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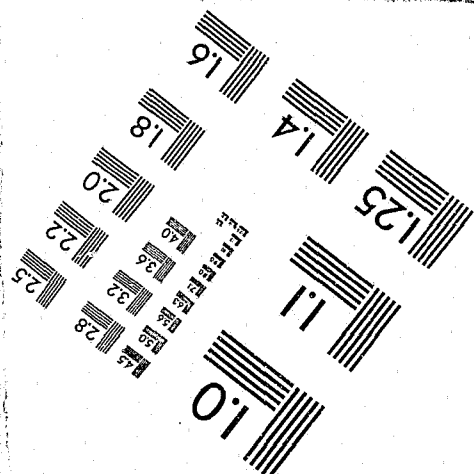
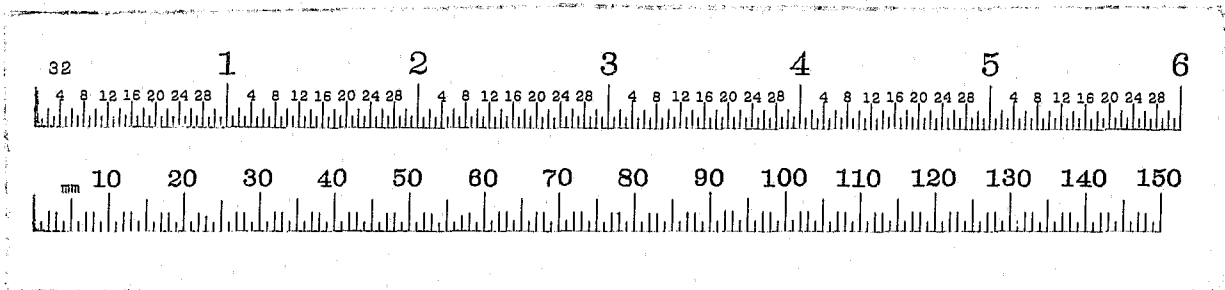
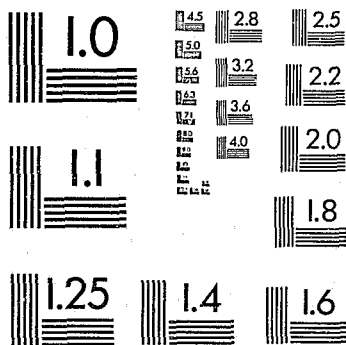
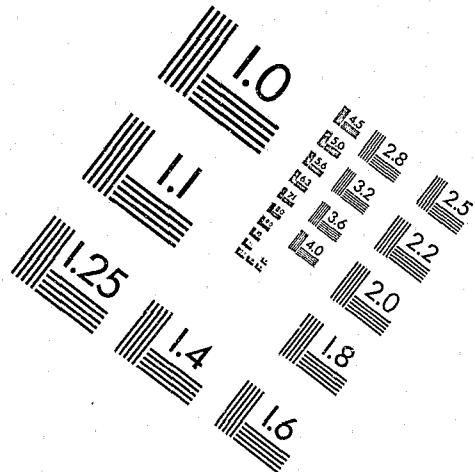
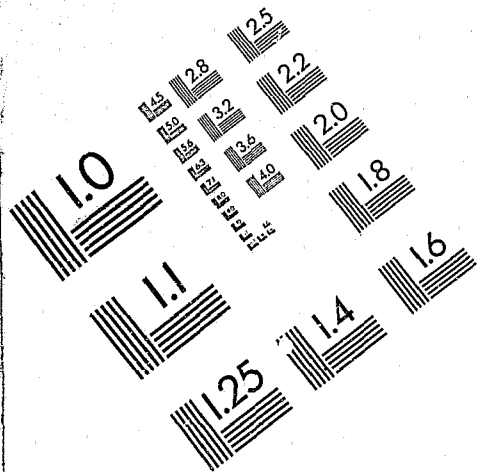
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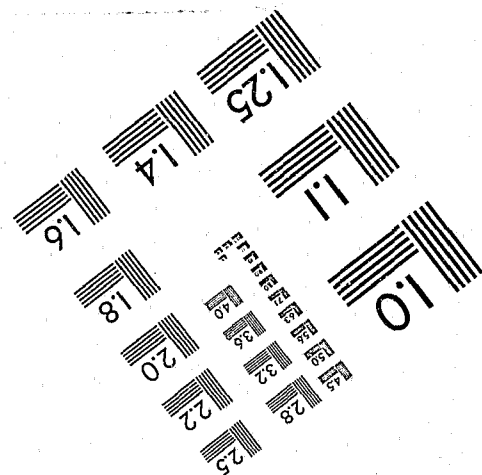
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Police Chief

