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Focus on Police and the Community

Features

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The Cover: SAT officers on patrol stop to make friends with a youth from the neighborhood. See article p. 2.

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Operation CLEAN

Reclaiming City Neighborhoods

BY
RICHARD W. HATLER



*Pictured clockwise from top left:
Officers execute search warrants at the beginning of the operation.
A mounted officer is present for crowd control during the execution of warrants.
An abandoned apartment complex is demolished.
Walking beat officers provide followup after the operation's conclusion.*

Dallas, Texas, faces the same problems as many other cities around the country. It has experienced the devastation of whole neighborhoods as drugs, particularly crack cocaine, destroy old ways of life and replace them with violence, thievery, and a feeling of hopelessness. One by one, communities in Dallas fell to drug dealers, only to become darkened marketplaces of the drug trade.

To curb the growing tide of urban deterioration, the Dallas Police Department embarked on a broad-based program designed to reclaim neighborhoods and rid communities of the drug dealers who were responsible for most other crimes. Through Operation CLEAN (Community and Law Enforcement Against Narcotics), the Dallas Police Department serves as the catalyst for change, coordinating the

full resources of the city toward target neighborhoods. The goal of this campaign is to return control of neighborhoods to the law-abiding residents who had been forced to surrender their communities to drug dealers.

Operational Components

The success of Operation CLEAN depends on the total support of the police department and

city administrators. Fiscal efficiency is very important since many of the operations require large outlays of funds that should not be diverted from other programs. Therefore, it is essential that all participating city agencies work together to provide required services. Several municipal departments work together to make up Operation CLEAN components (the CLEAN Team), and each has specific responsibilities:

- The police department is responsible for the removal of drug dealers, crime prevention training, intensive 24-hour personnel deployment, and coordination of Operation CLEAN activities.
- The fire department checks properties for fire code violations and orders the closing of unoccupied buildings with safety violations.
- The streets and sanitation department is responsible for the general clean-up of target areas; clearing alleys, trimming trees, and removing discarded furniture used by drug dealers.
- The housing and neighborhood services department is responsible for strictly enforcing applicable city codes, referring unsalvageable properties to the Urban Rehabilitation Standards Board for demolition, and working with outside groups to obtain vacant lots for housing units.

- The city attorney's office provides vigorous prosecution of code violations and aggressively seizes abandoned properties.

Each component of the CLEAN Team is critical to the success of the operation. The CLEAN Team approaches neighborhood involvement with an eye toward addressing quality-of-life issues within the target area.

Target Selection

It is very important that a jurisdiction has sufficient resources to substantially impact the target area. The size of the neighborhood and the population density must be considered. In Dallas, it was determined that a target area should include no more than 10 square city blocks. Preliminary statistics and intelligence information concerning crime levels in the target area must be accurate so that adequate manpower can be devoted to the operation. The selected area should be large enough so that a significant impact can be made, but not so large that available resources are insufficient to accomplish the operation's objectives.

The CLEAN Team established certain criteria that each target neighborhood had to meet before it could be accepted into the program. To be considered, an area had to be experiencing a high level of drug use and street distribution, a high crime level, and a high number of calls for police service. It was also determined that Operation CLEAN would be most effective in primarily residential areas, rather than industrial or business com-



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**The Operation
CLEAN program is
one approach
to reclaim lost
communities.**
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munities. This is due largely to the cooperative nature of the campaign and the need to ensure participation by all CLEAN Team components. To select an industrial area, for example, would limit the participation of the housing and neighborhood services department and could result in a loss of interest by the department in future operations.

Another important consideration when selecting a target area is the attitude and potential of residents and business leaders in the area. An important element in the operation is the willingness of neighborhood residents to take con-

trol of their own communities. The greater the willingness of the residents to take control, the greater the probability that a long-term solution will result.

Implementation

Each Operation CLEAN project has basically seven phases. The level and type of activity varies in each phase.

- *Phase One*—The most appropriate target area is selected. Because undercover operations will begin in phase two, only selected individuals within the police department are involved in this decision process. The other CLEAN Team departments are not advised of the target area until phase three.
- *Phase Two*—Narcotics Division detectives infiltrate the target area. Detectives make undercover buys and use confidential informants to obtain information for search and arrest warrants. This phase normally lasts 5 to 14 days. The objective is to identify as many drug dealers, drug distributors, and drug dealing locations as possible.
- *Phase Three*—This is the first overt enforcement phase, which is initiated by executing simultaneously all search and arrest warrants within the target area. Uniformed officers,

plainclothes detectives, and canine and horse patrols saturate the neighborhood so that the police department has almost total control of the target area. In Dallas, as many as 100 officers are normally involved in this phase. The news media is contacted prior to implementation, so that extensive media exposure will accompany this phase. The objective of this phase is to remove as many drug dealers from the target area as possible.

