

## **ABSTRACT**

### **SCANNING**

During 1996, concerns were raised by the media and public about crimes against tourists. Deputy Chief of Police Lee Donohue instructed the patrol divisions to identify problems and solutions in their areas of responsibility.

### **ANALYSIS**

The problem was analyzed by personnel throughout the district to obtain maximum insight and ideas to facilitate solutions and to enhance participation and permit those who would carry out the solution to take part in the planning.

The problem was identified in District 4 as thefts from tourists' vehicles at recreation areas, and preparations were made for solutions in 1997. Theft offenses and suspects from 1995 onward were analyzed. The key elements of these crimes were analyzed: victims, suspects, modus operandi, locations, time elements, underlying causes, and contributing factors. Each aspect of the problem was considered for potential countermeasures and solutions.

### **RESPONSE**

The analysis provided a clear assessment of the problem and a combination of innovative proposals designed to supplement the basic police response and traditional law enforcement approaches to solve the problem. The result was a coordinated, district-wide counterattack on crimes against tourists.

A wide range of tactics and strategies were simultaneously adopted to solve the problem including: utilizing high visibility patrols, stationing uniformed officers at the highest risk locations, providing crime prevention education and information to potential victims, creating a special Beach Theft Detail, conducting surveillance operations, using "bait cars," gathering intelligence and investigating known suspects, sharing the results of intelligence gathering and improving communication and cooperation throughout the division, utilizing photographic

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line-up books, forming Citizens Beach Patrols and Neighborhood Security Watches, working with citizen volunteers, making use of bicycle and All Terrain Vehicle patrols to take advantage of their special abilities, and addressing narcotics offenses and other underlying causes of theft offenses.

**ASSESSMENT**

The primary objective was to reduce thefts from vehicles. There was a dramatic decline in these offenses from 188 in January 1997 to 4 in December 1997. There was a similar impact on other types of property crimes with an overall decline in property crimes from 617 in January 1997 to 277 in December 1997.

## **DESCRIPTION**

The description of the project is presented using the four-step SARA problem-solving model outline: Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment.

### **SCANNING**

**Problem:** Thefts from vehicles at recreation areas were found to be a serious and escalating problem, particularly thefts from tourists and their rental vehicles.

**How the Problem was Identified:** The problem was identified within the police district through increasing numbers of theft cases handled by patrol officers and detectives and detailed analysis of these cases by the Crime Reduction Unit for crime trends.

**Who Identified the Problem:** The problem was identified as an island-wide concern by media coverage of crimes against tourists and concerns raised by the business community about the potential for negative impact on the tourist industry. Tourism is the prime engine driving the island's economy and is more important than ever with the decline in agriculture and military spending (other major sources of income to the local economy). The potential for crimes against tourists to have a negative impact on tourism was a cause for public concern because losses in the visitor industry would result in lost jobs and revenue. At the close of 1996, Deputy Chief of Police Lee Donohue called for the patrol districts to focus on crimes against tourists in 1997.

### **ANALYSIS**

**District Problem:** The problem was found to be of particular concern to District 4. The district is located on the scenic and beautiful Windward side of the island of Oahu with approximately 41 miles of coast and numerous beaches, beach parks, and other shoreline recreation areas attracting tourists. These were found to be the scene of increasing thefts from visitors' rental vehicles.

**Who Analyzed the Problem:** The problem was defined and analyzed by the command staff, element commanders of the patrol watches, specialized details, and other key personnel in

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District 4. In turn, these commanders polled their staffs and front-line officers for their ideas.

**Analysis:** Thefts from vehicles in the district began to increase in the early 1990s. Theft offenses and suspects from 1995 onward were reviewed by the District 4 Crime Reduction Unit. This analysis revealed that the majority of the cases occurred when a tourist visited one of the beaches or other tourist attractions in the district, parked and secured valuables in their rental vehicle, and were singled out as targets for theft. The key elements of these crimes were analyzed: victims, suspects, modus operandi, locations, time elements, underlying causes, and contributing factors. Some highlights of the analysis findings follow.

