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Homeland Security and the Police Mission

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Homeland Security and the Police Mission

Stephen A. Morreale and David E. Lambert

Abstract

The terrorist attacks on America are seen as a pivotal period for the nation and for policing. They have thrust policing into a new mission that will have a wide ranging impact on the police role, organizational strategies, staffing, training and policy. State, local and tribal police are now at the forefront of Homeland Security activities, yet there remains a great deal of uncertainty about their mission.

The ramp-up efforts by federal and state government are reminiscent of the staging for civil defense in the 1960's. As a result of 9/11, there has been an invigoration for cities and towns to develop response plans for any localized terrorist incidents. The safety of the public is important and falls to government agencies.

Community policing was intended to encourage community input and involvement. As communities and our country attempt to put safeguards in place and raise awareness, community and business leaders, and neighborhood groups should be enlisted to assist. The tenets of community policing can be utilized to plan and engage the community as police agencies endeavor to respond to a new mission.

Using a sample of New England police agencies and police practitioners, this research will query whether police agencies are changing their organizational mission to integrate Homeland Security activities. The researchers used several methods to analyze police agencies and their role in Homeland Security. First, examining police agency mission statements through content analysis, the authors found little evidence of a formal Homeland Security focus. This research utilized a web-based survey tool to elicit officer perspectives on Homeland Security objectives.

KEYWORDS: Homeland Security, police mission, counterterrorism, mission statements, police leadership

Introduction

The terrorist attacks on America are seen as a pivotal period for the nation and for policing, in particular (Henry 2002; Rinaldi 2003; White 2004). These attacks thrust policing into a new mission that will have a wide-ranging impact on the police role, organizational strategies, staffing, training and policy. Some authors have described this as a watershed moment in our field (Murphy and Plotkin 2003) with substantial policy implications for the police mission over the long term. According to the Oklahoma City National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) first responders play a critical role in response to terrorist attacks on American soil (Pollard, Tuohy and Garwin 2003).

While traditionally counter-terrorism was the purview of the CIA, FBI, State Department and other national security entities, this has proven to not be effective. A consensus has been built that posits that state, local and tribal police are now at the forefront of Homeland Security activities (Gilmore Commission 2003; Hart, Rudman and Flynn 2002; Murphy and Plotkin 2003; Pollard, Tuohy and Garwin 2003; Rinaldi 2003; White 2004). Henry (2002) contends that the American public expects state and local police departments to provide security, and focus resources on the prevention, deterrence and response to terrorism. At the national level, state and local police have been granted a significant role in counter-terrorism. The Gilmore Commission (2003) advocates involvement of state and local police in the tasks of terrorism awareness, prevention, information gathering and sharing and emergency response.

Redefining Roles and Expectations

There is, to date, no clear and defined role for the 18,000 police agencies across America. PERF (2002) states that those agencies who believe they must make significant strategic changes to their organizational structures, policies and procedures, personnel expertise, training and budgets, are doing so without a strong unifying strategy at higher levels (Gilmore 2003; Henry 2002; Holden 2003). Police agencies are expected to prevent, detect, interdict and respond to terrorism within the U.S. but the specifics of what national policy makers want and share with these agencies are not clear.

While there is great anticipation that state and local police departments will, at this time, play a major role in counter-terrorism, most of that expectation has been unrealized. Clearly, some of this confusion is due to the uncertainties of redefining the role of state and local police agencies in regard to Homeland Security (Murphy and Plotkin 2003). Many police agencies are hesitant to jump into this new and unfamiliar challenge without clear guidance from federal and state leaders regarding agency role, training, equipment and other resource needs. In other cases, change

comes slowly to law enforcement. This is especially the case where policing is attempting to redefine its mission to encompass counter-terrorism. The pace of this shift has been extremely slow (Henry 2002).

Despite a lack of role clarity, there is an expectation within many segments of the profession that police agencies will evolve into an effective counter-terrorism component (White 2004). Flynn (2002) reports that police organizations have risen to the challenges presented by the addition of a counter-terrorism role. In specific cases such as New York City and Washington D.C., this is accurate. However, it cannot be assumed that this role is widely accepted within the police world. In many aspects, the police role of counter-terrorism is similar to the crime-prevention role and the response to violent crime in the event of an attack. In most cases, local and state police would serve as first responders to such an incident (Morreale 2004).