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Since 1963, when then-President John F. Kennedy signed the legislation establishing National Police Week and National Peace Officers' Memorial Day, the law enforcement community has set aside time each May to reflect on the sacrifices of those who have given their lives in the line of duty. We extend our deepest appreciation and sympathies to the families, friends and co-workers left behind. Photo © George Godoy Photography.

# The Police Chief

MAY 1994  
VOLUME LXI, NUMBER 5

The official publication of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Inc.

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Second-class non-profit postage paid at Merrifield, Virginia, and at additional mailing offices. The *Police Chief* (ISSN 0915-2571) is published monthly by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, 515 N. Washington St., Alexandria, VA 22314-2357, USA; 703/836-6767; fax: 703/836-4543. Subscription rate of \$25 to IACP members is included in annual membership dues of \$100; subscription rate to nonmembers is \$25 per year, domestic and foreign. Single copy, current issue, \$2.50; back issues, \$3, except April (Buyers' Guide) issue, \$12.50.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the *Police Chief*, 515 N. Washington St., Alexandria, VA 22314-2357, USA.

NOTE: New subscriptions and changes of address require six to eight weeks to process. Subscriptions begin with next available issue; for backdated subscriptions, place separate order for back issues desired. IACP will not be responsible for replacement of an issue if not notified of nondelivery by the 15th of the third month following the month of issue. Please check address label and promptly mail any necessary changes.

Articles are contributed by practitioners in law enforcement or related fields. Manuscripts must be original work, previously unpublished and not simultaneously submitted to another publisher. No word rate is paid or other remuneration given. *Contributors' opinions and statements are not purporting to define official IACP policy or imply IACP endorsement.*

Microform is available from: University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48016, USA.

Printed in the U.S.A.



BPA business publication membership granted September 1991

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# Community-Oriented Policing

## Making a Difference in a Public Housing Project

By Major Walter A. Baranyk, Patrol Bureau Commander, Fairfax County Police Department, Virginia

The nationally accredited Fairfax County Police Department—Virginia's largest local law enforcement agency—employs nearly 1,000 sworn officers and over 1,400 total personnel to serve a population of approximately 800,000 within a 400-square-mile geographic area. Department statistics indicate that service delivery—in terms of per capita cost, crime rates, closure rates and sworn personnel per 10,000 population—is among the most effective of any major suburban police agency in the nation.

Organizationally, the agency uses a centralized command and control management configuration in which a deputy chief for operations and deputy chief for administration report directly to the chief of police. The department is further broken down into 10 major bureau-level units designated Patrol (Divisions I and II), Criminal Investigations, Operations Support, Community Services, Technical Services, Administrative Services, Public Safety Communications, Public Safety Academy, and Planning and Research.

Decentralized command and control are accomplished by assignment of patrol and localized investigative functions to seven geographically based police substations. Numerous special enforcement units are available to supplement the patrol function, including selective enforcement teams, tactical teams, narcotics enforcement teams and criminal investigations sections.

### A Community in Need

It is in Reston—envisioned by its architects and developers as a utopian com-

munity in which residents could live, work and play within a self-contained environment—that the Total Community Policing (TCP) philosophy examined in this article has been implemented.

