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Mounted Units: Effective Tools in the Public Safety, Community Relations, and
Community Oriented Policing

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ABSTRACT

Law enforcement enters into the new millennium with many new tools and technology designed to deter criminal activity. Computer aided dispatching systems, global tracking devices, and highly developed lap top computers are ready to assist officers in the performance of their duties. Many communities have become more involved with their police departments. This involvement has blended well with a new concept of policing that has evolved in the law enforcement community; that of community oriented policing. This philosophy calls for police departments to work closely with the community they serve. Positive interaction between police departments and their communities is on the rise. Citizens want to feel safe as they move about their communities. Police agencies can convey this feeling of safety to their community by maintaining high visibility and presence. These objectives can be accomplished through the efforts of specially trained unit.

To investigate these issues this project looks back to the accomplishments of mounted units in recent times. Police journals, police periodicals, and a variety of other printed materials will be reviewed in an effort to provide current and detailed information. Furthermore, the project interviews police officers that are currently assigned to mounted patrol units. Through their experience and insight one can get a first hand look at the issues at hand.

It is concluded that mounted patrol units can provide the communities they serve with a sense of well being simply by utilizing high police presence and visibility. It also proves that mounted units are extremely effective in the areas of crowd and riot control. More importantly, this research shows that mounted units can be highly instrumental in employing the concept of "Community Oriented Policing."

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INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement enters into the new millennium with many new tools and technology designed to deter criminal activity. This new arsenal of sophisticated weaponry has been developed to help officers detect and deter crime by the most efficient and effective means available. Computer aided dispatching systems, global tracking devices, and highly developed lap top computers are ready to assist officers in the performance of their duties. These systems enable law enforcement to effectively respond to the calls for service from their community. Many communities have become more involved with their police departments. This involvement has blended well with a new concept of policing that has evolved in the law enforcement community; that of community oriented policing. This philosophy calls for police departments to work closely with the community they serve. Positive interaction between police departments and their communities is on the rise. Citizens want to feel safe as they move about their communities. Police agencies can convey this feeling of safety to their community by maintaining high visibility and presence. These objectives can be accomplished through the efforts of specially trained units.

~~Fortunately, many police departments already possess a specially trained unit that is~~ capable of completing the tasks; a mounted patrol unit. A mounted unit can be highly visible and presents a strong deterrent to crime. These units utilize methods of policing that were developed to effectively deter crime, and give the community a sense of well being. (Conly, 1994). The concept of mounted protection dates back to the era of Caesar Augustus. He created the Praetorian Guard to protect the emperor and his properties (Yates, 1992). The effectiveness of those ancient units is reflected in the accomplishments of the mounted units in modern times.

This project will investigate several issues. The first step of this project will study how effective a mounted unit can be in providing high visibility and presence. Can a mounted unit provide a comfort zone for the citizens of the community? Next, it will investigate the effectiveness of the mounted units in the area of riot and crowd control. The final step will be to measure the mounted unit's community relations capabilities, and to determine if the unit can enhance a police department's participation in the concept of community oriented policing.

To investigate these issues this project must look back to the accomplishments of mounted units in recent times. Police journals, police periodicals, and a variety of other printed materials will be reviewed in an effort to provide current and detailed information. Furthermore, the project intends to interview police officers that are currently assigned to mounted patrol units. Through their experience and insight one can get a first hand look at the issues at hand.

This research project intends to have a positive outcome. It plans to prove that mounted patrol units can and do provide the utmost in police presence. It also intends to show that a highly trained mounted unit can be one of the most effect tools in crowd and riot control. These positive attributes should contribute to the success of mounted units. This success will build on the success that police agencies can achieve in the area of community relations. Combined together, these factors will show that mounted units can have a positive impact on a community oriented policing.