Funding and Redefining the Mission

Nearly eight years after 9/11, American policing seems to have lost its sense of urgency in relation to the terrorist threat to our public safety. While terrorism is still a national security priority in Washington, it is doubtful that it is a priority in every community that has critical infrastructure. There seems to be a strategic disconnect between policy makers and police organizations at the state and local levels. For instance, during 2004 the U.S. Department of Homeland Security asked municipal public safety officials to conduct a lengthy Homeland Security needs assessment through its Office of Domestic Preparedness. This needs assessment was met with substantial resistance from local officials, many of whom have questioned the utility of this data-collection project. There were complaints that the federal government did not provide effective training, guidance and coordination of this effort (Boston Globe 2004) and local communities were overwhelmed by the complexity of this assessment. One element of this resistance seems to be the lack of buy-in from the non-federal police agencies.

This lack of buy-in is related to a number of factors such as the perception that this needs assessment falls outside a traditional law enforcement mission and the lack of understanding of the federal-state-local role in domestic preparedness. The needs assessment shifted substantial work to local agencies without the requisite resources to complete it successfully. In addition, police agencies generally assign a low priority to emergency planning. Overall, this illustrates the disconnect between the homeland security expectations of federal officials and the perceptions and resources available to conduct homeland security operations at the state and local level.

As many national panels (Gilmore 2003; Hart, Rudman and Flynn 2002) have discussed, first responders are under-trained, under-staffed, under-funded and under-equipped to deal with the new realities of Homeland Security. Police agencies and

municipalities report that they lack sufficient training, detection equipment, personal protection equipment and technology to effectively conduct a counter-terrorism function. Departments are faced with the new challenge of Homeland Security yet at the same time are dealing with severe fiscal constraints as a result of a prolonged weak economy. Particularly, with the funding allotted, Murphy and Plotkin (2003) felt that "Leaders of every law enforcement agency in America want to do their part in the fight against terrorism, yet many local police are struggling to muster resources, reorient their personnel and carve out new relationships with their state and federal counterparts." This statement points out the dilemma that American police departments face in the post-9/11 era.

Police departments across the country are struggling to maintain even routine levels of police services (Holden 2003). They have, in many cases, less officers than they had 5 years ago, the inability to pull officers out of the system to attend training and less funding to purchase new equipment, making the expansion of their mission much more difficult.

We have to ask: Are police officers at the ground level better trained, equipped and prepared for the challenges of international and domestic terrorism? There is an abundance of evidence that they are not prepared. But beyond the training, equipment and planning involved, is the broader question of whether police leaders and their organizations have accepted Homeland Security as part of their organizational mission. The rhetoric of Homeland Security as an integral part of the new police mission appears to outpace the reality of our domestic preparedness. Undoubtedly, police agencies have become aware of the potential for instituting Homeland Security strategies, have received some funding for equipment and technology and have been able to train some officers.

Even with funding, the larger problem is the definitions of mission and expectations. Police officers are not successfully trained in Homeland Security and counter-terrorism missions. For example, police agencies are expected to detect suspicious activity which may be indicators of pre-operational planning, yet most police agencies have not been trained on what specific behaviors to look for. Terrorists use forged documents to enter the country, hide their identities, carry out terrorism planning and carry out attacks, yet many officers are not effectively trained to identify false documents (Henry 2002).

In other cases, there is an expectation that police officers will respond to chemical or biological attacks, yet have been provided little guidance regarding personal protective equipment, response protocols or detection technology. Political decisions such as funding Homeland Security equipment purchases without significant development of national, statewide or regional strategies that address first-responder roles, goals and objectives also confuse the issue.

Symptomatic of this disconnect between state and local police agencies and the counter-terrorism mission are the problems highlighted by the use of federal

Homeland Security grants. The Washington Post (Becker, Cohen and Hsu 2003) detailed a pattern of questionable Homeland Security spending by first responder organizations such as leather jackets for police officers and the purchase of a customized \$350,000 boat for a volunteer fire department. In other cases, large amount of funding went unspent due to bureaucratic regulations.

There is little indication that local agencies have redefined their mission to include productive Homeland Security measures. Further anecdotal evidence suggests that the average patrol officer has seen little change in agency role, responsibility and focus. Police officers do not appear to be collecting intelligence, sharing information, conducting threat and vulnerability assessments, planning for emergency response or enhancing critical infrastructure security measures.

