

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

0120

Scanning

The problem of increasing gun violence was clearly evident as the City's murder rate rose at an alarming rate. Concurrently, there was a steady increase in the number of serious assaults with firearms. The dynamics of the relationships among the crimes would take quite awhile to discern, but the trend of violence was readily apparent.

The shootings began to increase early in 2000, but they increased dramatically in early May. A large proportion of them proved fatal. But, fortunately, many of the shooting victims survived and the incidents were classified as serious assaults.

Detectives of the Homicide Squad suspected common threads among many of the incidents, but had been overwhelmed by the frequency of events. Consequently, they had been unable to adequately investigate many of the existing leads or to locate many suspected witnesses and perpetrators.

As the task force was being formed, information was culled and collected from the Division's records management system, investigative files, and Crime Analysis Unit on all homicides and firearms related assaults over the previous three years. The new task force was then assembled and participants were briefed on the information collected.

Analysis

While the increase in murder and firearms related assaults were statistically measurable, the relationships among them were not. Over the previous year, several names associated with murder investigations began to reappear as witnesses,

associates, victims, relatives, or suspects. Sometimes the commonalities were not as palpable, but were suspected by the investigators.

But regardless of whether the crimes were related to some collective criminal enterprise or other commonality, the effect upon the community was obvious. News reports increasingly contained accounts of murder and other violence, and the fear of crime was increasingly palpable.

Before the creation of the task force, the Homicide Squad investigated all assaults resulting in death, and detectives assigned to the respective patrol districts investigated non-fatal assaults. Consequently, information was not systematically shared among the investigative entities, and common participants - unless identified on offense reports as victims, witnesses, perpetrators, or suspects - were not readily apparent. Bringing the investigative entities together helped bring the information together as well.

Response

Representatives of several investigative entities of the Louisville Division of Police were brought together to form the "Save Our Streets - Task Force One." (The number one was used to signify that, if successful, the concept would be duplicated again in the future to address other problems.) Detectives from the Metro-Narcotics Unit, the Intelligence Unit, and from all five of the Division's Police Districts, were joined with the entire Street Crimes Unit and Homicide Squad to form the task force.

As the plan was being developed, Chief Smith and members of his staff attended community meetings, met with community leaders and area ministers, to discuss the proposed task force and ways to enlist the support of the community in "saving our

streets." Their reaction and support was overwhelming. The group agreed to endorse the task force and to help spread the message to their constituents about assisting the police in investigating and solving the crimes in their neighborhoods. A media campaign was also initiated.

The first stage of the investigative component involved a careful review of all violent assaults and robberies that had occurred over the previous three years to attempt to identify any possible patterns - especially among victims and perpetrators. The results confirmed the detectives' suspicions that many of the crimes involved a common cast of characters. But the pattern was still not clear.

At the direction of Homicide Squad detectives, the operation began as task force members assisted in follow-up investigations and sought the many individuals that were needed for questioning in the unsolved incidents. But first, extensive research was conducted on every suspected participant that had been identified. Detectives ascertained:

- 1) Criminal Histories.
- 2) Positive identifications and photographs.
- 3) Prior offense reports - collected and analyzed to establish motives and patterns of involvement.
- 4) Complete photo packets and all information on both factions were developed and issued to all task force members and affiliates.
- 5) Extensive plans detailing tactics and actions to be taken by Street Crimes personnel were developed.

6) The local offices of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms were consulted and briefed due to the possibility of Federal prosecutions.

7) Specific locations were examined for future references regarding criminal activity.

The concurrent media campaign was also implemented and citizens were encouraged to help "save our streets" by coming forward with information about the unsolved crimes. Both efforts proved immediately successful. The missing witnesses and suspects began to be located and questioned, and citizens began to call. Valuable information began to flow - slowly at first - and the pieces started coming together.

Two rival groups became increasingly clear as being connected to a significant number of the incidents. Apparent motives ranged from robberies of the rival gangs to revenge for previous infractions. Regardless of the motives, it was clear that a war was raging between the two factions and that innocent victims were being caught in the crossfire.

