

CRIME AND POLICE PROBLEMS IN THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Marc H. Morial was elected Mayor of the City of New Orleans in 1994 primarily on his proposed package of reducing the widely publicized rampant crime, particularly murders, and his recommended police reforms based on citizens complaints.

One of his first acts was to launch a search for an out of state qualified Superintendent of Police. On October 13, 1994 he appointed Richard J. Pennington from Washington, D.C. as the Superintendent of the New Orleans Police Department. Pennington began his career in law enforcement in 1968 with the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department. He advanced through the ranks to the position of Assistant Chief. His experience included Internal Affairs Division, Finance and Budget, Personnel and Recruiting, Youth Division, Robbery, Seventh District, Community Relations, and Homicide. In his last promotion as Chief of Operations, he initiated the first cultural diversity training program for both police officers and community leaders.

After Chief Pennington painstakingly interviewed members and carefully reviewed each and every district, division and unit of the New Orleans Police Department, as well as checking crime reports and meeting with citizen groups, he released his plan of action on January 11, 1995. This plan had ten major elements of need within the Department.

He learned that New Orleans differs from other American cities because ten public housing developments were scattered all across the city. Crime, through the years, had increased throughout the city, however, three of the housing developments were pinpointed as the highest crime areas.

Part of the problem was not being able to recruit enough officers to offset the declining number through from retirement and leaving to join higher paying departments. Chief Pennington enlisted the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the International Association of Chiefs of Police for in-service training, and members of the private business sector for recruiting and combatting the salary problem.

Through his outstanding performance, Chief Pennington has earned the complete support of the men and women of the Department which has subsequently resulted in reducing violent crime in New Orleans and in returning dignity, respect and public confidence to the New Orleans Police Department. This is substantiated by feedback from the general public about their perception of NOPD's crime fighting methods and community policing, citizen surveys, local and national television, and editorials in local and national papers, magazines, etc. Chief Pennington realizes that by no means can victory be claimed and he has pledged to continue to work toward his goal of securing every street, every block, and every neighborhood in New Orleans.

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Crime, and particularly murders, was rampant in the City of New Orleans when Richard J. Pennington was selected as Superintendent of the New Orleans Police Department in October, 1994. He immediately checked the Uniform Crime Report for the Year 1993 and learned there had been 396 murders and 55,172 total crimes. There were 425 murders and 55,172 total crime incidents for the Year 1994. In his assessments, he learned that three of the ten Public Housing Developments were identified as having one of the highest crime problems he faced. Twenty-six per cent of all homicides in 1994 occurred in these three housing developments.

Subsequently, after Chief Pennington completed his assessment of the NOPD and the City of New Orleans, he released the "Pennington Plan" containing ten major elements of need on January 11, 1995:

- I. Abolish Internal Affairs and create the Public Integrity Division (PED) to instill credibility and integrity to the NOPD and to be responsible for investigating allegations of corruption and criminal activity by police officers and civilians.
- II. Establish Police Early Warning System (PEWS) For Citizen Complaints. This system is to identify and monitor the behavior and conduct of police officers for citizen complaints.
- III. Begin Comprehensive Community Policing Strategy to follow crime fighting initiatives focusing on high crime areas.
- IV. Training For All Police Personnel
- V. Increase the Number Of Professional Homicide Investigators by 40%.
- VI. Police Personnel Enhancement Package
- VII. New Recruit and Promotion Standards

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VIII. Complete Reform of the Outside Employment Policy (Details)

IX. New Policy for Take Home Police Vehicles

X. Appointment of New Deputy Chiefs

On February 1, 1995 Chief Pennington initiated his comprehensive community policing strategy following crime fighting initiatives focusing on high crime areas. Community policing creates a partnership between police and residents and is designed to improve mutual trust as well as more effectively prevent and suppress criminal activity. The major components include: organizing community based crime prevention activities neighborhood by neighborhood; restructuring how officers are deployed and establishing foot patrols to ensure greater command accountability at the neighborhood patrol level; focusing City resources on higher crime areas; and, informing the community on the results of the police operations, investigations and initiatives in neighborhoods.

First came the creation of a new 100 member citywide policing team known as the Community Oriented Police Squad (COPS). These officers were trained in special community policing tactics by the International Association of the Chiefs of Police. The tactical training included conflict resolution, problem solving, organizing citizens patrols, coordinating with other public agencies and establishing neighborhood watch organizations.

