

## *Essex Village Initiative*

### **Abstract**

In February 1998, Colonel H. W. Stanley, Jr., Chief of Police, for Henrico County, Virginia held the department's first Drug/Crime Summit. The purpose of the summit was to solicit ideas from the department's rank and file on problem solving policing within Henrico County and to address the impact of drugs and drug-related crime in its communities.

In April 1998, armed with Colonel Stanley's philosophy of problem solving policing, Lieutenant Gerard Dabney launched an ambitious program in the county's eastern police district. Lieutenant Dabney assigned specific geographic areas within the district to the five Platoon Commanders reporting to him. The Commanders were responsible for developing and implementing problem solving initiatives by relying on the elements of the Scanning Analysis Response Assessment ("SARA") Model. (See Attachment #1)

Operating as an adjunct to the Commanding Officer, Captain William L. Davis, C/Sgt. James B. Fitzgerald, Commander of "B" Platoon, developed and implemented initiatives within the Essex Village Community. Essex Village is a Section 8 housing area consisting of 496 residential units encompassing about three-square city blocks. The community of approximately 1,250 residents was plagued by street level drug dealing and was exposed to drug-related crime and violence. (See Attachment #2)

C/Sgt. Fitzgerald embraced Colonel Stanley's challenge of not accepting the "status quo." Officers were assigned to the project and were asked to develop

guidelines and to prepare a policy statement representing their best problem solving objectives.

These officers, known as the Essex Village Task Force, created a policy statement entitled "To improve and Maintain the Quality of Life for Our Citizens." The officers were committed to the project's success and to its preservation.

C/Sgt. Fitzgerald was empowered to develop partnerships both internally and externally within the agency and the community. The partnerships afforded the resources necessary to conduct both enforcement and community maintenance operations all aimed at improving and maintaining the quality of life for the residents of the Essex Village Community. The support from all stakeholders allowed the officers to carry out their mission and enabled them to utilize integrated enforcement initiatives. This sustained community policing effort led to the reduction of crime. This reduction in crime dramatically improved the quality of life for the residents of the Essex Village Community.

## Scanning

Upon assignment of the project, C/Sgt. Fitzgerald began collecting and disseminating to the Task Force statistical data related to drug and related crime incidents within the Essex Village geographic area. Calls for service were analyzed every 90 days to identify potential trouble areas. The Division of Police Criminal Intelligence Unit supplied information concerning known drug violators and other persons identified as being involved in criminal activity. Data concerning calls for service received by police during the year 1997, revealed that the department had responded to this community 1,086 times with 64 responses cleared by arrest. The initial data was categorized and sorted by activity type, the date and time of the incident, as well as the disposition of the call. [This data would be used later in the initiative to establish where police response should be positioned.] (See Attachment #3)

Contact was also made with the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) planner. The CPTED planner was invited to visit this area and make recommendations concerning quality of life and citizen safety issues. C/Sgt. Fitzgerald and the Task Force reviewed the CPTED study results with the Essex Village property management. With the cooperation and assistance of the property management, some "Quality of Life Issues" were addressed. Steps were made to install additional lighting throughout the Village, garbage collection was increased to three times per week, overgrown shrubs were removed or cut, and abandoned vehicles were towed.

## Analysis

Based on information from the Chiefs Drug/Crime Summit, the department classifies drug violators into six drug protocol levels. The established protocol requires the evaluation of offenders and the level of their individual participation in criminal activity. The Division's Drug Protocol requires the Narcotics Investigations Unit (NIU) to investigate Level 1 through Level 4 Violators. Level 5 street dealers and Level 6 drug users are the responsibility of Uniformed Operations. This protocol became very important because the majority of the drug violators in this community would fall under the responsibility of Uniformed Operations.

Prior to adopting the SARA model, policing within this community was on a reactionary basis. In addition, concerned citizens within the Essex community were thwarted in their attempts to rebuke drug dealers and related crime incidences. Innovated and integrated approaches to problem solving needed to be implemented to reduce the number of calls for service and to involve the community in the department's efforts to reduce criminal activity.