Public Perception and Community Policing

While the public perception is that police departments are fully engaged, the reality is much different. The Homeland Security role of the state and local officer today is quite limited. A view from the field reveals that very little strategic change has occurred. Homeland Security training for officers is available but restricted to a narrow proportion of officers. This is similar to the philosophical shift toward community policing training in years past.

As community policing was implemented, countless police officers stepped back into the community. Instead of riding on random patrol, responding to calls, some agencies began to adopt an approach of outreach, neighborhood empowerment and prevention. Neighborhood Watch groups grew in cities and towns. The principles of community policing included developing sustainable community partnerships, problem solving in collaboration with the community and organizational change within the police agency. However, community policing efforts were not department-wide and were limited to only a portion of officers. We find this happening now, with limited local Homeland Security activities. There is a perception of change, but in reality, the change covers a wide surface area – intelligence, emergency response, equipment, etc., but without depth. The perception of change is not equal to the facts.

Collaborative problem solving strategies common in community policing, as well as experience and training, will provide a structured model to prepare citizens, identify, prevent and manage a response to potential terrorist activities on a community level (Morreale 2004). However, for Homeland Security these activities need to be comprehensive and department-wide.

Paradigm Shift

Even with the funding and staffing deficiencies discussed above, there should be some indication that police agencies have shifted their focus from traditional law enforcement roles toward the new challenges of counter-terrorism and Homeland Security. Agencies should be developing new Homeland Security goals, objectives, and grant proposals and budgets that reflect a policing paradigm shift. There should be some tangible evidence that agencies are refining their mission, goals and objectives.

However, there is additional empirical evidence to suggest that local police agencies have not substantially shifted their roles since 9/11. The Gilmore Commission (Gilmore 2003) reports that state organizations have participated more than local organizations in federal training, equipment purchases and funding programs. Further, local first-responder organizations who did participate were more limited in their level of participation.

In fact, many police departments' missions are only marginally different than before 9/11. A cursory examination of New England police department websites found that while most had mission statements, little mention of Homeland Security, terrorism or emergency preparedness was discovered. Several sample mission statements are listed below.

Springfield, MA Police Department

To provide public safety and to contribute to the quality of life for the citizens of the City of Springfield by protecting, serving and working with the community to develop philosophies which promote equity and establish partnership between citizens and police to enhance law enforcement, aid in the prevention of crime, and preserve the public peace.

Burlington, VT Police Department

We are committed to policing with the citizens of Burlington to achieve a safe, healthy and self-reliant community.

Portland, ME Police Department

The mission of the Portland Police Department is to enhance the quality of life throughout the City of Portland by working cooperatively with all of our citizens to preserve the peace, enforce the law, reduce fear, and promote a safe and caring environment.

New Haven, CT Police Department

To provide pro-active, community police services to the public by furthering the partnership with our community to protect life and property, prevent crime, and resolve problems.

Providence, RI Police Department

The Providence Police Department, united with all citizens is committed to improving the quality of life in the city by aggressively resolving problems, preserving the peace, protecting human rights and apprehending criminals, consistent with the law.

As is apparent, these sample statements do not reflect a mission of Homeland Security. We found only *one* mission statement in the Northeast (including New York and Boston) that incorporated a Homeland Security perspective:

Philadelphia Police Department

The mission of the Philadelphia Police Department is to fight crime and the fear of crime, including terrorism, by working with our partners to enforce the laws, apprehend offenders, prevent crime from occurring, and improve the quality of life for all Philadelphians.

Clearly, although Homeland Security represents a new paradigm with new roles, objectives and methods to institutionalize within police agencies, most police departments have little experience or knowledge of counter-terrorism or Homeland Security functions. There is a great deal of uncertainty about the mission and roles that state and local police agencies will inherit as part of a national Homeland Security strategy (Gilmore 2003; Henry 2002; Holden 2003). A report by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF 2002) states that many law enforcement agencies are unsure of what their role should be in preventing and responding to terrorism.