The problem was traced back to an incident in 1997 when a gang member was shot and killed by a rival at a party. However, that shooting was even suspected as being retaliatory for previous confrontations between the two rival gangs. The gang component was clear in the case, but the investigation had long been at a stalemate as no witnesses - of which there were many - had come forward to provide information that would help bring the perpetrators to justice.

The violence between the two factions had steadily increased since that incident, but the silence never ceased. Several subsequent assaults and murders seemed to

relate to the 1997 incident, but the pieces could not be put together. The violence became increasingly volatile and deadly as time had passed. As was confirmed during the task force investigation, there were many common players who were gang members content on settling scores or seeking revenge on the streets.

The frequency of the shootings reached a high during the summer months of June and July 2000. Community concern and fear also escalated during this time period after the shooting deaths of two young females - apparently innocent victims caught in the crossfire. In one case, a 12-year-old female was shot to death while sleeping on a couch in her Aunt's living room. The shooting was labeled a "drive-by" - the shots had come from a vehicle in the street. The other incident was the shooting death of an 18 year-old sitting in her car in front of her residence.

Assaults with firearms had clearly become the outstanding community problem in the city's West End - as that was the battlefield where the two rival gangs were waging their war. In addition to the investigative component, aggressive enforcement actions in the affected areas were also initiated by the Street Crimes Unit component of the task force along with street-level appeals for information.

Since it was known that many of the suspected participants were also involved in illegal drug activity, enforcement and investigative activities were also stepped-up in that area with the task force leading the charge. "Open-air" drug markets were targeted and random "interdiction roadblocks" were established.

Many of the individuals being sought were located during these activities. And many of the suspected perpetrators were incarcerated on other charges. At the same time, several citizens also started to volunteer information at the roadblocks. Much

valuable information was gleaned from this source alone. Anonymous information also began to increasingly flow over the telephone lines.

Up to this point, many of the suspected participants had been confident and cocky when questioned by detectives - they believed no one would speak out against them. But the task forces activities had begun to turn the tide. The community saw aggressive action by the police, witnessed the thugs being apprehended, and then began to share what they knew.

The threat of incarceration had little effect on the perpetrators because it had not seemed real to them - they had believed the witnesses were too afraid to cooperate with police. But as it became apparent that the investigators were beginning to learn the truth, the players' confidence began to turn to fear, and their confidence waned - some even began to fall. As they did, they began to turn on the others in an effort to protect themselves.

A large variety of resources were utilized to accomplish the task force goals. Anything that *could* be utilized to produce a positive result was utilized. Most of them were mentioned above. The task force encountered very few problems during the course of operations.

As with any operation of this nature, the most frequent problem encountered was the dissemination of information and the response to it. This problem was addressed as it was encountered and was easily overcome.

Assessment

As the task force activities progressed, positive results were felt in several ways. First, the targeted enforcement activities instilled fear in wrongdoers and street drug

sales and violence declined in the target area. But, more specifically, no further acts of violence were committed during the task force period by any of the members of the targeted groups. And, ultimately, many of them were incarcerated and unable to continue their spate of violence after the task force ended.

At the same time, street violence declined in general. The high visibility of enforcement actions and the arrests of well-known offenders in the target area had a significant impact.

The most measurable result was in the charges placed on several of the targeted suspects and collateral arrests during the enforcement activities. One hundred and sixty three felony arrests were made and 46 felony warrants were served. Additionally, even larger numbers of misdemeanor offenders were arrested and weapons, drugs, and stolen merchandise were seized. More specifically:

- 6 arrested for murder or related charges
- 2 arrested in relation to numerous shootings during the past year
- 21 homicide suspects located and detained for questioning. Many were charged with other offenses or arrested pursuant to warrants
- 6 of those arrested were charged with Federal crimes
- 2 Marijuana growing operations seized

Additional Statistics

- 163 Felony Arrests
- 291 Misdemeanor Arrests
- 46 Felony Warrants Served
- 123 Misdemeanor Warrants Served
- Crack and powdered cocaine seized: **1,220.5 grams (equals 1 kilogram - 7.59 ounces)**
- Marijuana Seized: **21 pounds -- 5.48 ounces**
- Firearms Seized: **39 (7 of which had been reported stolen)**
- Stolen Automobiles Recovered: **18 (8 with arrests)**
- Currency Seized: **\$22, 695.21**
- Search Warrants Executed: **5 - plus 7 consensual searches**

Most notable among the cases cleared, the 1997 case that started the violent conflict among the groups was solved and an arrest was made. That suspect is currently awaiting trial.