**Victims:** The typical victim was determined to be a tourist or visitor from other areas of the state. The victims did not know the suspects, usually did not even see the suspects, frequently could not recognize or identify the suspects, and generally did not want to be involved in or return for a trial. Most victims were found to be unfamiliar with the surroundings, unaware of potential crime risks, and left valuables in their vehicles.

**Suspects:** The typical suspect was found to be a criminal who recognized the inherent weaknesses of the visitors as potential victims and who exploited these to advantage. Suspects made use of the "home ground" familiarity with their surroundings, knowledge of approach and escape routes, often knew the patrol characteristics of police, and knew when and where to strike. It was found that criminals understood the potential for profit vs. risk: tourists tended to carry large amounts of cash and valuables easily convertible to cash, while the risk of getting caught by police was minimal. Many of the suspects were drug abusers, particularly users of crystal methamphetamine (a highly addictive drug). Most of the suspects had prior criminal histories for this or similar types of crimes and were known to patrol officers and investigators for their involvement in thefts and other crimes but were difficult to "catch in the act."

**Causes/Criminals' Objectives:** The object of these crimes was to steal money and valuables (average losses were approximately \$500 to \$1,000 per crime in the form of cash, jewelry, cameras, and other valuables easily converted to cash). The primary tactic of the criminals was to steal from parked cars. The thefts tended to be swift and efficient, using practiced and highly effective techniques to make entry into locked vehicles efficiently and inconspicuously. The crimes tended to be non-confrontational, and suspects would strike at several locations in succession rather than make several hits at a single location. The time elements and primary locations where these crimes occurred were studied. Many of these

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offenses were found to be the result of a relatively small number of suspects or rings engaging in series and crime sprees.

**RESPONSE**

**Response Development:** The analysis provided a clear assessment of the problem and a combination of innovative proposals designed to supplement the basic police response and traditional law enforcement approaches to solve the problem. The focus of the response would be on the victims, suspects, and the crimes occurring. The result was a coordinated district-wide counterattack on crimes against tourists with each element and member of the District 4 team doing his or her part. A wide range of tactics and strategies were simultaneously adopted to solve the problem.

**Traditional Police Services:** Basic police services were maintained with an emphasis on quality and improvement in report writing, initial investigation checks for latent fingerprints, evidence, witnesses, victim interviews, response times to reported cases, and other aspects of the traditional response to theft complaints.

**High Visibility Patrols:** Uniformed officers were assigned to patrol high-risk areas in tight circuits. These patrols included bicycle officers, All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) units, and regular beat patrol officers depending on the specific locale. The high visibility was geared to reduce crime by deterring suspects from hitting a given area and to enhance the sense of security of the visitors who could see the police actively patrolling for their protection.

**High Visibility Posts:** Uniformed officers were assigned to monitor and protect high-risk areas to prevent crimes by their physical presence at stationary posts in the highest risk locations. These posts denied the most vulnerable locales to suspects. Stationary officers would watch for known suspects who were cruising and looking for a location to hit and would alert mobile beat officers along the high-risk circuit to be more vigilant and to increase field investigative stops.

**Crime Prevention Education and Information:** Uniformed officers assigned to high visibility patrols, posts, and regular beat assignments (such as checking the recreation areas) would also watch for potential victims. They would greet tourists and give them suggestions on how to secure their valuables to reduce the risk of theft. Thousands of copies of a special

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brochure outlining theft hazards and precautions were printed by the Community Policing Team and distributed by officers to visitors throughout the district on a regular basis.

**Beach Theft Detail:** A "Beach Theft Detail" was formed for the specific purpose of addressing this problem. Two Crime Reduction Unit officers and one officer drawn from each of the three uniformed patrol watches were dedicated to this effort. Their function was to address beach thefts particularly at Makapuu Beach Park, Waimanalo Beach Park, and the Kailua Beach Park-Lanikai areas (prime theft locations). The program produced arrests and stolen property recoveries.