Under the Reston master plan, dwelling units, intended for occupancy by residents of dissimilar socioeconomic backgrounds, were located contiguously. Several public housing projects were also included in this development plan.

The Reston police district comprises a 79-square-mile area that generally consists of residential dwellings, commercial and high-tech industry, shopping centers and an extensive park, pathway and recreation system. At its core, the district covers the Reston "new town" area, but it also extends to other locations, including traditional suburban residential neighborhoods and some semi-rural localities near the Potomac River. The police facility is staffed by 77 sworn personnel, including 12 supervisors and two staff officers serving as commander and assistant commander.

The Stonegate Village Housing Project—among the first of such complexes to be constructed in the Reston area—consists of 14 separate buildings with a total of 240 individual dwelling units, which vary from one to four bedrooms and have the capability to house single member or multi-member families. The buildings, parking lots and common grounds occupy a land area of 10.5 acres. Intentionally located adjacent to both single-family and town-house units, the development was originally constructed under private ownership funds as part of the mixed residential schemes inherent in the Reston commu-

nity. Previously owned and managed by a private firm, the complex was purchased in 1990 by the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RHA).

Prior to initiation of aggressive enforcement efforts in 1988, Stonegate Village suffered from the effects of pervasive, open-air drug markets and a high rate of violent crime. Police-community relations were strained, and there was inadequate resident support for—or confidence in—police intervention. The complex was experiencing a disproportionate amount of crime, and residents were demanding more and more police protection. Traditional methods of patrol and enforcement did little to gain the trust and cooperation of the residents or reduce the occurrence of crime.

The department sought to create within this complex long-term, quality-of-life improvements through the use of TCP, a multi-staged program emphasizing aggressive narcotics enforcement and permanent on-site officers. The premise was that intensive enforcement efforts—supplemented by community involvement and coordinated support from on-site social service providers—would result in dramatic reductions in crime, as well as improved community perceptions of police performance.

Regular meetings were conducted with "core" resident families—thought to have some degree of social influence—to determine residents' perceptions of the most pressing issues facing tenants. The importance of cooperating with the police in identifying and prosecuting offenders was also emphasized to both residents and project management staff. An informal tenants' association was formed, and core fam-

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ilies were encouraged to solicit the support of all residents in addressing the community's problems.

With this foundation laid, station command could begin to implement a comprehensive community-oriented policing effort. The key to the success of such an effort is the adoption of an initial, aggressive enforcement policy with continued maintenance enforcement, broad-based community involvement and the ability to refer residents to alternative social support services.

### Stage 1: Enforcement

Based upon both resident complaints and police intelligence data, the first priority in Stonegate Village was to crack down on the open-air drug market. A special team of officers was assigned to work full-time in the community to identify and remove the drug dealers who had been using the community as a safe haven. Undercover operations were begun, along with high-profile drug arrests by members of the department's narcotics enforcement team.

Frustrated with drug dealers who operated brazenly in their courtyards and playgrounds, local Neighborhood Watch groups assisted in these efforts by providing information on suspected dealers.

As the number of arrests increased, it became evident that many of those being arrested were not local residents. With support from the community and complex management, the property was formally posted, and trespassers entering the area to buy drugs were arrested immediately. As potential customers were eliminated, the drug market activity was greatly diminished—from 60 recorded cases in 1988 to four in 1992.

### Stage 2: Community Involvement

To shore up confidence in the police, particularly among the children in the development, crime prevention officers working closely with station command formulated a community police education called "Cops Caring About Kids." While such an approach was unproven in Fairfax County, and staff were unsure of its potential for success, it nevertheless garnered considerable support. Officers brought in an array of displays ranging from police cars and crime-fighting robots to a medevac helicopter, school teachers conveyed the message in their classrooms and local businesses donated large quantities of food and prizes. Several hundred tenants and nearby community residents took advantage of the opportunity to sit in a police car, see a helicopter close-up and share food with participating officers.

Having lowered many of the barriers to effective communication and created



a foundation for a joint approach to community problem solving, this first expo was pronounced a tremendous success by local and county government officials, as well as the news media.