Communications were established between the Platoon Commander and the Commander of Narcotics Investigation Unit to ensure a two-way information flow and that all officers involved in future operations were aware of what role they played. The Criminal Intelligence Unit provided data concerning calls for service, persons wanted, and probation/parole information as well as information concerning persons involved in criminal activity in the area.

## Response

Additional resources were not available to support protracted operations. Therefore, carefully planned and executed operations needed to be designed to surgically address specific problem areas at specific time frames. C/Sgt. Fitzgerald created a multi-interdepartmental task force to develop and implement these operations.

It was important that the Task Force be empowered to have ownership over the goals and objectives of the project. The Task Force under the command of C/Sgt. Fitzgerald, consisted of officers from each platoon assigned to patrol Essex Village, investigators from N.I.U., Community Services Unit and Criminal Investigative Section, School Resource Officers, as well as the Division's Strike Force Officers. One of the Task Force's first challenges was to develop a dialog and begin team-building initiatives among its members. It was important to the overall success of the project that members of the Task Force develop and build a mutual trust and confidence to work as a combined team. One of its first challenges was to develop specific goals and objectives. The Task Force was also asked to develop guidelines and prepare a policy statement representing their best problem solving objectives. Meetings were held monthly to assess the progress of the Task Force initiatives and to address any problem areas. To ensure that the Task Force had a direct line of communications, an electronic mailbox group was established. (See Attachment #4)

The Task Force approached the community leaders. An Essex Village Community Work Group was formed consisting of community leaders and Task Force representatives. Bimonthly meetings were held to discuss concerns of the community

and role of the Task Force in resolving those concerns. One of the initial concerns voiced by the citizen group was about juveniles loitering around Essex Village after hours. The Task Force launched an operation to arrest the offending juveniles. Results reflected that the majority of the juveniles arrested were not residents of the Essex Village Community. Citizens of Essex Village praised police for their juvenile enforcement efforts.

Through the assistance of the State Alcohol Beverage Control Board ("ABC"), stationary and hand-held video cameras were used for surveillance operations. Members of the Task Force and from the ABC installed stationary video cameras in vacant apartments to conduct surveillance and assist in identifying locations within the community that were infested with open-air criminal activity. The hand-held video cameras were used to conduct surveillance of areas alleged for use of street level drug dealing. Operating from an unmarked van, members of the Task Force were able to observe the methods employed by local dealers, including their lookouts and couriers.

The Task Force was also able to identify a problem area outside the Essex Village Community. Due to aggressive patrol of Essex Village, street level drug traffickers were forced to conduct business on a street near Essex Village. Street peddlers solicited cocaine and marijuana under an oak tree. The Task Force surveyed and video taped the area. Information obtained from the surveillance indicated that some of the buyers were coming from an adjoining county, Hanover, Virginia. The Hanover Sheriff's department was notified and assisted the Task Force in the operation.

Results of the operation, dubbed "Oak Tree," affected 14 arrests within a two-hour period.

The Task Force determined that many of the drug traffickers and users were traveling to the area to conduct business. Using a "ghost car," the Task Force conducted a radar operation in and around Essex Village. Once the vehicle was stopped, Task Force members attempted to gain search consent from the vehicle's operator. The majority of the violators granted consent to search their vehicle. Therefore, resulting in the aforementioned 14 arrests.

Another operation launched by the Task Force was "Operation Cable Buster." In cooperation with a local cable company, the Task Force investigated residents of Essex Village suspected of stealing cable service. Relying upon the cable company's resources, 19 apartments were identified. The Task Force acting on this information obtained search warrants and achieved the following results:

- 19-Search warrants for cable fraud
- Two-drug warrants
- Six-misdemeanor cable violations
- Three-felony cable violations
- \$1,800 worth of cable converters recovered
- **Drug Arrests**
  - 0 Possession of marijuana
  - 0 Possession of cocaine
  - 0 Possession of heroin

## 0 Possession with intent to distribute cocaine

(See Attachment #4 & #5)

The next strategy that was introduced into this community involved Probation and Parole. At the onset of the Task Force's Probation and Parole initiative, 11 active parolees were identified as living in Essex Village. The department's Meet and Greet Program was also implemented. (See Attachment #6) Task Force members visit recently released offenders known to reside in Essex Village. The offenders are provided information concerning the department's Zero Tolerance for Crime philosophy as well as information on how to gain employment. Since it is important for Task Force members to gain the assistance of the probation and parole officers, the Regional Director of Community Based Corrections was contacted. It was agreed that Probation and Parole resources assist the Task Force in its initiative. Specialized training was developed and conducted for members of the Task Force and Probation and Parole. Specific objectives were identified:

- Re-distribution of parole officer caseload (one officer versus numerous)
  - Geographic Case Assignment
- Home visitation with police officers
  - Meet and Greet Initiative
- List of active parolees prepared and distributed by Criminal Intelligence Unit to 30 Zone Units
- Random drug screens

With the cooperation of the Probation and Parole officer, parolees are summoned to appear at the Police Field Office where they participate in a random drug



screen. Positive tests result in the parolee being taken into custody. Currently there are only two active parolees living in Essex Village.

Through a working partnership with the Essex Village property management, 21 families have been evicted as a direct result of police action and 437 people have been barred from entering Essex Village due to their criminal involvement.

A "Knock and Talk" operation was devised involving teams of specially trained officers. The officers visit Essex Village locations suspected of drug activity. The officers speak with the residents and on occasions where the residents give consent, officers enter and search the residences. This tactic was used on several occasions with great success. (See Attachment #7)

In 1984 the General Assembly of Virginia passed legislation to allow localities to join together and create a multi-jurisdictional grand jury to investigate drug-related matters. With uniformed officers assuming a greater responsibility for drug enforcement, four Task Force officers assigned to the Essex Village initiative were sworn to the grand jury in an effort to solicit cooperation from those violators arrested as part of past enforcement operations conducted in the Essex Village Community. The implementation of this strategy was different because the criminal element felt this type of function was reserved strictly for Narcotics Officers and Detectives. They were very surprised to be served a subpoena to appear before the grand jury by a Uniformed Police Officer.

## Assessment

With the overall goal of "Improving the Quality of Life for Our Citizens," the aggressive Essex Village approach to criminal enforcement has been viewed as very successful within the department. No violent crime has been reported in the last quarter of 1998 or the first quarter of 1999. Complaints of open-air drug markets operating in this community are virtually non-existent. Calls for service in 1998 as compared to 1997 are down by 23.8%. The following is a snapshot of the results of this policing initiative between April and December 1998.

0 17 Firearms Recovered

0 \$7,811 Recovered

0 7 Cellular phones recovered

0 9 Pagers recovered

0 109 Field interviews conducted

0 291 Criminal Arrests

-84 Drug suspects identified

0 Drug Seizures\*

-Marijuana - 1,966 grams

-Heroin- 1.2 grams

-Crack Cocaine - 617 grams

\*Street value according to the Division's Narcotics Investigations Unit - in excess of \$150,000.

There were seven active drug complaints when the initiative began. Currently, there is one active complaint.

Police initiatives planned for this community by the Task Force for 1999 are:

- 0 Target Harden - locations in Essex as well as surrounding areas to deter individuals from entering the area to participate in criminal activity
- 0 Continue directed/integrated patrol initiatives
- 0 Use of the multi-jurisdictional grand jury
- 0 Expand coordination with Probation and Parole
  - Community based corrections/police effort
  - Operation consequence (random drug screens)

Quality of Life initiatives identified by the Essex Community Work Group for 1999 are:

- 0 Spring clean-up
- 0 Christmas in April
- 0 Involve patrol officers in "The Mentor Program" at elementary schools in the 30 Zone
  - Glen Lea Elementary
  - Laburnum Elementary

It is also important to mention the Crime Analysis of this community. The following is a statistical comparison was conducted between April 1997 - April 1998 and April 1998 - April 1999.

The following reductions were observed:

Burglary reduced 52.6%

Robbery reduced 77.7%

Larceny reduced 25 %

Auto Larceny reduced 52.6%

Aggravated Assault reduced 33.3%

This significant reduction in crime has truly improved the quality of life for the citizens of the Essex Village Community. (See Attachment #8)

### **Agency and Officer Information**

The Essex Village Initiative is an example of an ambitious problem-solving project undertaken by Uniformed Personnel assigned to the Division of Police's Eastern District under the Command of Captain William Davis. The effort illustrated the possibilities of problem solving policing when police executives select good people and empower them to be creative and forward thinking in their approach to resolve the problems that harm a community. This initiative was conducted without the benefit of external funding or the creation of any additional positions to address the issues facing this community. All the operations undertaken were designed to be conducted as part of the officer's tour of duty.