**Surveillance Operations:** The Crime Reduction Unit conducted surveillance operations wherever vantage points could be established at high-risk locations. Active suspects were arrested for thefts, warrants, and other offenses; crimes in progress were interrupted; and criminal activities were disrupted at these locations.

**Bait Cars:** Surveillance operations conducted by the Crime Reduction Unit were enhanced by the use of unmarked or rented cars to mimic the rental cars used by tourists. These were stocked with typical tourist valuables. Surveillance and arrest personnel were positioned to watch the cars and arrest suspects. A major problem in prosecuting property crimes against tourists has been the reluctance of visitors to return from another state or country to testify at trial and the high expense to the government in providing transportation and accommodation when victims did agree. The use of "bait cars" with police complainants produced cases free of the usual problems of victim cooperation and expense and addressed the same criminal behavior and suspects.

**Gathering Intelligence and Investigating Known Suspects:** Active intelligence gathering and investigation focusing on known suspects enabled Crime Reduction Unit investigators and theft detectives to gather information and supporting evidence to link given suspects with crimes already committed. Even in cases where there was no specific evidence at the scene such as a witness or fingerprints, in-depth investigations were able to reveal other evidence (such as the recovery of stolen property) about known characters who engaged in this type of crime or modus operandi. One Crime Reduction Unit investigation of this type resulted in evidence to arrest a single suspect for his commission of 40 theft from vehicle cases. Many cases had no suspect and were deferred with no leads until investigations identified rings, fencing operations, and associated suspects for search warrants to recover stolen property.

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**Intelligence Sharing and Distribution:** A renewed effort to share intelligence information, mug photographs, and identified suspects was made. Communications and cooperation were enhanced between the different elements in the district, including detectives, Crime Reduction Unit officers, and uniformed patrol officers on the front line. The active sharing of information at patrol line-ups and weekly meetings, in-district fugitive and wanted suspect circulars, and cooperation between individuals and elements enabled swift dissemination of information and alerted officers to the most current active suspects.

**Photographic Line-Up Book:** The suspects were largely known to police officers in the field. To supplement this knowledge and put it to practical use in initial investigations, photographic line-up books were made to permit swift identification of suspects. Swift identification can make a critical difference at the time the offense is first reported with suspects arrested more quickly and more victims' property recovered. The identification process itself is enhanced. The image of the suspect is still fresh in the mind of the victim or witness, and legal concerns that accompany one-on-one identifications in the field are avoided. The photographic line-up book concept was promoted by the Crime Reduction Unit and continually updated, expanded, and made available to the field officers.

**Citizens Beach Patrols:** The Community Policing Team coordinated the formation of partnerships with citizens to patrol beach parks and high-crime-rate areas to supplement police efforts. Citizens Beach Patrols were successfully formed in Waimanalo and patrolled beaches and parks with unpaid citizen volunteers. They would go out as a group in special volunteer t-shirts to identify them and would patrol during the peak theft times and at high-risk locations to act as a visible deterrent to crime. Volunteers included members of the community who lived near the "hot spots" and members of the "Single Marine Program" at Marine Corps Base Hawaii who would volunteer on their free time. Citizens Patrols were equipped with donated cellular telephones to call for emergency services, and they coordinated their walks with police patrols in the spirit of mutual support and cooperation.

**Hot Spot Neighbors:** In an effort similar to the Citizens Patrols, the Community Policing Team enlisted the help and support of residents living in the immediate vicinity of high-crime rate locations to participate in Neighborhood Security Watch programs and on an individual basis as appropriate. Their role was to call the police when seeing suspicious activity. They would be the "eyes and ears" of the police, watching for suspect descriptions, license numbers, and other vital information.

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**Bicycle and ATV Patrols:** Uniformed patrol officers were assigned to operate bicycles and All Terrain Vehicles in beach parks to take advantage of the ability of these vehicles to access different patrol routes and approaches to high risk areas. They served as both a deterrent and another tactic to catch in-progress crimes.

