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CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESEARCH AND CRIME REDUCTION

ADDRESS BY GEOFFREY W. ALPHEA
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
NIJ/ECJ

WORKSHOP ON CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION MANAGEMENT

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the first place. When some of our leading police administrators say that the police cannot and should not be expected to cut crime by themselves, they are no doubt correct; when correctional administrators say that corrections has always been the dumping ground of the system and, therefore, they cannot be expected to do much about rehabilitation or recidivism, they are stating a self-evident proposition; and when we at LEAA point out that the LEAA budget accounts for only about 5% of the overall national expenditure on the criminal justice system per year, and that as a result expectations about the LEAA program have to be scaled down, we also are stating what is obvious and true. But I wonder if all of our newly discovered realism really misses the point. As the crime rate keeps soaring, the nation's frustration with the government's inability to do something about this most important domestic concern soars with it, and I think the national level of frustration has just about reached the breaking point. To the legion of crime victims among us, and our victimization studies show that there are far more of them than we ever would have wanted to acknowledge, it all has the ring of a well orchestrated cop-out.

It is of course quite easy to understand how we have gotten to this point so quickly. After all, it is only 12 years since crime surfaced as a national issue, raised in the 1964 presidential campaign. What is particularly disturbing, of course,

is that if we were blessed with 1983 crime rates now, we would still be claiming that we had licked the crime problem. The President's crime program of 1966, obviously a response to the crime issue raised the year before, was accompanied by the grandiose claim that we were going to banish crime from our land. Two years later, the National Crime Commission echoed that sentiment, coupling crime reduction to national willpower, and Americans have always had enough willpower -- to beat back the depression; to start from scratch and demolish two mighty war machines in World War II in a scant three and a half years; to hold the line in Korea and, only two years after the Crime Commission report, to put a man on the moon. What obstacles could street crime present in the face of such a record? Not many, and we so informed the country. I think the country believed its leaders' promises; we had not yet failed in Vietnam or been tarnished by Watergate. But now, 12 years later, those events and others have occurred and our promises to cut crime have not been fulfilled. The national sense of disillusionment that we read about, almost daily, is quite real, at least in criminal justice. We have simply got to do something -- soon.

But what, and where do we look? If it is correct to say that part of the nation's disillusionment comes not only from our failure to cut crime, but also from our general inaction on the crime issue, then it certainly would be reasonable to suggest to a

sophisticated audience that criminal justice research has many of the answers we are looking for. That would be nonsense. But some impressive beginnings are being made and some important issues are at least being crystallized by studies which are producing, finally, apparently important results. You do not have to agree or disagree with the conclusions of the Kansas City South Patrol study to know that the effectiveness of traditional preventive patrol is a key crime reduction issue. Indeed, the importance of the Kansas City study is not whether there was more crime in the proactive beats and less in the reactive, or that there was little if any difference, but rather that the study has made patrol utilization probably the most important crime reduction issue facing American policing today. If the results of the Kansas City study hold up in other experimental studies in other cities, then experimental social science research will have added a major, unexpected piece of knowledge to the puzzle. And it probably is the unexpected nature of the Kansas City results which make so many so uncomfortable. Most police administrators have always believed that random preventive patrol was the best, most economical way to use available resources for crime control and citizen satisfaction purposes. Kansas City jars that accepted wisdom out of place. It is disconcerting; if the implications of the study are correct generally, a lot of us have been wrong for a long time

and one of the things that we are doing to
relieve the burden on the police is to provide training
that will help them to deal with the public and we don't
know how to relieve crime, we don't know how to relieve
Kansas City crime, we don't know how to relieve crime
they collide with conditions elsewhere. In terms of crime, it will
be hard to have it all.