New Orleans differs from other American cities in that we have a total often public housing developments scattered all across the city. By virtue of a \$3.4 million federal grant in January, 1995, Chief Pennington was able to establish COPS in three developments. The Community Policing Program began with opening Community Empowerment Centers in Desire, Florida and B. W. Cooper Housing Developments, the three highest crime areas. Mini sub-

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stations were established and serve as 24-hour outreach facilities to the community. The centers provide a highly visible police presence through foot patrols, intervention initiatives, and the maintenance of a 24-hour safe home hotline. Because of the federal government's confidence in the NOPD's declining crime numbers and increased manpower, additional grants have led to the creation of four additional COPS sub-stations in Iberville, Lafitte, C. J. Peete, and St. Bernard Developments.

Over time, the officers have established a solid rapport with the residents, which directly led to increased trust and confidence - two key components to increase the flow of information as well as a growing sense of overall security in these neighborhoods.

As an expansion of this program, for the first time in the history of the NOPD, all sworn officers received in-service training in ethics, values, conflict resolution, sensitivity and community policing. District Commanders received Total Quality Management Training, Investigators received Technical and Forensic Training, and the Command Staff received its first course in Ethics given by the National Institute of Ethics. Total Management Training and the International Association of Chiefs of Police community policing training will become a requirement for each new recruit class.

In the Chiefs first year progress report to the Mayor and Members of Council on October 10, 1995, he stated murder rate in the public housing development areas decreased by 83%. Community policing initiatives within public housing carried over to affect the citywide murder rate, which led to an 18% reduction in murders across New Orleans. Also, from February to October, the COPS patrols in the housing developments were responsible for 861 felony arrests, and 402 juvenile arrests. They conducted over 7,000 pedestrian checks and

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removed nearly 300 abandoned vehicles in these communities. The year end statistics for 1995 revealed murders had dropped from 425 in 1994 to 366 in 1995, but total reported crime increased from 52,703 incidents in 1994 to 53,528 incident in 1995.

Also, on February 1, 1995, Chief Pennington announced the new location of the Public Integrity Division (PID), its commander, management team and operational procedures. The Federal Bureau of Investigation assisted in the reorganization and training of the investigators in interviewing, interrogations, surveillance, undercover and sting operations. At this time the Police Early Warning System was put in place to identify and monitor the behavior and conduct of police officers. To better monitor their activities, Chief Pennington went before the State Legislature to request a change in state law allowing unsustained complaints made against officers to remain in their personnel files. Previously, complaint records against officers could be expunged after seven years. These records are vital in tracking officers who may be developing inappropriate patterns of behavior. This system enables a better tracking of complaints and allows the command staff to intervene, counsel and take the necessary actions to prevent any further incidents of inappropriate conduct by police officers. Subsequently, in-service training was provided to these officers including the Professional Performance Enhancement Program (PPEP), and since this system was established, both the number of citizen and rank initiated complaints have decreased.

In November, 1995 a small group of New Orleans business and community leaders acted to create the New Orleans Police Foundation as a non-profit corporation, with John Casbon as its founding chairman. Their purpose was to provide substantial and systemic business assistance to the Superintendent as he worked to root corruption out of the New Orleans Police Department

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and make it operationally capable of reducing crime. In March 1996, the Police Foundation was launched at a news conference where they pledged to forge a public-private-partnership that would combine the resources and expertise of both sectors in a manner that would have dramatic impact on crime and the quality of life in New Orleans.

In May, 1996, the Police Foundation retained KMPG/Peat Marwick to audit the expenditures of the New Orleans Police Department. When the audit was completed, the findings revealed no misallocation or improper use of funds by the NOPD. In October, 1996, the Police Foundation retained the John Linder and Jack Maple to help implement Chief Pennington's plan of action for dramatically reducing crime in New Orleans and to assist in rebuilding the NOPD. Mr. Linder worked with the Foundation's Executive Director, Terry Ebbert, the Police Department and Civil Service to reengineer a recruiting system which had been able to hire only 19 police officers in 1996. Mr. Maple was responsible for establishing his COMSTAT process at the NOPD designed to set crime fighting strategies and tactics for cutting crime. This process had been extremely successful in New York City.

On June 5, 1997 Chief Pennington gave another Status Report in which he stated that although murders dropped from 366 in 1995 to 350 in 1996, total crime incidents again increased from 53,528 in 1995 to 54,012 in 1996. At that time he launched additional initiatives to complement the plan of action he had announced October 14, 1996 to dramatically reduce crime in New Orleans.