**Narcotics Control:** The property crimes against tourists were often committed by suspects who were drug abusers, and money for drugs was a common motivation. The Crime Reduction Unit and Community Policing Team worked closely with detectives from the Narcotics/Vice Division to share intelligence information and support for drug-related investigations. Search warrants and arrests by Vice detectives attacked the theft problem indirectly by reducing the availability of drugs that were a motivating factor to some criminals. As an example of the team effort, drug sales at Waimanalo Beach Park were brought to the attention of the Community Policing Team by members of the Citizens Patrol which patrolled the park. Information gathered by Citizens Patrol members was used by the Crime Reduction Unit to conduct a covert narcotics investigation. The result was the arrest of a suspect selling drugs at the park which was also a high-risk location for theft from vehicle offenses.

**ASSESSMENT**

**Thefts From Vehicles:** The primary objective was to reduce thefts from vehicles. The key evaluation measure was the number of thefts from vehicles. There was a dramatic decline in the number of thefts from vehicles from a high of 188 reported cases in January 1997 to a low of 4 cases in December 1997. This was a clear and unequivocal gauge of the success of the campaign.

**Property Crimes:** The impact on other types of property crimes revealed an apparent secondary impact of this campaign. Burglary offenses declined from 125 in January 1997 to 62 in December 1997. Overall Property Crimes declined from 617 cases in January 1997 to 277 cases in December 1997.

| <b><u>Offenses</u></b>         | <b><u>January 1997</u></b> | <b><u>December 1997</u></b> |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Thefts From Vehicle</b>     | <b>188</b>                 | <b>4</b>                    |
| <b>Burglary</b>                | <b>125</b>                 | <b>62</b>                   |
| <b>Overall Property Crimes</b> | <b>617</b>                 | <b>277</b>                  |



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Attachments: Graphs tracking these offenses on a month-by-month basis through calendar year 1997 are attachments to this report.

Arrests: These served as an indicator of the emphasis and degree of effort. Arrests for targeted offenses in 1997 included: 60 felony theft, 22 misdemeanor theft, 38 auto theft, and 8 detaining stolen property. There were also 93 arrests for narcotics offenses which included investigations conducted by the Crime Reduction Unit (C.R.U.) and arrests arising from search warrants and investigations by the Narcotics/Vice Division in cooperation with the C.R.U. and uniformed patrol arrests.

**Review:** The success of this campaign is attributed to the dedicated efforts of the command staff and personnel of District 4. The attention to each aspect of the problem identified, the combined and coordinated efforts to address the problem as a whole with several simultaneous and complementary strategies, the support and cooperation of the community, and the SARA method were all instrumental in correctly identifying the problem and devising solutions.

Future: This problem will require continued vigilance and application of the strategies applied to solution. Some aspects of the solution, such as improved communication and coordination among personnel of the district, are organic and represent fundamental improvements in the way police services are provided to the community. Other measures are now identified as methods available to address situations as they arise, such as ATV patrols.

## **AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION**

**Initiative:** The call for a solution to the problem came from the public and Deputy Chief of Police Lee Donohue. The initiative for developing and carrying out the solutions to the problem was at the district level.

**Training:** The Community Policing Team and Crime Reduction Unit applied the problem identification-solution approach, partnered with other law enforcement agencies and the community, and also applied other aspects of the community policing philosophy to their work. Community policing training encompassing problem-oriented policing (POP) is part of the district in-service training program which serves as a model for the rest of the department.

**Problem-Oriented Policing Model:** The POP model served as the foundation for identifying and developing solutions to the problem.

**Resources:** The solutions to this problem did not require hiring additional personnel and did not represent any overall increase in the division budget. The relatively minor cost of renting "bait cars" for the program was accomplished using existing expense money, and overtime used in arrests and operations was already allocated to the district for general use. The problem was solved with existing personnel and resources.

**Incentives:** The police personnel involved in this campaign did not receive any special compensation or incentives for participation. The effort was successful due to the professionalism and dedicated efforts of all personnel.