These findings may have a very positive impact on law enforcement and their communities. The mounted units will bolster and uphold the reputation and the integrity of the police agencies that they represent. They will also instill in their citizens a sense of well being and a perception of safety as they move about their community. All in all it will prove to be a win-win situation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nationally, mounted patrol units remain popular with the general public and with the officers that ride the beat on horseback (Rinker, 1997). These mounted units utilize the horse as an effective tool in public relations and crime deterrence. The units also participate in parades, work with unruly crowds, and provide a sense of security at sporting events or shopping malls (Sparrow, 1990). These strengths are the attributes that keep the mounted units in popularity and existence. Their popularity can be traced back to the 1800s when the first mounted police unit was established. It is believed that London's Horse Patrol of 1805 can be credited with being the first formal mounted police organization. The Bow Street police department developed the unit. The mounted units patrolled the highways around London. The officers lived on or near the routes they patrolled. They dressed distinctively and were easily recognized. Their primary purpose was to deter robberies by the criminal highwayman. The mounted units worked closely with their neighbors, and did what they could to deter crime on the highways. The mounted unit's presence established safe zones for the good citizens that traveled on the highways. The success of this unit was so overwhelming that in 1836 it was incorporated into Sir Robert Peel's ~~Unarmed Police Force~~. (Roth, 1998). ~~These mounted units proved that high visibility and~~ presence were an essential component in crime prevention. This axiom holds true even in modern times. Horses are especially useful in areas of heavy congestion and traffic. The mounted officer's elevated vantagepoint makes him highly visible in these areas. Business and shopping districts can be extremely crowded and congested as well. The mounted rider can overlook these crowds and watch for and deter crime (Carney, 1978). From the back of horse, a police officer can maintain surveillance of a fleeing suspect more effectively than a foot patrol officer can. This fact was proved to be true on the streets of downtown Boston. Two men held

up a jewelry store in broad daylight. They quickly melted into the crowded city streets and appeared to be making their getaway. Unbeknownst to them, they were being watched by an officer sitting astride his horse. He was able to follow the thieves' movements through the busy street and was able to apprehend them. (Goodman, 1981). More important, the mounted officer provides a comfort zone that a foot patrol or motorized unit is unable to provide. This can be extremely comforting to those who see him, and it can be especially helpful to those who may need assistance.

Mounted units have established themselves as vital tools in apprehending criminals. They are able to work in business districts, neighborhoods, and rural areas. The mounted unit can be moved easily to the areas that require their attention in a relatively short period of time. Trailers can transport them to any part of the city or countryside that may have need for high police presence. Moreover, horses, unlike motorized units, require very little down time and require no routine maintenance (Sassone, 1972). The mounts are able to take their riders places where a foot patrol cannot go. The riders can cover their beats much faster and more effectively than any foot patrol officer. The mounted officers are fully capable of patrolling neighborhoods and business districts. When assigned to neighborhoods, these officers become familiar with the members of the community. They are able to provide and receive valuable information from the citizens. The residents of the community realize that the police officers can be caring and compassionate people (Fairburn, 1989). Mounted units have been extremely effective policing "soft crime" in the downtown area of Houston, TX. The unit members do not answer calls for service. The mounted units patrol the streets issuing citations, giving directions to citizens, and turning their focus to street drug use and sale, public intoxication, and loitering. The officers that work in this unit chose to participate in this unit. These officers maintain a high morale and

work willingly with the public in an effort to stop crime and disorder problems (Huey, 1995). Truly, these units prove that their presence continues to provide a great service to the citizens they serve.

Mounted units have expanded their role in law enforcement. Mounted units have proven that they are a great asset when it comes to crowd control. Over the years mounted units have been put to the test. After each instance in which they were used to handle large crowds, their performance was critiqued. These critiques brought about new training methods and operating procedures (Federal Bureau of Investigation Law Enforcement Bulletin, 1980). During a spring break in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., a large group of students blocked a highway without reason. Over fifty uniformed officers tried to disperse the crowd. The officers were unsuccessful. A second attempt to move the crowd with motorcycle officers was also unsuccessful. The commander of the unit contemplated using a riot squad and tear gas to disperse the crowd. Suddenly eight mounted officers arrived on the scene formed a line across the street. These mounted officers were visible to the entire crowd. Their arrival quickly drew the immediate attention of the large and somewhat unruly crowd. The mounted officers began riding toward the crowd in a tight formation and began to blow their whistles and motion the crowd off the road. The crowd quickly dispersed with little or no problems. There was no question as to what the officers wanted and the crowd was quick to comply (Fulton, 1993). The attention the mounted units command is understandable, one horse can be as effective as twenty men can when it comes to handling an unruly crowd. It appears that people instinctively respect the size and weight of the horse. This may go back to the time when the unhorsed peasant looked up to the mounted lord of the manor. Angry crowds have been known to overturn an automobile, but they have never been known to have overturned a horse (Chapman, 1970). They can also be very effective in

controlling motorized traffic and in search and rescue missions. They can be used in all types of terrain and weather and can be deployed quickly (Conly, 1994; Yates, 1994).