The Study

It is time for a paradigm shift using mission-driven government which is more innovative and flexible than bureaucratic, rule-driven agencies (Osborne and Gaebler 1992). This allows organizations to address the challenges of a Homeland Security environment, because agencies that are mission driven can reformat their activities to focus on that mission rather than reacting to bureaucratic rules. This study

highlights the perceptions, the reality and the necessity for this paradigm shift toward Homeland Security goals and local agency missions.

Research Question

Are police agencies changing their mission to integrate Homeland Security in tangible ways?

Data

The survey collected data on officer demographics, strategic leadership, Homeland Security and adaptation towards roles including prevention, threat identification, response and investigation of terrorist behavior. It also examined what training and exercises have been conducted to prepare police for this challenging mission.

The self-administered officer questionnaire consisted of a combination of open-ended and close-ended questions totaling 12 forced choice and Likert-style statements. The survey project used an on-line survey tool, www.Surveymonkey.com to assist in the data collection. The researchers provided the website through e-mail to sample respondents over a 3-month period.

Sample

There are two levels of analysis for this research: organizational and individual-level. In order to assess the organizational vision and mission of police departments in this study, the researchers first sampled agencies from across New England to examine their vision and mission statements.

To assess whether police agencies have redefined their organizational missions, the researchers collected a set of mission statements from departments across New England. Mission and vision statements identify what agencies view as their core mission (Kotter 1996; Osborne and Gaebler 1992). A clear organizational vision leads change by directing, aligning and inspiring actions of a large number of participants. Agencies that do not have a guiding vision have difficulty articulating how individual efforts lead to accomplishment of agency goals.

At the individual level, this research used a purposive sample of officers engaged in community policing and other progressive policing strategies. This group represents a proxy measure of change agents in New England policing. In addition, the authors obtained the attendance list of personnel attending training sessions at Roger Williams University (RWU), Justice Systems Training and Research Institute.

This list included sworn officers from various New England police departments of varying ranks, and represent attendees of sessions ranging from Field Training Officer, Internal Investigations, Cyber Crimes, as well as First Line Supervisors

Course, Mid-manager's Course and Executive Development Course. These lists were compared to remove any duplicate names and avoid duplicate responses.

The sampling frame for this study includes all full-time sworn staff for the 797 police agencies throughout New England represented by the attendees of courses at the JSTRI at Roger Williams. A total of 26,811 officers are in New England departments (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2003).

While a random sample is often a preferred sampling method, there is no easily compiled comprehensive list of the population of interest police officers from New England law enforcement agencies. Without a specific sampling frame in this instance, there was no ability to draw a random sample. Instead, we use a purposive sample of change agents. While the Roger Williams University New England mailing list may not be representative of all police agencies in the region, it may represent an important subset of innovative, more strategically oriented police agencies. These types of agencies that invest in officer training are more likely to be positioned to expand their mission.

Demographic measurement of the officer sample included officer tenure, rank and age. Most responding officers (39%) were first-line supervisors, while another 21% were patrol officers or investigators, and 24% were middle managers. A majority of officers in the survey had a Bachelor's (41%) or Master's (24%) degree with only 1% having only a high school education. Over half (51%) of the respondents had 10-20 years of experience with an additional 31% having 20 or more years in policing.

Agency characteristics included department size and location. Departments with 25-49 officers made up 32% of the agencies with 21% having agency size of 50-100 officers. Larger departments of 100-249 officers and 250-999 officers accounted for 17% and 7% respectively.

Measurement of Variables

Strategic Leadership

One component of the survey queries officers uses a series of Likert-style statements concerning agency mission, goals, objectives, officer role and agency leadership. There are a total of nine strategic leadership indicators. For instance, one statement relates, "The department has goals and objectives related to its Homeland Security mission." Officers are asked to rate their agreement to this statement on a 5-point scale.

