



THE POLICE

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"OFFICER NEEDS HELP!"

According to the latest F.B.I. statistics: Over 62 thousand line-of-duty assaults against U.S. law enforcement officers have been reported. Four out of five officers assaulted were on vehicle patrol. 55% of the victims were patrolling alone. One out of three assaulted were injured. Of the assaults 4% were with "personal weapons" (hands, fists, feet, etc.). Only 5% involved firearms.



These statistics prove that law enforcement officers need a safe, humane, non-lethal way to defend themselves effectively—particularly when handling, transporting, and maintaining custody of suspects.



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Creativity: The Key to Small Agency Criminal Investigations

By Sgt. Stephen M. Ramirez
Criminal Investigations Supervisor
Juno Beach Police Department

If there is a catch phrase for the 90's, it's change. The world around us is changing with such speed that only those organizations who can adapt with vision will ultimately survive. Law enforcement agencies are certainly no exception in that each agency is essentially a business with a product to market to its clients. The simple times of quiet rural communities have given way to a population of every increasing density and complexity. The increased mobility and sophistication of the persons committing criminal acts has greatly changed the climate which small municipal police agencies face.

Small police agencies, like their larger counterparts, must consistently evaluate current methods of achieving their organizational goals. The approaches taken to meet the challenges of the changing environment must be innovative and dynamic. The complex criminal investigation requires that managers of small law enforcement agencies think beyond the obvious and traditional.

Personnel

One of the first problems which presents itself to the small agency investigator in regards to large scale proactive cases such as narcotics or white collar crime is the availability of personnel. There are a variety of methods which may be utilized for overcoming this factor. One way to acquire adequate personnel for operations of moderate size and duration is to mobilize the officers of your agency by creative rescheduling, overtime, or comp-time.

A narcotics investigation in which officers of the Juno Beach police department were mobilized to facilitate the covert purchase of several thousand dollars worth of marijuana from a target led to the successful arrest and prosecution of several schoolyard dealers. The co-lateral benefit to using your own employees in the operation is that it creates and affirms a feeling of team work.

Most small law enforcement agencies suffer from a relatively high rate of turnover resulting at least in part from employee dissatisfaction related to a misconception that the opportunity for diversified experience is limited by organizational size. In reality each organization is limited by the depth of each members vision and commitment to that vision. Whenever possible using the agency's own human resources to support major investigative cases leads to overall job enrichment and increased employee satisfaction.

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Creativity: The Key to Small Agency Criminal Investigations

Two other possibilities for generating increased manpower would be the formation of a mutual aid consortium or a regional task force. With both of these options it is vital that a written contract be established which addresses the issues of purpose, scope, administration and control, and leadership of the unit. The mutual aid consortium has the advantage of being more broad in scope and allowing greater control over member agencies own employees during unit actions. The task force must have a centralized area of control and is task specific in nature. Neither option is mutually exclusive.

Equipment and Training

Equipment and training can be obtained much in the same manner as personnel. It can be purchased via the use of forfeiture funds or via community grants or donations. Many training opportunities are available to small agency personnel free of charge from larger law enforcement institutions. It is up to the police manager to show the initiative in seeking out these opportunities.

Mutual aid consortiums can include the sharing of equipment and expertise. Through intelligent planning among member agencies various specialty items can be purchased thus sharing the impact on local budgets.

One source of equipment that is most often overlooked by managers is the community. Most segments of community are eager to help law enforcement with only a written expression of appreciation on department letterhead as the price of their services. On numerous narcotics investigations the Juno Beach

police department has been able to obtain; houses, cars, jewelry, and other items necessary for conducting large scale covert operations. In one investigation the Juno Beach police department secured the loan of a house from a wealthy planned community, furniture and other artifacts from various merchants, and vehicles from the local car dealers. Equipment which we did not have on hand was loaned to the department via our mutual aid agreement. The operation led to the seizure of a white collar criminal enterprise that encompassed four counties. The equipment, location, and props for this operation cost the tax payer of Juno Beach absolutely nothing. In many cases, the investigation hours can be repaid via court ordered restitution to the police agency upon conviction of the defendants.

Conclusion

The size of your police agency and the amount of resources it possesses need not limit its ability to conduct complex criminal investigations. Through vision, cooperation and creativity a small law enforcement agency can take on even large scale investigations. The result is more arrests being made, restitution being awarded and increased knowledge and morale among your officers. The investigative ability of each agency is only limited by its imagination and vision.

Sgt. Ramirez is the supervisor of the criminal investigations division of the Juno Beach police department. He holds a Bachelors Degree of Human Resource Management and is currently earning a Masters Degree in Business Administration.

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