### **Project Contact Person**

Lieutenant Gerard A. Dabney  
Administrative Lieutenant  
Uniform Operations District I  
3812 Nine Mile Road  
Richmond, Virginia  
Work (804) 652-3311  
Fax (804) 652-3397  
E-mail: *dab@co.henrico.va.us*

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**ESSEX COMMUNITY**  
**APRIL 1998-APRIL 1999**

TOTAL OFFENSES: 514

\*\*\*\*\* OCCURRENCES \*\*\*\*\*

HOMICIDE->: 0	RAPES---->: 1	ROBBERY-->: 2	AGRV-ASLT>: 6
BURGLARY->: 9	LARCENY-->: 18	SHOPLIFT->: 10	LARC-AUTO>: 7
AUTO THEFT: 20	N-AG ASLT>: 77	ARSON/BOMB: 1	FORG/CTRFT: 1
FRAUD---->: 7	STOLN PROP: 0	VANDALISM>: 31	WEAPONS-->: 7
SEX OFFNSE: 1	DRUG VIOLA: 77	GAMBLING->: 0	OFFNS-FMLY: 14
DUI----->: 1	LIQUOR LAW: 16	DRUNK---->: 9	DISORDERLY: 15

ALL OTHER>: 184

\*\*\*\*\* DAY OF OCCURRENCE \*\*\*\*\*

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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60	56	65	95	97	63	78

\*\*\*\*\* MONTH OF OCCURRENCE \*\*\*\*\*

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
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29	26	42	58	101	23	27	46	55	25	39	43

\*\*\*\*\* HOUR OF OCCURRENCE \*\*\*\*\*

00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12
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39	31	8	13	4	5	6	5	8	11	11	14
12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
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11	24	8	33	21	45	22	30	35	41	23	46

STATUS: 2)ATTEMPT> 11  
3)COMPLET> 422  
NO CODE> 81

DISPOS: 1)CLR-ARS> 262  
2)CLR-EXC> 40  
3)NCL-INA> 11  
4)NCL-NFA> 186  
5)NCL-ACT> 15

\* I N C I D E N T      S U M M A R Y \*

**ESSEX COMMUNITY  
APRIL 1997-APRIL 1998**

TOTAL OFFENSES:    494

\*\*\*\*\* OCCURRENCES \*\*\*\*\*

HOMICIDE->:    0	RAPES---->:    0	ROBBERY-->:    9	AGRV-ASLT>:    9
BURGLARY->:    19	LARCENY-->:    24	SHOPLIFT->:    20	LARC-AUTO>:    11
AUTO THEFT:    30	N-AG ASLT>:    71	ARSON/BOMB:    2	FORG/CTRFT:    5
FRAUD---->:    1	STOLN PROP:    1	VANDALISM>:    43	WEAPONS-->:    9
SEX OFFNSE:    0	DRUG VIOLA:    58	GAMBLING->:    1	OFFNS-FMLY:    10
DUI----->:    0	LIQUOR LAW:    5	DRUNK---->:    6	DISORDERLY:    8

ALL OTHER>:    152

\*\*\*\*\* DAY OF OCCURRENCE \*\*\*\*\*

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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59	58	78	62	70	83	84

\*\*\*\*\* MONTH OF OCCURRENCE \*\*\*\*\*

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
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52	56	48	24	31	26	41	49	46	28	53	40

\*\*\*\*\* HOUR OF OCCURRENCE \*\*\*\*\*

00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12
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29	17	13	12	5	2	3	4	5	9	4	11
12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
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14	17	29	19	34	35	30	47	34	32	38	27

STATUS:    2) ATTEMPT>    9  
           3) COMPLET>    410  
           ?) NO CODE>    75

DISPOS:    1) CLR-ARS>    225  
           2) CLR-EXC>    57  
           3) NCL-INA>    37  
           4) NCL-NFA>    163  
           5) NCL-ACT>    12