In terms of strategic leadership, the evidence does not support the assumption that police agencies have accepted Homeland Security as part of their mission, goals and objectives. Table 1 depicts that only 37% of the officers responding to the survey strongly agreed or agreed that "The department has a clearly defined mission in

regard to Homeland Security.” Similarly, 35% agreed that their department had Homeland Security-related goals and objectives, whereas 58% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that “The Homeland Security role of police officers is clearly defined in this agency.” Officers from departments that responded to the survey show that some have strategically adopted Homeland Security while others have not. This reflects some of the qualitative findings from the review of mission statements also.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Clearly defined HS mission	12% (13)	25% (28)	7% (8)	43% (49)	13% (15)
Dept. goals and objectives	12% (14)	23% (26)	13% (15)	40% (45)	12% (13)
Clearly defined police role	4% (5)	25% (28)	12% (14)	45% (50)	13% (15)
Leadership commitment to HS	12% (13)	35% (28)	15% (17)	34% (38)	15% (17)
Modified policies to address terrorism	12% (14)	23% (26)	17% (19)	31% (35)	16% (18)
Funding for HS planning & response	12% (13)	20% (22)	18% (20)	34% (38)	16% (18)
Officer role changed after 9/11	23% (26)	33% (37)	13% (14)	25% (28)	5% (6)
Strategic partnerships with other agencies	11% (12)	32% (35)	18% (20)	31% (34)	9% (10)
Dept culture does not support HS	6% (7)	16% (18)	26% (29)	41% (45)	11% (12)

Table 1

Another element of strategic leadership involves changes to existing agency policies, funding priorities and programs. The researchers elicited responses from another set of Likert-type statements that tap into this aspect of leadership. Regarding the statement, “Department leaders have modified existing policies to address the challenges of terrorism,” 35% of the officers strongly agreed or agreed, and 47% strongly disagreed or disagreed.

Examining funding priorities, officers were asked to rate this statement, “This department has invested substantial funding in Homeland Security planning and response.” The responses included 34% who disagreed and another 16% that strongly disagreed with the statement. Some of the commentary provided additional insight into Homeland Security spending. For example, one respondent wrote: “Homeland Security grants have been used to purchase big ticket items for the department and have not been used to help the officer on the street.” About half of the respondents felt that the agency had invested in homeland security, an inconclusive overall response to this indicator.

When asked about the development of strategic partnerships to address Homeland Security challenges, the responses were inconclusive, split almost evenly between the agree and disagree categories. Another question explored the officers' perspective on organizational culture and its influence on officer support for a Homeland Security mission. Only 22% strongly agreed or agreed with the assertion that the agency culture would not support a Homeland Security mission.

A majority of study respondents believe that their organizations have an unclear mandate and commitment to Homeland Security. It appears that organizations are not developing business practices or policies that address Homeland Security functions, and thus there is little evidence that departments have established a specific vision and role in the Homeland Security environment.

Training and Exercises

Another area of critical deficiencies in Homeland Security and counter-terrorism activity in policing relates to training and exercising response plans. In order to highlight whether agencies have instituted Homeland Security training and exercises, eight Likert-scale questions were developed to assess the level of involvement in these activities.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Suspicious package training	6% (7)	49% (54)	7% (8)	29% (32)	9% (10)
Extensive HS training	5% (5)	14% (15)	18% (20)	45% (50)	18% (20)
Agency will not conduct HS training	6% (7)	18% (20)	23% (26)	39% (43)	14% (15)
NIMS training	24% (26)	44% (48)	7% (8)	17% (19)	8% (9)
Routine HS exercises	2% (2)	11% (12)	8% (9)	47% (52)	32% (35)
International terrorism understanding	10% (11)	34% (38)	16% (18)	27% (30)	13% (14)
Training in asset surveillance	7% (8)	18% (20)	15% (17)	44% (49)	15% (17)
Officers with adequate PPE	8% (9)	21% (23)	14% (16)	35% (39)	22% (24)

Table 2

In relation to training activities police organizations have undertaken to prepare officers for Homeland Security roles, as in Table 2 above, a majority (55%) stated that they strongly agreed or agreed that officers in their agency have been trained in suspicious package and improvised explosive device response. That

represents a significant degree of concurrence for this type of mission-critical training.

Police and Homeland Security Activities

There are a number of Homeland Security tasks that police agencies can provide for their communities. This survey instrument used eight Likert questions to examine police involvement in this mission. The first statement in this series is “Officers are unfamiliar with the community’s Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) or Comprehensive Emergency Plan (CEMP).” Both these emergency plans are crucial documents for the Homeland Security mission, but typically are unknown to most police officers. Familiarity with these documents would indicate an awareness of emergency planning activities. Unfortunately, 19% strongly agreed and another 42% agreed with the statement, confirming that most police officers in the sample were unfamiliar with these plans. The involvement of police in the development of these plans varies by community. In some cases, police officials are involved in the development of the CEMP, while in other cases, this function is delegated to fire or emergency management staff without any police input. Police have a unique perspective regarding contingency planning and emergency response and need to be involved in this process.