**PROJECT CONTACT PERSON**

Name: Rapplee V. Fitzsimmons  
Position/Rank: Major, Division Commander, District 4  
Address: 45-270 Waikalua Road  
City/State: Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744  
Phone: (808) 235-7621  
Fax: (808) 247-3873  
E-Mail: 196250% CCHPD@co.honolulu.hi.us

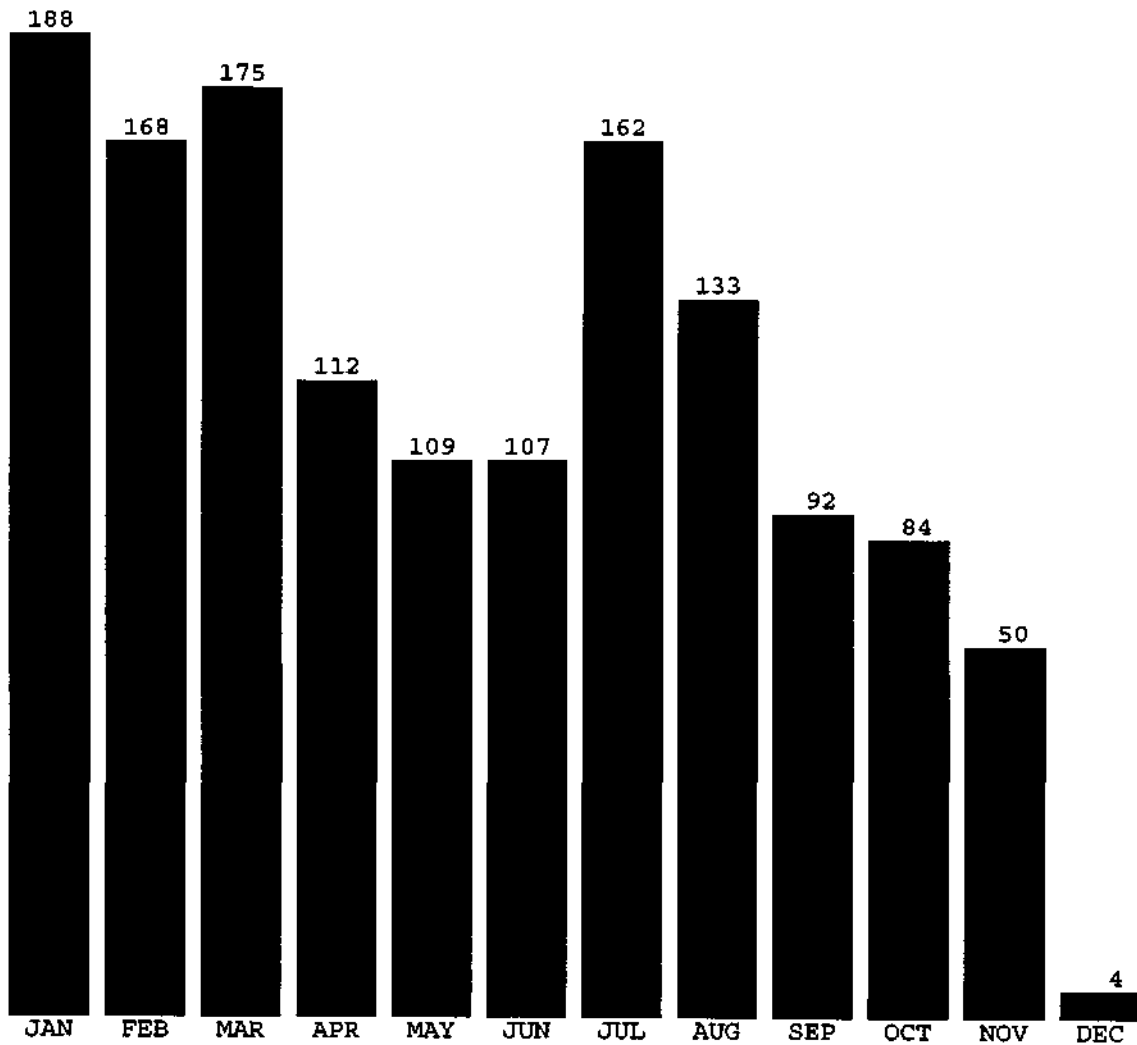
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## Theft From Vehicle

There was a dramatic drop in the number of theft from vehicle offenses in the district.