The participants universally feel that the operation was a total success and could not have gone more smoothly. The overall goal was achieved and is continuing to produce positive results even today. Relationships were built between the Louisville Division of Police and community entities and individuals that will pay dividends long into the future. Feedback from the affected neighborhoods has been very positive and many citizens are now more willing to take a stand and assist the police when they have information about crime in their areas. Additionally, the investigative relationships built and strengthened within the Louisville Division of Police will pay dividends far into the future as well.

Continued monitoring of the targeted area indicated that violent crime is still down and that the remaining free members of the rival groups have not resumed their violent conflict. Therefore, the task force's efforts were indeed success in resolving the targeted problems, and not just displacing it into another area.

Several cases involving members of the rival groups are still pending and appear to be nearing a point where arrests will be affected. Such is naturally a result of continued investigation, but it was made possible by the strides of the task force in breaking down the barriers and the veils of silence surrounding the groups and their crimes.

The selection of the Street Crimes Unit to conduct the enforcement activity of the task force was a necessity. The type of violence that was occurring is what a unit like

Street Crimes was designed to address. The fact that the Street Crimes Unit has the ability to continue to monitor and enforce situations like this facilitates other units such as the Homicide Squad to provide the investigative work needed on other cases. The continued information shared by the units ensures that quick problem identification can be done to possibly prevent this problem or others from taking place in the future. The continued support of the Chief of Police and the Mayor of the City of Louisville facilitated the response of the task force and ensures similar actions if warranted in the future.

Agency and Officer Information

The problem-solving initiative started with the Division's Homicide Squad. As the squad became increasingly overwhelmed by the increasing murder rate, it became increasingly apparent that the detectives needed assistance and that a concerted effort was necessary to adequately investigate the crimes and to stem the tide of violence. Consequently, a task force was created and detectives were temporarily reassigned to it from each of the Division's patrol districts, Metro-Narcotics Unit, and the Intelligence Unit. The entire Street Crimes Unit was also temporarily assigned to the effort.

As each detective had already received training in the Community Oriented Policing model, additional training was not required. Each officer was given great latitude in identifying and undertaking initiatives to address the problems identified. In addition to addressing traditional enforcement-related issues, the effort called for building trust on a large-scale between the police and the community and encouraging reluctant citizens to come forward with valuable information. Success was achieved in both realms.

As noted, personnel resources devoted to the effort came from the Division's normal operating budget. However, additional costs were incurred from overtime expenditures.

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"SAVE OUR STREETS" TASK FORCE ONE

SUMMARY

In the months leading up to July 31, 2000, our city experienced a series of violent assaults and murders. As the numbers rose at a disturbing rate, our Homicide investigators were significantly challenged. By mid-year, the City of Louisville had suffered twenty-five murders and over fifty gun-related assaults - a significant increase over similar periods. In less than one week, there were four murders and seven gun related assaults. There appeared to be common threads connecting many of the incidents, but investigators were too overwhelmed to follow the leads adequately. As a result, the "Save Our Streets - Task Force One" was formed.

The task force's primary objective was to assist the Homicide Squad detectives in locating individuals from the ever-growing list of suspects and witnesses. At the same time, it was charged with identifying and addressing the underlying causes for the general increase in violent crime. Since indications of gang activity and drug trafficking were common among many of the crimes, the task force addressed these activities as well - not just for the "quality of life" aspects, but also for the possible identification of suspects and witnesses regarding the open investigations.

As the task force was being formed, community leaders were brought together for input about ways to collaterally stem the increase in violence and to encourage citizen involvement in solving the crimes. A media blitz was also initiated to establish awareness of the department's efforts and to attempt to cause a cessation of the violence from fear of apprehension.

The task force began operation on August 8, 2000 and culminated its efforts on October 14, 2000. Among its successes:

- 6 arrested for murder or related charges
- 2 arrested in relation to numerous shootings during the past year
- 21 homicide suspects located and detained for questioning. Many were charged with other offenses or arrested pursuant to warrants
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