Horses make great icebreakers for both officers and citizens. Children enjoy talking to the officer and petting the horse. People who would never have stopped to speak to an officer will stop and have friendly interaction with a mounted officer. This type of contact leaves a citizen with a pleasant lasting impression of the police (Fairburn, 1989). A mounted officer finds himself back in touch with the community (Carney, 1978). The officer will learn the names of the citizens, both young and old, which live on the officer's beat. This interaction provides the citizens a great opportunity to assist in crime prevention and reduction (Marshak, 1979). The good will that can be created by mounted units cannot be measured. In Fort Lauderdale, FL., the units work with the children, the 4-H club, and the public in general. The essence of community policing is to be in the seen by the public and to meet and talk to them. It can be said that the mounted officers are the original proponents of "Community Oriented Policing" (Fulton, 1993).

None of these feats could be accomplished without training. These units receive intense and thorough training. Horses and riders must be carefully selected and trained for service. Horses must meet specific height, weight, and at times, color requirements. The horse must have a calm disposition and demeanor. Many times riders without riding experience were preferred (Doeren, 1989). These qualities in riders and horse are not always easy to find. The training is necessary and its importance is impossible to measure in dollars and cents (Carfield, 1982). The training prepares both horse and rider for the rigors of work that lies ahead. What it does not prepare the officer for is the strong support that the mounted officer receives from the community. Many times citizen volunteer units grow from the relationship that develops between the community and the mounted officer (Marshak, 1979). The relationship that a

mounted unit develops with the community it serves makes the cost of training and operation acceptable. Mounted units have proven to be great ambassadors in "Community Oriented Policing."

METHODOLOGY

There are several issues that will be addressed by this project. First and foremost, is the issue of high visibility and presence. Does a mounted unit provide a comfort zone for the citizens of the community. Secondly, it will investigate the effectiveness of the mounted units in the area of riot and crowd control. The final step will be to measure the mounted unit's community relations' capabilities, and to determine if the unit can enhance a police department's participation in the concept of community oriented policing.

It is expected that this project will have a positive outcome. It will confirm that mounted units have had, and continue to have, great success in providing a comfort zone for the citizens of the communities they patrol. It will prove that the mounted units presence and high visibility truly gives the citizens a sense of safety and security. It will also attest to the fact that mounted units can be extremely effective tools in crowd and riot control. Finally, it will substantiate the positive effect that mounted units have in community relations. This project will prove that these strong community relations will enhance a police department's role in community oriented policing. To summarize, it is expected that this project will prove that mounted patrol units play an important role in providing citizens with a perception of safety, can be efficient tools in riot and crowd control, and serve as an important cog in the concept of "Community Oriented Policing."

This project chose to look back in time to see what information the history of mounted patrol units would provide. It looked back into periodicals, police journals, and other printed materials in an effort to investigate success or failure of past mounted patrol units. The success stories that can be found in this printed material is by far the best measuring stick for success by the mounted units. Present success or failure was determined by getting the information "straight from the horse's mouth." In this case, from those officers that ride the mounted beat. The project spoke to officers from two police departments in the Houston, TX area. These officers spoke to the individual accomplishments of their department in the various areas of concern for this project. These areas included the effects of presence and visibility, unruly crowd, and community relations. It is expected that the combination of this data will prove the hypothesis to be true.

FINDINGS

Throughout history the horse has been an important factor in the progress of man. This can be seen as early as the days of the Roman Empire and can still be seen in present day and time. Horses have taken man to war, fought in battles, and helped him plow the fields, and provide basic everyday transportation. The loyalty and love that a horse is willing to give is immeasurable. These fine animals have a mystique that will probably never be surpassed by any other domesticated animal. These outstanding qualities make the horse the success that he has become in law enforcement. England, Australia, and the United States all had early success in using the horse as a tool for effective law enforcement. London's Bow street police and the Texas Rangers are law enforcement units that used the horse effectively in their efforts to keep citizens safe. Therefore, it is no surprise that this project was able to find success story after

success story about horses in law enforcement. These stories helped this project reach a positive outcome on all the issues it investigated. The first issue to be discussed is that of presence and high visibility.