We have a lot of people who are looking out
the horizon. The concept of the police is, of course, that
the faster the police get to the scene of a crime, the more
likely it is that an arrest will be made or that the scene. And
based on that assumption we have spent millions in improving the
capacity of patrol vehicles to respond as quickly as possible to
certain kinds of crimes. In the response time study now being
completed, again in Kansas City, the data being accumulated are
indicating that all along we have been asking the wrong question
and that in many cases whether or not the police respond in 5 minutes
or 50 minutes is absolutely irrelevant to the question of arrest of
a suspect on the scene. That is because, quite simply, it generally
takes the citizen an unexpectedly long time to notify the police
that he has been victimized. If the police are notified 30 minutes
after the completion of a commercial robbery, it basically makes no

difference in such time it takes them to arrive at the scene -- as difference in the location of onset of the offense. We even know of cases where, for example, after a liquor store robbery, the victim has called his family to ask what he should do before he has called the police. It may be that some of the funds we devote to reducing response time ought instead to be diverted to supporting other education programs or other means of reducing the time between the completion of the incident and the citizen's notification of the police.

The conclusions of both the South patrol and response time studies are quite surprising to most people in the field. We have always thought that random preventive patrol was the best, most economical and most crime prevention oriented patrol technique available, and we have always believed the quicker patrol vehicles responded to the scene of a completed criminal offense, the more likely it was that the perpetrator of the offense would be arrested on or near the scene. We have been surprised and made uncomfortable by studies which challenge those notions and, indeed, seem to indicate that they are wrong. But why, then, are some people upset at the conclusions of Rand's criminal investigation study? What is surprising about those findings? Does any sophisticated police administrator seriously dispute the notion that

in large departments, over half of all serious reported crime receives only cursory attention from investigators? or that an investigator spends most of his time on cases that statistics indicate are not likely ever to be solved? or that what solves most cases is the information which the victim provides the immediately responding patrol officer? If what is upsetting about the Rand study is simply the public explosion of the Kojak myth, then that is an understandable reaction. It may be, though, that the failure to accept the Rand findings has a deeper meaning, and reflects a sense almost of embarrassment among criminal justice officials that they had to be told by a group of researchers what should have been perfectly obvious to them, and at a price to the taxpayer of over a half a million dollars. Now that is uncomfortable.

It also may be unfair. It usually takes more than an intuitive piece of knowledge to move a large bureaucracy in any direction, and this is certainly true of large city police agencies. It may be that research has several roles to play in producing constructive change and that two of those roles are exemplified by the two Kansas-City studies on the one hand, which truly contain findings that are surprising and unexpected, and by the Rand and SRI investigation studies on the other, which, for the most part,

may confirm the intuitive beliefs that many people in the field have held for a long time. It may be that this second type of research can play a sort of catalytic role in transforming intuition into knowledge. A third role, of course, is transforming knowledge into system improvement and crime reduction, and this type of conference is a step toward that end.

The frustration Americans feel with our inability to reduce crime, coupled with the first tricklings of research findings of major importance combine to make this a very exciting, if dangerous, time in the history of criminal justice system in this country. In corrections, a single research study seems to have sparked the first major reexamination of underlying correctional philosophy in 40 years. Profoundly difficult questions of rehabilitation vs. punishment vs. warehousing are being reconsidered. In the courts a major reevaluation of sentencing is in progress. While Institute supported studies grapple with the problem of sentencing disparity, the frustration level of our citizens manifests itself in calls for flat-time and mandatory-minimum sentences. And in policing, as we know, how patrol and detective work is managed is under examination, and those two elements are the guts of policing.

None of us know where any of this will end. But we know one thing. It is good and important that we care enough to try to make the system more fair for every day it touches; it is fine that

we try to speed its processes and expedite its functioning; it is noble that we attempt to make the burdens of the victim and the citizen easier to tolerate. These are important ends and we should try to reach them. But none of us can afford to lose sight of the fact that we are all being judged on our ability to reduce crime, and that so far that judgment, for all of us, is that we have not succeeded. In the end, we will win or lose the crime war on that issue, and whether that is fair to any of us or not, that is the way it is going to be.

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