All enforcement and investigative functions of the Department were centralized under the command of the newly appointed Assistant Chief for Operations. As part of this historic reorganization and in accordance with the implementation of the Department's plan of action,

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the former Investigative Services Bureau was abolished as were the District Managing Crime Investigative Units (MCI). Officers performing investigative duties were reassigned and distributed throughout the eight police districts and District Investigative Units (DIU) were created, each commanded by a Detective Lieutenant. As a part of the plan, each of these investigative officers were issued a detective badge as part of their credentials. The eight District Commanders are also now being held strictly accountable for all follow-up investigations, wanted persons and the crime rates within their respective districts, in accordance with the decentralization philosophy. Operational and support personnel are now coordinated in the focus on crime reduction through the Department's weekly COMSTAT meetings with District and Unit Commanders. Each week every District Commander reports to the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendents on crime in their district, offenses under investigation, initiatives undertaken and tactics being utilized to reduce crime. These meetings also give commanders the opportunity to share intelligence information, and to coordinate their crime fighting efforts across district and departmental boundaries. Due to the success of this COMSTAT strategy, its use has now been expanded beyond the original plan and implemented at the individual district level and in non-district units including the recruitment process. This new method of accountability is the cornerstone of the NOPD's crime reduction efforts and since the inception of COMSTAT in October of 1996, reductions in crime were noted in both the fourth quarter of 1996 and the first quarter of 1997. To assist in the production of accurate and timely intelligence information for the COMSTAT process, a daily computer listing of all crime incidents is forwarded to each District Commander who verifies its accuracy. This data is then utilized by the Technical Services Bureau to produce a weekly "Crime Trend Booklet" which contains information on crime rates,

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locations of offenses and management information on the performance of each district in the areas of response time, handling times, and waiting times for all calls for service. This booklet also contains up to date information useful in assisting District commanders with the deployment of officers, crime initiatives and the formation of task forces, as well as feedback on the results of previous deployments in terms of crime reduction and arrests. This Crime Trend Booklet, along with other computer printouts of open cases and clearance rates, in addition to data on arrest warrants and search warrants, form a "profile" on the performance of both the District Commander and the Detective Squad Commander.

In order to assist in the execution of the large volume of warrants on file, a Violent Offenders Warrant Section and Violent Crimes Fugitive Task Force were formed to work in a coordinated effort with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. This partnership includes the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, United States Postal Inspectors, the State Department of Probation and Parole and all metropolitan Sheriffs Offices. Distant fugitives have been located, arrested and extradited with the assistance of out of state law enforcement agencies. From October 1996, since the inception of this cooperative effort through May of 1997, a total of 751 offenders have been apprehended, 648 of which were violent felons.

Also implemented as planned is the Investigative Support Division to enhance the clearance and arrest rates of "cold" homicide cases, major narcotics cases and incidents involving sexual offenses or the abuse of our children.

The Scientific Criminal Investigation Division has also been transferred to the Operations Bureau, which has enhanced the processing of crime scenes, developed a closer working relationship between investigators and lab technicians and has also increased the accountability

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through unity of command.

In trying to keep pace with the computer revolution, the Department's Technical Services Bureau, commanded by an Assistant Chief, has made significant progress in the modernization of all computerized operations, such as the installation of Mobile Data Terminals in patrol cars and a new Integrate Ballistic Identification System (IBIS), which was donated to the NOPD from Washington. The Alarm Ordinance, in conjunction with the new 911 response policy will enable the Department to make great strides towards our goal of reducing unnecessary police responses by 50%.

The Office of Policy and Planning has been established and is headed by an Assistant Chief. As a modification to the original plan, the Department's Research and Planning Division was reorganized and placed directly under the Policy and Planning Office. Significant personnel enhancements include the addition of a Police Major and Captain to assure the Department remains on the cutting edge of police practices. During the calendar Year 1998, this office and members successfully completed the project of revising the operations manual. Since 1979, when changes were needed to meet specific regulatory needs, a "patching up" was accomplished through the issuance of an ever-increasing number of General Orders. During the revision, 391 of the 500 General Orders were canceled; 129 newly authored or revised regulations were implemented which canceled 50 ASOP's, 40 FSOP's, and 37 Sections. Additional, there are 35 new regulations in draft format which will cancel the remaining, ASOP's, FSOP's, Sections, and General Orders, thus consolidating all of the rules and regulations into one consistent manual. This will allow the NOPD to operate under regulations which meet national standards of professional excellence.