One statement asks officers to rate on the same five-point scale, “Within the department, officers are assigned to conduct threat and vulnerability assessments of critical infrastructure or key assets in the community.” Few study respondents believed that officers in their department have been assigned to conduct threat and vulnerability assessments of critical infrastructure. Only 26% stated that they agreed or strongly agreed that officers were engaged in this function. This tracks with observations made by researchers regarding participation of police agencies in conducting these assessments.

This type of detailed assessment of facility threats and vulnerabilities is often ignored by police agencies or done only informally. In at least one large state, this activity has been shifted to a state police agency due to the unwillingness of other agencies to collect this information. This function is critical to the development of remediation and response strategies, yet often is not addressed in a variety of communities. There has been little buy-in that threat and vulnerability assessment or comprehensive planning is part of the police mission. Officers at the line level are often completely removed from these activities. Agencies are reluctant to assign staff to conduct these assessments even though training is sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security. These assessments are labor intensive and have less value at the local level, therefore have less a sense of urgency for police departments.

Another element of a comprehensive Homeland Security training program is to conduct exercises to practice police response. This was measured using the statement, “Officers have not conducted exercises in responding to mass casualty incidents.” In total, 56% strongly agreed or agreed with that statement, illustrating again that most officers have not taken part in this critical training function. Once again, there appears to be a disconnect between what ought to be done to prepare for potential terrorist attacks and what is being done.

Conventional wisdom dictates that police should practice as they expect to respond in real life situations. While the Homeland Security rhetoric supports this mindset, in actuality, police officers are rarely involved in this activity. The average police officer has not participated in a Homeland Security exercise, making their readiness questionable, and of concern to public safety.

However, police involvement in specific Homeland Security activities is not entirely negative. Inquiring about officers’ submission of suspicious activity reports to intelligence units, 67% reported that their officers are expected to submit information (see Table 3). Fifty-four percent (54%) of all respondents said they believed officers are expected to observe critical infrastructure facilities. Based upon the responses to these activities, there are certain functions that police officers buy into as part of their normal activities including patrolling critical infrastructure and key assets. They are less inclined to accept emergency planning and exercise functions. This makes some sense in that patrol and security of key assets has always been part of the patrol mission. Protecting and securing buildings or public facilities do not appear to be a change of mission for officers who responded to this survey.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Unfamiliar with LEPC	19% (21)	42% (47)	20% (22)	16% (18)	3% (3)
Report suspicious activity	17% (19)	50% (55)	12% (13)	17% (19)	5% (5)
Threat and vulnerability assessments	7% (8)	19% (21)	6% (7)	46% (51)	21% (23)
Homeland Security unit	14% (15)	37% (41)	7% (8)	23% (26)	19% (21)
Observe critical infrastructure	10% (11)	44% (48)	10% (11)	25% (27)	12% (13)
Conduct exercises	18% (20)	38% (42)	8% (9)	29% (32)	7% (8)
Patrol Officers expected to check critical infrastructure	14% (15)	40% (44)	15% (16)	21% (23)	11% (12)

Table 3

Homeland Security Funding

Another set of three questions inquired about Homeland Security funding received by officer's departments. These questions examined the different funding focus areas to determine where agency executives have targeted their funding. Funding decisions provide a concrete example of leadership focus (see Table 4).

Funding purposes	
Planning activities, public outreach and threat assessments	31% (25)
Staffing: overtime, hiring and consulting	26% (21)
Equipment: protective equipment, information technology, interoperable communications	90% (73)
Training: overtime, conferences or training consulting	49% (40)
Exercises: Planning, consulting or travel costs	27% (22)
Other	9% (7)

Table 4

Discussion

Bureaucracy and Homeland Security

Mechanistic, bureaucratic organizations are less appropriate to rapidly changing and turbulent environments (Burns and Stalker 1961). Bureaucracies by nature are reactive and find it difficult to shift missions as the world changes. These organizations such as traditional police agencies, which tend to be mechanistic and bureaucratic, face internal inertia in their attempts to ramp up for new missions. Homeland Security and counter-terrorism are salient examples of a complex, rapid shift in the mission of policing. While bureaucracies do well with routine work processes and technologies, this new mission thrust upon policing exemplifies non-routine tasks and functions. Activities such as threat and vulnerability assessments, intelligence collection, emergency planning and response, are some of the non-routine work processes that Homeland Security officials have assigned as tasks to police agencies.

