policy Building—"Prototypes for Progress." President Martin would like each of our 15 regions to submit at least two policies which have been successful in that area. According to President Martin, "Sharing information makes each of us more successful in providing better services for our citizens."

Our first example from Sgt. Stephen Ramirez of the Juno Beach Police Department will give you an excellent idea of the content your sample policy should contain. It includes concept, analysis, development, step-by-step implementation, hiring and training, problems and solutions, and results.

Our FPCA staff is ready to answer your questions or help you with the details. Call us at (800) 332-8117 or mail your policy to either the Tallahassee or Regional office. Your participation in the project will make a difference for all of us.

Thanks!