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The entire process of recruiting and selecting qualified applicants underwent a significant transformation which reduced and streamlined the process from 3 to 6 months, down to a 6 to 8 week period from application to the hiring of potential police officers. Training programs were also revamped. Since an aggressive recruiting campaign was undertaken in September 1996, increased demands were made for training. The staff of the Municipal Training Academy is totally committed to insuring that overlapping classes will maintain the same rigorous requirements and instructional elements, combined with field assessment and continued training in the field. The training includes instruction in areas of police ethics, discretion, professional conduct, citizen complaint avoidance and minority relations. The training insures that each recruit understands his/her obligation to society and place in the criminal justice system. At this time, over 500 qualified police officers have been successfully hired and trained since 1997.

Superintendent Pennington, with the assistance of the Police Foundation, was successful in spearheading a campaign to get the men and women of the Department a 12% to 62% salary increase in January, 1997. This increase also allowed the Department to be competitive in recruiting candidates, including lateral transfer officers from other jurisdictions, and in retaining quality officers on the job.

The release of the latest crime statistics reflect a drop in murders from 266 in 1997 to 230 for the Year 1998. Additionally, total crime incidents decreased from 45,744 in 1997 to 40,811 for the Year 1998. A complete review by a member of our local paper, The Times Picayune, indicates the number of murders in New Orleans dropped 31 per cent in the first quarter of 1999, compared to the same period in 1998. The 48 murders in the first quarter of 1999, compared to 70 in the first quarter of 1998, is the second lowest number recorded in the past six years. Only

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one other time in the past six years has the Uniform Crime Report shown a lesser number of murders and that was the third quarter of 1998, with 41 murders. Murder totals have dropped each year since the high of 425 in 1994. This is directly attributed to the leadership of Chief Pennington, the commitment of the men and women of the New Orleans Police Department, the improved technology and equipment, the improved police pay and the partnership with the citizens of the community. Underlying the data and statistics, however, is the feedback received from the general public about their perception of NOPD's crime fighting methods, which include community policing. Every two years the University of New Orleans conducts a survey gauging public opinion of how our local citizens feel about the police department. The NOPD's approval rating in 1998 was 85%, more than double the number from 1996. This rating shows the citizens of New Orleans agree with what Chief Pennington and the members of NOPD are doing. But by no means can victory be claimed, because, as in other cities, more work has to be done.

A member of COPS is a board member in each of the resident council organizations where a sub-station is located. This allows these members to learn specific problems the residents experience so solutions can be found. COPS also participate in many community functions, including National Night Out Against Crime, Christmas celebrations, athletic leagues and voter registration drives. A program has been established called "COPS for KIDS," where children who live in public housing can take advantage of an annual visit to the Louisiana Superdome to meet players and coaches participating in the annual NOKIA Sugar Bowl, as well as participating in many summer-time activities. As the momentum continues from welfare-to-work, members of COPS align themselves directly with public housing residents who are currently in training to join the workforce. It is a proven fact that community policing works, however, it takes manpower

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and money. The ideal endeavor would be to infuse community policing throughout the City of New Orleans, and hopefully in the years to come, this may be possible.

Superintendent Richard Pennington has made significant strides in reducing violent crime in New Orleans and in returning dignity, respect, and public confidence to the New Orleans Police Department. He has pledged to continue to work toward his goal of securing every street, every block, and every neighborhood in New Orleans.

New Orleans U.C.R. Reportable Crimes

1st Quarter 1999 Compared With 1st Quarter 1998 Citywide Totals

<i>Offense</i>	1st Quarter 1998	1st Quarter 1999	% Change
<i>Murder</i>	69	48	-30.43%
<i>Rape</i>	73	70	-4.11%
<i>Arm. Robbery</i>	622	397	-36.17%
<i>Sim. Robbery</i>	199	196	-1.51%
<i>Assault</i>	830	706	-14.94%
<i>Violent Crime Total</i>	1793	1417	-20.97%
<i>Burglary</i>	1934	1350	-30.20%
<i>Theft</i>	4614	4511	-2.23%
<i>Auto Theft</i>	2136	1841	-13.81%
<i>Non-Violent Crime Total</i>	8684	7702	-11.31%
Total Index Crimes	10477	9119	-12.96%

New Orleans Police Department

Year End UCR Crime Statistics 1994 - 1998