Without fail, every piece of research data had one commonality, mounted officers are highly visible. The mounted officer's presence commands almost immediate attention and provides a comfort zone for those who see him. Citizens want to feel safe while they go about their daily routines. This sentiment was expressed throughout the research material. Very little, if anything makes the citizens of any community feel safer than the presence of a police officer. A police officer on a horse makes it all that much better. From neighborhood to business district, the ever-present vigilance of a mounted rider provides citizens with a strong sense of security. To often, the foot patrol officer gets lost in the crowd and can only monitor his immediate surroundings. A motorized unit is regulated to the streets and because it is constantly moving, it appears impersonal and unapproachable. The mounted unit on the other hand, is seen by many and can be approached by all that may need assistance or simple wish to speak.

In addition, this project's research indicated that a mounted unit could be a great crime deterrent. Simply stated, a police officer on a horse is as visible to a criminal as he is to the good citizens of the community. It proved that the officers elevated position was a definite advantage when it became necessary to track a criminal in a crowded or congested area. It also proved that it is very unlikely that a criminal on foot will outrun an officer on horseback. There are very few places that are accessible to a person on foot and are inaccessible to mounted officer.

This project confirmed that the horse is a highly efficient tool in the areas of riot and crowd control. Officers on foot can only see and address the people directly in front of them in the crowd. The officers on horseback are able to see the total picture. They not only see the front

of the crowd, but they also see what is happening within a large crowd. More importantly those within the crowd are able to see the officer and are able to understand what the officer wants them to do. There have been times when an unruly crowd had to be moved or dispersed. The size and power of a horse will intimidate most people. A trained police horse can do the work of more than ten officers on foot. A mounted unit consisting of as few as eight riders can move a crowd that numbers in the hundreds peacefully and safely. During riots or in peaceful protest situations, an organized mounted unit can enter a crowd and extract the leader or leaders. This can be done with such precision that the injury to police personnel and civilian participants can be held to a minimum.

In an effort to maximize the use of their mounted units, many police agencies expanded the role of these units by utilizing them in search and rescue missions. In critical situations such as these, time is of the essence. Horses have proven to have great endurance and stamina. Trailers can transport the horses to any location quickly and efficiently. The horses are able to cover a lot of ground in a short period of time. Their rider sits up high and can look down into areas of tall grass and weeds much better than someone on foot. Mounted units have located lost children and adults, missing evidence, and in worst case scenario, dead bodies.

The final and most important issue to be researched by this project was the mounted unit's role in public relations and how that role could tie into community oriented policing. Unanimously, every source that was researched stated that a mounted unit was one of the best public relation tools a police department could have. It appears that everyone loves horses, especially children. Almost instinctively, both the young and the old want to pet a horse when they see one. This type of encounter provides an excellent opportunity to meet and speak with members of the community. Children discover that a police officer can be friendly and

informative. The children learn that a police officer, mounted or otherwise, can be a source of comfort and help in times of trouble and distress. The adults are able to humanize the person in the uniform. They see the officers as a real person and learn to relate to them. This type of interaction develops a strong bond between the officers and the communities that they serve. In neighborhoods the citizens will adopt the mounted units that watch over them as their own. They will provide a place to tie up when the officer takes a break. Businesses have been known to provide a watering place for the horses and on occasion will provide the horse with a treat. Volunteer groups, such as citizen watches and citizens on patrol, have developed from the relationship established between the community and the mounted units in their neighborhood. Mounted officers in the cities of Houston, TX and Baytown, TX echoed the same sentiments. They stated that almost always, the citizens appeared happy to see them. The public was much friendlier to them when they were on horseback as opposed to when they were in motorized units. This in turn did much to improve the officer's outlook on the public and on the officer's morale. The officers are willing to participate in community functions such as parades, health and job fairs and the like. It is all of these factors, relationships and organizations that make up the core of the concept of community oriented policing. Seven major cities in the United States have not been without a mounted unit since their inception. Even during times of budgetary shortfall and problem, these units were left virtually untouched. This extraordinary fact can only be attributed to one thing, the administrations of these departments did not want to deal with their citizen's discontent over the loss of their mounted patrols. This research left little doubt that a mounted police unit can be a great asset to community relations and to the concept of community oriented policing.