Traditional bureaucracies rely upon centralized decision making and functional specialization to carry out their mission. There is a tendency to use specialization as a method to address new challenges (Gaines, Kappeler and Vaughn 1994; Lambert 2003; Maguire 1997; Sheehan and Cordner 1995). Reform-era police organizational styles often turn to specialty units to address new problems. This has occurred in the areas of gangs, community policing, drug control and, more recently, terrorism (Lambert 2003). Initial reaction for many police agencies has been to build up tactical units, moving away from innovative community policing principles which are also applicable to the Homeland Security mission. Rather than treating terrorism as another problem to be solved in a community policing context, many agencies respond using a traditional law enforcement response.

This silo structuring impacts the rest of the organization since it relieves the remaining staff of any responsibility for addressing terrorism. It allows other organizational entities to maintain the status quo and do what they always have done. In fact, if the average patrol officer were to be asked, most are doing the same routine functions as prior to 9/11. Their role has changed very little, as evidenced by many of the responses in this survey.

Further, specialization makes communication across technical areas more difficult, often leading to stove-piped organizational goals and practices. Patrol officers and investigators may be working simultaneously on aspects of drug enforcement or critical infrastructure protection without knowing what the other is doing. Specialization also can create intra-unit conflicts which further erode communication between those entities. Specialization makes units compete for status and resources as well (Schermerhorn, Hunt and Osborn 1985).

The bureaucratic nature of organizations leads to tunnel vision and an inability to maximize resources. A series of incidents involving terrorism using radiological dispersal devices recently occurred in one eastern state. The policy makers who responded, including a large police agency, failed to consult with the agency's in-house experts, hazardous device technicians mainly because the technicians were not part of the everyday bureaucratic decision-making apparatus. Empowering those experts would have increased the organizational knowledge of the decision makers and lead to a more informed police decision (Docobo 2005; Lambert 2003). This participative focus is often absent in a bureaucratic, top-down decision-making structure.

Bureaucratic, mechanistic agencies provide less "out of the box" thinking than more organic agencies. They tend to engage in less collaborative problem solving and more stove-piped decision making. They rely upon the same resources that they use for other situations, regardless of their utility to the current problem.

There is a natural tendency in a bureaucracy for a reactive response, which is often manifested in policing by deployment of uniformed officers to create a perception of security. Problems are resolved by adding police personnel because it creates the appearance of solving the problem. Officers are deployed to critical infrastructure targets, nuclear power plants, reservoirs, tunnels, airports and energy facilities in reaction to perceived threats, even if the addition of personnel have little potential to resolve the problem. For example, deploying a police officer to guard a bridge will have little impact on a suicide truck bomber, yet it provides an illusion of safety for the masses.

Rather than take a strategic approach solving the larger problem, bureaucracies are predisposed to be reactive in their response to Homeland Security challenges. They add more officers, buy command posts and expensive chemical-biological equipment or purchase more weapons when the real solutions are more complex and difficult.

What appears to be missing is the information sharing and intelligence piece. There is little effort to develop information to shape the nature of response more specifically. If police organizations could develop a problem analysis capability as recommended for community policing, they could more cogently deploy resources where there are higher probabilities of attack.

Leadership Strategy

In many police departments, the social, political and cultural environment work against addressing changing conditions. Perhaps the lack of a recent terrorist attack in America over the last several years has led to significant complacency in the public safety. Most police agencies have little buy-in to the Homeland Security mission and often having competing missions which they must dedicate resources to address.

This situation is exacerbated by the fact that crime and other public safety issues persist even as police are asked to take on this new mission. Homeland Security activities are required while agencies are still expected to handle drug, gang and other public safety and quality of life issues.

Related to this lack of urgency is the larger issue of the lack of strategic vision in the Homeland Security area articulated by police executives. There are few outward signs that police executives are deeply engaged in redefining their missions to incorporate Homeland Security and terrorism goals. Homeland Security missions require strategic leadership in order effect change in a decentralized policing structure. Homeland Security missions necessitate greater coordination, planning, joint training and exercising to overcome traditional jurisdictional barriers. Large-scale events demand a multi-jurisdictional and multi-disciplinary response.