Subsequently, several other projects aimed at the community's youth were established, including a weekly children's movie and a "Cops 'n Kids Run Against Drugs," in which about 200 youngsters participated to take a stand against the drug trade in their community.

These efforts led directly to enhanced community responsiveness. Formal resident leaders emerged and freely offered their input concerning police operations within the community. Two of these leaders were invited to join the district's Citizens' Advisory Committee, which meets monthly to exchange information with the station commander and provide input on issues of mutual concern.

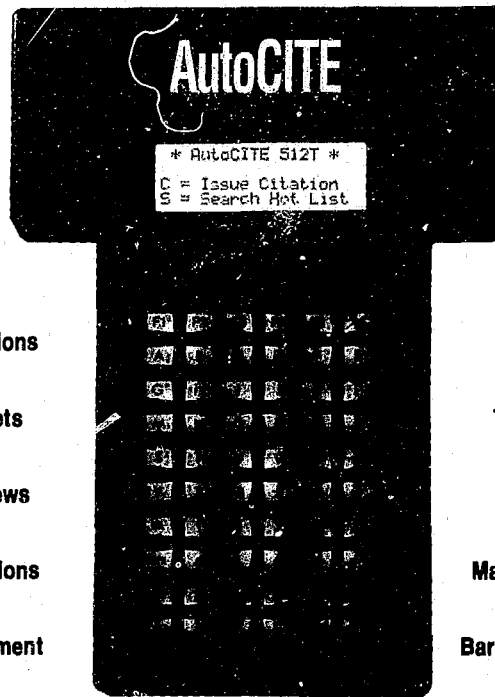
### Stage 3: Supplemental Services

Supplemental community support services are critical to the lasting success of any problem-solving approach because the responsibility for both initiation and follow-up lies with the service recipients. Where traditionally an officer responding to a family dispute might attempt either surface reconciliation or arrest, the community-oriented policing approach often relies on referral to appropriate counseling/support agencies. Indeed, the officer himself may actually initiate the referral call and arrange for the involved parties to accept formal counseling.

The opportunity to greatly expand community policing capabilities in Stonegate Village occurred in September 1990, when the Fairfax County Department of Housing and Human Development, in cooperation with the RHA, purchased the complex from its private owners, initiated rehabilitation efforts and established on-site management. Significantly, referral/counseling services were also located within the complex. (Previously, limited access to transportation kept many residents from taking full advantage of drug and alcohol abuse programs and family counseling services located elsewhere in the county.)

The ability to conduct immediate follow-up with essential service components and assess the results of their referral and problem-solving efforts provided officers assigned to the complex the feedback necessary to evaluate options, provide recommendations and determine the results of non-arrest alternatives.

On-site services provided to community residents since the inception of TCP have included adult education, health services, nursing visitation, alcohol abuse counseling, drug abuse counseling, child care, employment counseling and place-



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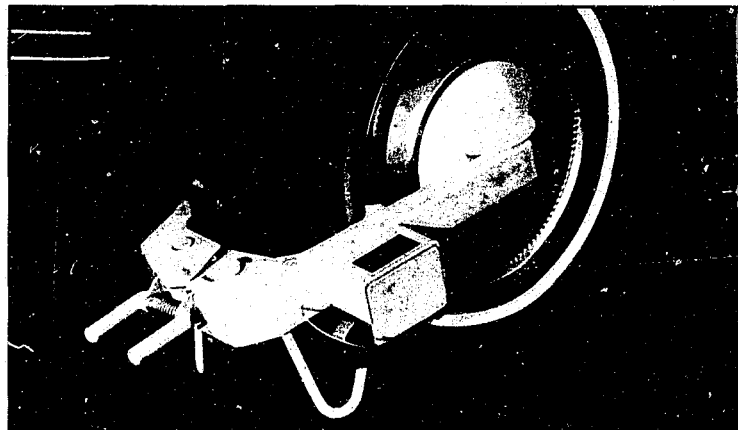
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ment, food and nutrition counseling, housing assistance and interdenominational religious services. These services created in Stonegate Village the opportunity to implement and maintain a strong community policing program. The dedicated efforts of numerous counselors, instructors and volunteers toward the achievement of higher community and human standards have, to a large extent, made possible the success of a problem-solving policing approach.