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- *Phase Four*—Phase Four begins as phase three is being executed. During this phase, eight uniformed officers and a sergeant are assigned specifically to the target area 24 hours a day. A total of 24 officers and 3 sergeants are assigned to the area to cover all three shifts. This phase lasts 2 weeks.

During this phase, officers take aggressive enforcement action against all criminal activity, including

traffic violations. The objective is to disrupt the pattern of criminal activity that has existed in the area.

Also during this phase, all CLEAN Team departments meet to discuss and visit the target area. All team members become active during phase four. Personnel from the Community Services Division begin to organize local residents into Crime Watch groups. One important component of this phase is to inform the residents of the target area of the objectives of the CLEAN Team.

- *Phase Five*—This phase is a continuation of phase four, but the intensive police contingency is reduced to operating 16 hours per day. Other Operation CLEAN efforts continue. During this phase, which lasts 2 weeks, control of the target area is gradually transferred to legitimate community members.
- *Phase Six*—This is a continuation of phase five, except that the police contingency is further reduced. One shift of eight officers and a sergeant is assigned during the most active 8-hour period, usually in the evening. A walking beat is established and will continue after the operation has been completed. Other team members complete their

activities. Increased control is transferred to community residents.

- *Phase Seven*—This is the follow-up and evaluation phase. Any needs identified in earlier stages that have not been met will be assigned to specific individuals. Each team member critiques the success of the operation and cites where future improvement can be made. An operational report is prepared and forwarded to the city manager's office.

Results

Since the adoption of the program, there have been several Operation CLEAN projects. Operation CLEAN I was initiated on March 11, 1989. The target area was a 6-square block neighborhood used by drug dealers and overrun by violence and criminal activity. In the 6-week period prior to March 11th, a total of 336 calls for police service had been received from the area. There had been 26 violent crimes and 9 property crimes reported during this period. In addition, the department continually received reports of gunfire in the area, both day and night.

During the execution of 14 search warrants in the third phase of Operation CLEAN I, 630 packets of crack cocaine and 76 packets of marijuana were seized. Several weapons were also confiscated. During phase four, 289 arrests were made and 200 traffic citations issued. An additional 106 arrests

Results of Operation CLEAN I

- Calls for police service declined by 40%
- The occurrence of Crime Index offenses reduced by 71%
- The streets and sanitation department cleared 6.4 miles of alleyways and streets
- The fire department inspected 95 locations and acted on 159 violations
- The park department re-opened a neighborhood park and provided staff for recreational activities
- A citizen Crime Watch Program was established

were made during phase five, and 39 arrests were made in phase six.

During the 6 weeks of Operation CLEAN I, the number of calls for police service decreased 40 percent and Crime Index offenses were reduced by 71 percent.

When Operation CLEAN I was completed in May 1989, many significant changes to the target area had been realized. Criminal activity in the target area had been significantly reduced, the neighborhood had been cleared of 1,000 cubic yards of debris, and construction began on new buildings that replaced dilapidated structures. An active Crime Watch Program was created, and most important, concerned citizens regained control of their neighborhood. Overall, there has been a dramatic improvement in the quality of life in the target area as a result of Operation CLEAN I.

Conclusion

As Operation CLEAN demonstrates, local law enforcement can work with other city departments to improve the quality

of life for residents living in areas overrun by drug dealing and violence. In Dallas, the police department decided to take a lead role in coordinating these efforts.

Because Operation CLEAN is manpower intensive, its effectiveness depends on the willingness of both city council and police managers to devote appropriate resources. As past Operation CLEAN projects demonstrate, however, these expenditures result in reductions in calls for police service and a decrease in criminal activity in target areas. In the long-term, this will save patrol and investigative resources that can be used elsewhere in the police budget.

As more communities become affected by the drug problem, public calls for innovative programs and new initiatives to combat rising criminal activity will require law enforcement agencies around the country to rethink existing strategies. The Operation CLEAN program is one approach to reclaim lost communities.

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