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**Increasing Patrol Efficiency While Reducing The Budget
-Doing More With Less-**

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**An Administrative Research Paper
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ABSTRACT

The police budget comprises a major portion of any government's total expenditures. With the economy being in a downturn, there are fewer dollars than ever for the providing of police services. Numerous law enforcement agencies have to struggle with how to make ends meet. Today's law enforcement officer is a professional and is typically paid like it. Officer salaries make the largest portion of the police budget and can easily run into millions of dollars. The threat of laying off police officers to balance the budget is all too real. This will only result in lower morale and diminished service to the community. Neither of which is acceptable. There is another way however. Most agencies are below their mandated strengths. These vacancies could be filled by civilians trained in such things as report writing and evidence collection. Taking these tasks from the officers will allow the agency to become more efficient. Quality of reports will improve and the police presence on the street will increase, all while reducing the budget.

In order to study the impact of such a concept, a review of all related subject matter will be performed. Since this is a fairly new concept, the amount of subject matter available is limited. Newspaper articles and professional journals will be reviewed to gain a better understanding of the overall economic picture. Finally the author's own experience as a police officer will be drawn upon to come up with a conclusion.

The research shows that it is possible to increase efficiency while reducing the overall budget. The use of citizens in key areas helps to achieve this goal. The overall quality of service increases when civilians are used for offense reporting purposes and evidence collection.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	
Introduction.	1
Review of Literature	3
Methodology	10
Findings	12
Discussions/Conclusions	15
References	17

INTRODUCTION

Is it possible to streamline the patrol process so that we can operate more efficiently with less officers and a smaller budget? The economy and budget are stressful areas for many law enforcement agencies. There is a pressing need to add officers to the force to maintain or acquire a certain level of service. These additional officers stretch the budgets of law enforcement agencies at a time when many governments are experiencing shortfalls in their revenues. Governments face difficult decisions if they decide to hire the additional officers. They can lay-off employees in other departments or freeze pay raises throughout the governmental entity. Both of these solutions lead to hard feelings and discontent.

It is the author's belief that another solution exists, streamlining the patrol process. In all law enforcement agencies, patrol comprises the largest sector. The patrol function currently is very inefficient. Patrol officers must complete all aspects of every call that they respond. They investigate the scene, complete reports and all associated paperwork, collect and process evidence, and transport prisoners. Performing all of these functions means that patrol officers spend a great deal of time being unavailable for calls. This results in less protection for citizens and a greater demand for additional officers to ensure that someone is always in service to respond to calls for service. The solution would be to eliminate certain responsibilities from the patrol officer. This will reduce the amount of time that an officer is out of service and will provide for a greater availability of officers to respond to calls for service.

The areas of the patrol process that can benefit the most from streamlining are that of report taking and evidence collection. These two areas represent the greatest drain on the patrol function. Calls that require a report be taken or evidence collected can take as many as four to

six times longer to complete than do calls that are handled on the scene. What would happen if these responsibilities were delegated to someone else?

Civilians could be hired to take on the responsibilities of report taking and evidence collection. Having civilians perform these functions the patrol officers would be out of service for a shorter period and would be able to respond to more calls for service. This will alleviate the need to hire additional officers to deal with the ever-increasing call load. The cost to hire and train civilians would come at a far-reduced cost to the budget of the law enforcement agency and would help governments in their time of shortfalls. Using civilians, patrol officers will be able to remain on the streets and ready to respond to emergency calls for service.

The research will be based on a wide range of information to provide a diverse understanding and solution to the problem of increasing patrol efficiency in difficult economic times. Periodicals, surveys, and personal experience will be used to come up with a viable solution. The author will use his own fifteen years of experience to gain a better understanding of the complexities currently facing law enforcement. The author has spent much of his experience in patrol, both as a patrol officer and later as a supervisor supervising patrol officers.

This paper will demonstrate the need for a more efficient patrol function. It will show how the utilization of civilians in certain key roles can eliminate the reasons why the patrol force is not available for call. In addition, this paper will show that civilians performing in this function will lead to more professional reports and higher moral for the patrol officers. All of this can be accomplished while at the same time improving the quality of service to the citizens and the overall reduction of the budget of law enforcement agency.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Having civilians perform field functions such as report writing and evidence collection is a new concept. An exhaustive amount of research went into the attempt to locate periodicals and professional journals relating to how integrating civilians into the traditional patrol officers' roles of report writing and evidence collection influences the overall law enforcement organization. Short of time management studies, there are very few articles or periodicals concerning this concept. As a result, the author will utilize personal experiences, observations, and surveys as the primary source of information.

A president of a major corporation does not type his own correspondence, nor do most other professionals for that matter. So why does a law enforcement officer type his own? The salaries of law enforcement professionals have increased throughout the past century. Today it is common for law enforcement professionals to make twenty dollars an hour or more. The average administrative assistant on the other hand makes roughly ten dollars an hour. Based on the difference in wages, would it not be more efficient and cost effective to train and hire administrative assistants to assist the law enforcement professionals?

Law Enforcement Agencies are facing difficult times. The City of Fort Worth is experiencing a shortfall of 8.9 million dollars, San Antonio 42.4 million dollars, Austin 72 million dollars, and Dallas is looking at a shortfall of an estimated 83 million dollars (Fort Worth Star Telegram June 19, 2002). There is a constant need to increase the number of sworn officers to maintain the present level of service. With the troubled economic times creating large deficits in most government budgets this does not seem possible. Another solution comes to mind: one that maintains and possibly even enhances the level of service

provided while being economically efficient.