### *Assessing Program Effectiveness*

Community perceptions of a police department's effectiveness often are dependent upon factors not easily identified or accurately measured. Observations made during a brief encounter, such as an officer's appearance, manner of speech, stance, bearing and related actions, can independently or collectively create a lasting favorable or unfavorable impression. While police managers are acutely aware of such intangibles, they are frequently forced to depend on other "hard" indicators. The assessment of formal crime data necessarily served as the basic foundation for the measurement of agency effectiveness within the community.

Ten incident/offense types occurring within the 240-unit Stonegate complex over a six-year period were selected for analysis, as were five arrest categories. Events were chosen based upon sufficient frequency of occurrence to allow legitimate year-to-year comparison, as well as officers' perceptions of their severity or community impact. These events—charted from 1987 through the first six months of 1993—include simple assault, disorderly conduct, domestic/family violence, public drunkenness, narcotics/vice violations, noise ordinance violations, auto tampering, trespassing, weapons violations and miscellaneous police assistance (non-criminal events such as premise checks, civil disputes, traffic control, vehicle lockouts, etc.).

Arrest data for this period include the following charges: simple assault, drugs/narcotics violations, disorderly conduct, drinking/public drunkenness and weapons violations.

For each of the specific incidents examined (except public drunkenness and auto tampering), there were fewer occurrences in 1987, prior to initiation of aggressive enforcement action in 1988. Since reported and police-initiated incidents increased substantially in the two years immediately after enforcement action began, it can be assumed that 1987 figures represent under-reporting by residents. This may have been due in part to a lack of confidence in the police department, as well as community apathy toward crime.

This assumption is further supported by the fact that, by the end of 1988, calls for service had increased 81 percent—from 379 in 1987 to 685 in 1988. Reported weapons violations increased 300 percent, from 6 in 1987 to 24 in 1988, and narcotics-related events increased 1900 percent, from 3 to 60 during the same time period. Significant increases in reported activity also were noted for simple assault, disorderly conduct, noise ordinance violations and trespassing.

Consistent with these increases, arrest figures reveal similar success in "weeding" efforts during the first years of enforcement activity. Arrests for trespassing, public drunkenness, disorderly conduct and simple assault all increased substantially, with narcotics arrests showing a dramatic 1037 percent increase from eight in 1987 to 91 in 1988. By the end of 1989—the second year of TCP within Stonegate Village—calls for service in all categories had peaked or begun to show declines. In addition, the number of arrests occurring within the complex showed marked decreases, particularly in the categories of disorderly conduct, public drunkenness and weapons arrests, which declined by more than 65 percent from 1989 through 1990.

From 1990 through 1992, intense community relations efforts, continued aggressive enforcement and implementation of a problem-solving approach—combined with utilization of on-site referral services—became firmly entrenched in the social fabric of Stonegate Village, where it produced identifiable positive outcomes.

While calls for service of the 10 examined events increased 12.6 percent county-wide—from 132,940 in 1988 to 149,676 in 1992—calls for service for the same events in Stonegate Village declined 67 percent—from 685 in 1988 to 224 in 1992.

Particularly notable is the extent of decline for those events and arrests most representative of an improvement in residents' quality of life: an 87 percent reduction in simple assault, an 89 percent reduction in disorderly conduct, a 93 percent reduction in narcotics-related crimes, an 89 percent reduction in trespassing and an 84 percent reduction in weapons violations.

An analysis of crime data for 1987 through 1992 clearly indicates tremendous success in reducing the occurrence of crime within Stonegate Village; in turn, the positive perceptions of police performance factored significantly in the success of TCP. Measuring the residents' attitudes added yet another dimension.