Study Limitations

While this study has limitations, it is felt that the work helps to illuminate current practice and help to frame the steps necessary for police agencies to meet the mission of Homeland Security. The survey instrument used in this study was drawn from a limited, convenience sample, in an attempt to understand the practice and perception of practitioners at the line and supervision levels of New England law enforcement agencies.

Summary

Examining police organizational mission, goals and objective will provide decision makers with a better grasp of their environment and enable appropriate changes to meet the challenges of policing in the post-9/11 era. Leaders and managers must

keep pace with these constant changes. We can no longer rely on the methods of the past to help with present and future issues. This pilot study of Homeland Security and Policing was intended to capture a snapshot of the practices and characteristics of approaches of police agencies to Homeland Security responsibilities.

This snapshot revealed that most officers feel that their organizations do not have a clear mandate and commitment to Homeland Security. While most respondents agree that the police mission has changed after 9/11, it appears that there still is no clearly defined mission and that there is little evidence that police departments have established a specific vision and role for the Homeland Security mission. This does not appear to be only a local issue. Across the country, there seems to be a similar range of perceptions of the policing mission and Homeland Security. This lack of clarity has then filtered down to state and local police agencies.

Leadership commitment to Homeland Security is less obvious (than measurable activities such as training and exercise) when examining changes in business practices such as additional policies and procedures to address new challenges. This is unusual for bureaucratic organizations because the development of policies and procedures is typically a classic reactive method to address new issues. Leadership commitment can also be measured by funding priorities for agencies. Officers reported that they did not perceive a change in priorities toward funding Homeland Security practices.

There is a delicate balance between responsiveness and effectiveness in law enforcement leadership. There are opportunities for leaders to enhance the effectiveness, reputation, and responsiveness of law enforcement agencies, and allow for more open dialogue between the traditionally cloistered police agency and the community it is charged to serve. This pilot study serves to focus attention on the reality rather than the rhetoric of practice in most law enforcement agencies.

Future Research Opportunities and Conclusion

Terrorism launched against innocent American citizens remains a vital threat. Large cities have had a heightened awareness, but are often lulled into complacency and a false sense of security as time passes without a tragic event. Although the survey instrument used in this study was drawn from a limited, convenience sample, in an attempt to understand the practice and perception of practitioners at the line and supervision levels of New England law enforcement agencies, the authors feel that the study helps to illuminate current practice and helps to frame the steps necessary for police agencies to meet the mission of Homeland Security.

This research study focused on representatives from a finite number of police agencies from New England. Each of the six states was represented in the sample from various police agencies ranging from 2,000 officers, to small agencies made up

of 2 to 3 full-time officers. Although the authors have studied only New England states, we suggest an expansion of this survey to other areas of the United States. There is ample opportunity across the country to conduct longitudinal studies designed to identify those actions by managers that would lead to clarity in defining their missions in order to adapt to their responsibility for a Homeland Security role.

Within such studies, the authors suggest interviewing successful law enforcement leaders in an attempt to investigate common approaches in organizations and to provide prescriptions for current and future law enforcement and public service managers. The results of this effort would hopefully help to further assess the practice of Homeland Security in effective law enforcement organizations.

In the law enforcement theater, more attention should be paid to the incorporating the responsibilities of Homeland Security through planning and training on a department-wide basis. In an age of constant change and uncertainty, the law enforcement agency routinely is called on to respond instantly to crisis, and yet is still expected to perform routine duties. The leadership of these organizations is critical to the delivery of services in both routine and emergency circumstances.

All too often organizations react to both routine and emergency needs by creating a specialty or specialty unit to deal with an issue and feel that this action will suffice. For instance, when the concept of community policing was in vogue, very few police agencies allowed this concept to actually permeate the organization. Instead, few officers were delegated to the task of community outreach while the remainder of personnel were left in the dark about expectations activities and responsibilities. From this research study, it seems clear that something similar is happening with Homeland Security expectations and responsibilities. The leadership of many police organizations must not compartmentalize, which is the way community policing was done years ago, and instead the leadership must communicate the mission and expectations of Homeland Security responsibilities on a department-wide basis.

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