This is the key measure of success: thefts from vehicles were the problem.

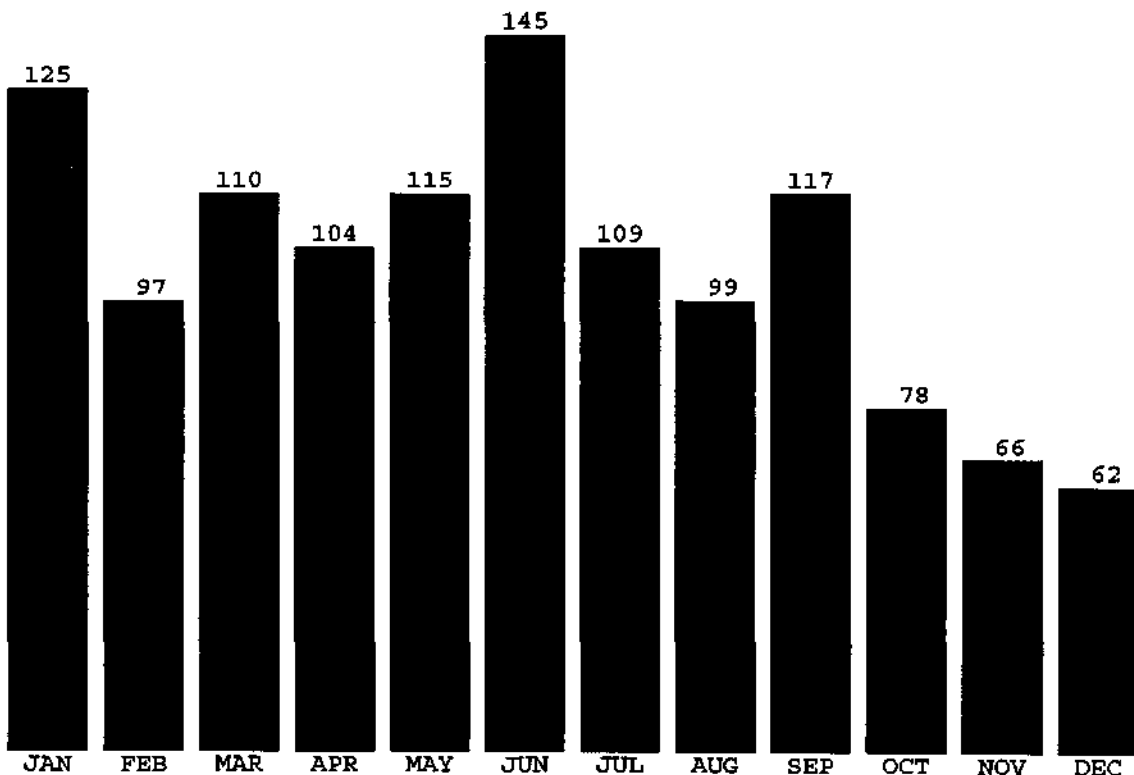


## Burglary Offenses

There was a decline in burglaries in the district.

This is a secondary measure of success: emphasis on property crimes (focusing on thefts from vehicles) was reflected in a reduction in other types of property crime such as burglary offenses.

Arrests for theft from vehicle and the deterrence of suspects engaged in theft appears to have had an overall chilling effect on other property crimes in the district. This success is attributed to the focus and coordination of efforts to address the theft from vehicle problem. This focus may have enhanced the perception of increased police efforts and risk of arrest on the part of suspects and the impact on suspects committing multiple types of property crime, such as thefts and burglaries.



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## Overall Property Crimes

There was a decline in overall property crimes in the district.

This is a secondary measure of success: emphasis on property crimes (thefts from vehicles) was reflected in a measurable decline in overall property crimes.