### *Assessing Community Perceptions*

A survey methodology was employed to solicit Stonegate residents' perceptions of police effectiveness, particularly with

regard to police response prior to and subsequent to the implementation of TCP. The survey instrument was comprised of two parts: Part I was structured in a factual format intended to establish length of residency and exposure to crime occurrence, while Part II employed a closed-end question-and-statement technique and offered response options in the Likert scale format: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neutral (N), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). In addition, several questions offered response choices of excellent, good, fair or poor.

The survey instrument was administered in August 1993 to 60 families residing in Stonegate Village, representing more than 25 percent of the complex's total population. Because questions regarding crime or illegal activity tend to arouse anxiety, surveys were administered with the assurance of absolute anonymity and presented personally to ensure an understanding of the survey's intent. Whenever possible, the questions and statements were completed by the primary adult resident or his spouse or partner.

Most respondents indicated greatly improved perceptions of both police effectiveness and crime reductions. For example, although 85 percent believed Stonegate had had a serious drug problem prior to 1989, 82 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement: "In your opinion, Stonegate Village has a less serious drug problem now."

Asked, "How would you rate communication between Stonegate Village residents and the police prior to 1988?" nearly 57 percent indicated that communication was poor. However, 93 percent of survey participants rated communication between residents and police since 1988 as either "excellent" or "good." Particularly among respondents who had resided in Stonegate Village for six or more years, survey results support a finding that community perceptions of the police were greatly enhanced as a result of TCP.

### *Conclusion*

The Fairfax County Police Department's six-year effort in the Stonegate Village public housing project represents the agency's first, formal, dedicated effort to target and police a service area in a non-traditional manner—going beyond reactive, incident-driven approaches. While most law enforcement practitioners will agree that community policing should be focused on long-term, problem-solving approaches, the methods of configuration and implementation are diverse and frequently contradictory due to budgetary constraints, insufficient personnel or equipment, ill-defined target areas or a lack of commitment by governing authorities.

While precise, detailed models for TCP may be as varied as the number of potential target areas, certain concepts consistent with the overall philosophy can serve as building blocks for the total program. Most critical to the success of TCP in a public housing project are the assessment of the target area and the involvement of service recipients in defining goals. There must be a mutual understanding between residents and police that they share responsibility for achieving genuine improvements in the quality of life.

Implementation of Stage I must include active, consistent enforcement and increased police visibility within the community to reduce the occurrence of crime.

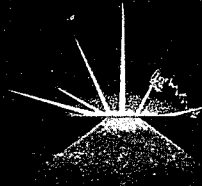
Stage II activities commence following initial community policing training and personnel selection, and are concurrent with the establishment of community support and enforcement efforts. During Stage II, community policing officers are tasked with continued on-site enforcement and participation in cooperative problem-solving efforts. Officers are responsible for encouraging the formation of citizens' advisory groups and coordinating their efforts with human resource support groups. Due to the complexities inherent in developing community confidence, Stage II can be expected to be time-intensive. Additionally, because community participation is difficult to predict, specific projections of a time line for task and goal accomplishment necessitate constant monitoring and reassessment.

The ultimate goals of the TCP philosophy are realized in Stage III, in which social services and other essential human resource organizations are established on-site in the targeted communities, where they become an essential element in the social substructure. Ideally, the character of law enforcement participation in Stage III undergoes some changes. Officers who conducted intensive enforcement in Stage I and facilitated preliminary social service networking in Stage II become monitors and facilitators in Stage III. While they remain on-site, their presence may be reduced.

Stage III also includes an evaluation dimension, measuring achievement against the standards of reduced crime rates and improved community perceptions of the police-resident relationship.

Of course, implementation of a Total Community Policing program makes considerable demands in terms of leadership, personnel and training resources, and the program may be further confined by budgetary restrictions. These limitations notwithstanding, however, TCP's potential for positive, achievable outcomes will undoubtedly influence contemporary police managers in the 21st century. ★

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