Two other issues became apparent in the course of this research, the cost of start up and cost of operations. This project discovered that these expenses can vary greatly. Some of the early units went to great expense during the development and establishment of their units. Large sums of money were spent to buy the horses, building stables for the horses, tack for the horses, and training both horses and officers. Other cities however, went about there establishment in a more efficient way. They solicited the citizenry for donations of horses, tack, and housing for the animal once they were obtained. This type of solicitation greatly reduced the impact on the department's budget and it also allowed the community to become involved with the mounted unit from the get go. Most agencies were quick to realize that buying a horse was much less expensive than buying a fully equipped squad car. Horses require no regular maintenance or down time for repair. A properly fed and conditioned horse rarely gets sick or disabled. The cost of feed and hay is much cheaper than the cost of fuel. Horseshoes are dramatically less expensive than tires. The comparisons are countless and they all greatly favor the mounted unit in the areas researched by this project. This project determined that in some albeit limited areas, the horse has been, and continues to be, one of the most efficient tools of law enforcement. The efficiency of the past continues to be the efficiency of the present and there is no reason to believe that anything will change any time soon.

CONCLUSION

This project investigated several issues. The first step of this project studied how effective a mounted unit would be in providing high visibility and presence. Could a mounted unit provide a comfort zone for the citizens of the community? Next, it investigated the effectiveness of the mounted units in the areas of riot and crowd control. The final step was to measure the mounted

unit's community relations' capabilities, and to determine if the unit would be able to enhance a police department's participation in the concept of community oriented policing.

This project expected to prove that mounted patrol units can and do play an important role in providing citizens with a perception of safety, can be efficient tools in riot and crowd control, and serve as an important cog in the concept of "Community Oriented Policing."

This project's research left little doubt that mounted patrol units are an essential part of police agencies that utilize them. The units play a vital role in overseeing the safety of the communities they serve. From business districts to neighborhoods, the mounted patrol units are quick to adapt to the job at hand. Whether it be directing traffic or stopping "soft crimes" in a congested business district or arresting pushers and prostitutes in a urban neighborhood, these units can and do perform their duties exceptionally well. The research also proved that mounted units are some of the most essential tools in riot and crowd control. There is an overwhelming amount of corroboration to substantiate this theory. Since medieval times a person on a horse has been look upon with respect and authority. The courage and nobleness of the horse is highly regarded by almost all of humanity. These favorable qualities, enhanced by intense and rigorous training, make the mounted patrol units one the most effective and revered units of any police department. The stature of the horse provides the intimidation that is needed to move a crowd, but it is the softness of the eyes and muzzle that moves the hearts of that very same crowd. These soft qualities are helpful tools in public relations. Perhaps it is this nation's history that endears almost everyone to a horse. Many times it is the gentleness of the horse that helps bring the community and the police together in harmony. The simple act of petting an officer's horse or asking for the name of the horse can open the doors to communication. The citizenry can personalize the officer and realize that a warm heart beats inside the uniform. The officer learns

that even in areas of high crime, good citizens still abound. The citizen and the officer learn to work together with a common goal, which is to stop the crime and violence in the neighborhood. This type of cooperation is community oriented policing at its best. Without a doubt, the research in this project clearly substantiated the hypothesis. The research material bore out the same positive message time after time. If there was a limitation, it was that all the material provided the same positive information time after time.

This study determined that mounted patrol units can be an integral part of any police department. As long as these units are used within the scope of their limitations, they can be extremely effective. Police departments across the nation must recognize that these units do have limitations. These units are specialized by design and should be used as such. Not every police department can benefit from this type of specialization. Much research should be done before a police department spends the money to implement a mounted unit. If however, a unit is formed on a voluntary basis, the police department should support their officers wholeheartedly. Many agencies began with volunteer units that grew to enormous popularity with the communities in which they serve. This study emphasizes the fact that the horse is back and here to stay, or perhaps it reminds us that the horse never left.

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