The average police officer patrols a geographical commonly referred to as a beat. During a patrol officer's tour of duty, they will usually encounter two or three calls for service that requires that a formal police report. When a report is required, the officer collects the needed information and leaves their beat to return to the station house. There the officer would sit down and proceed to type out the report. Only after completion of the report would the officer return to their assigned area of responsibility, usually an hour or two later. If this report required the collection of evidence, then the process can take as much as an additional hour or two. During this process, the neighborhood that the officer has responsibility for is unprotected.

There are numerous advantages to relieving the law enforcement professional from the burden of report writing and evidence collection. Numerous articles have been written about quality of police report narratives. While many law enforcement professionals possess a great amount of skill and expertise in the detection and apprehension of criminals, they typically do not possess great literary talent. Having the reports professionally done would improve the overall quality of the reports. Assigning these functions to trained civilians that possess literary skill would lead to a higher success rate by the prosecution when the cases come to trial. A poorly written report can cast doubt in the mind of the jury and destroy what might have otherwise been a prosecutable case.

Another advantage to having an administrative aide complete the offense reports is the reduction for time that an officer would have to be away from their beat. An officer could defuse the situation and call for the administrative aid to respond to the scene of the call. The officer could provide the administrative aide with their perspective of the call and

return to service. The administrative aide could then collect any additional information such as personal information, descriptions of stolen property, or other information from the parties involved that is necessary for the completion of the report. The administrative aide would then be responsible for the completion of the report. The beauty of this is that the officer is able to remain on their beat and be out of service for only a very short period instead of the usual one to two hours.

In the past, evidence Collection was something that only sworn personnel could perform. Why should this be true? The usual concern voiced most often is a concern about chain of custody. In most agencies, the sworn personnel collect the evidence. After filling out various forms and labeling each piece of evidence, the officer turns over everything they have collected to Property Room personnel, which are usually civilians. If civilians can be included in the chain of custody at the end, then why can they not include them at every step of the process? The administrative aide could collect the evidence, complete the report, and submit all the required paperwork, freeing the officer to answer the calls for service. This added freedom would result in a more visible presence in the community because the officer would be on the street instead of in an office completing paperwork and submitting evidence.

Still another advantage of alleviating officers from report writing and evidence collection is being able to provide an improved level of service to the community while reducing the overall police budget. When calculating the total number of officers needed to staff a particular unit, one must take into account the amount of time that an officer spends during a normal tour of duty collecting evidence and completing reports. These functions usually account for anywhere between thirty to forty percent of officers' tour of duty. Because of this, it is necessary to hire three officers for every two positions. A competent

administrative assistant could process the reports and evidence created by three officers. In this new model, the desired number of sworn personnel is reduced by a third. The remainder of the overall force would be replaced by a fewer number of administrative assistants. Because the administrative assistants' salaries are approximately half of what their sworn counterparts make, the savings would be significant.

The police budget continues to be a major drain on government budgets. With the economy experiencing a downturn, many government entities have to undergo drastic efforts to try to balance their budget. These measures have long lasting effects and typically damage the overall morale of the employees. At the same time, recent events in the news have increased the citizens' demands for greater police protection. The ideal solution is to provide better police protection for less money while improving the overall morale of the law enforcement agency. Sounds too good to be true, but is it? The research conducted has shown it is possible.

The police budget comprises a major portion of any governmental budgets with the major expenditure being that of salaries. In 2000, the Dallas Police Department's annual operating budget was two hundred forty six million dollars. The cost per sworn employee was eighty five thousand nine hundred fifty four. Fort Worth Police Department's annual operating budget for the same year was one hundred nineteen million one hundred nineteen thousand eight hundred eighty four dollars. The cost per sworn employee was ninety nine thousand five hundred ninety nine. In Arlington, the cost per sworn employee was ninety two thousand five hundred seventy seven dollars with an annual operating budget of forty four million nine hundred thousand. Dallas saw their police department's budget grow by twenty point eight percent between 1990 and 2000. Fort Worth's grew by eighty-six point

three percent and Arlington grew by sixty-six percent (Reaves 12). This is only a small sampling demonstrating the growth in police budgets and the rising cost of sworn personnel.

In the June 2003 Issue of Police Beat, there are numerous articles referring to budgetary problems now facing agencies throughout the country. On page twenty-six, an article titled "Layoffs hit home for cops" details the problems facing Corpus Christi, Texas. In order to try to balance the budget, this agency has had to lay off five deputies and delay the purchase of twenty-two cruisers. The cuts will leave only two deputies on duty per shift to answer calls for service for the entire county. The implications of this are astronomical, from the danger of poor officer safety to the diminished quality of service provided to the community. The article concludes with the following statement: "Despite the increased risk to area cops, officials say the layoffs are a matter of necessity."

Another article on page seventy in the June 2003 Issue of Police Beat chronicles the dilemma facing the Boston Massachusetts Police Department. The Department has reduced the size of its force by approximately two hundred officers over the past four years. However, even a reduction of this magnitude might not be enough. Another one hundred senior officers and civilians are being encouraged to take an early retirement. With all of the drastic measures taken, the Commissioner is still concerned that layoffs will occur.

Finally, on page eight in the June 2003 Issue of Police Beat are two short articles concerning fiscal matters that agencies are facing. In New Jersey, the State Police had to cut 2.8 million dollars from the budget, which was to be used to purchase new police cruisers. In Denver, Mayor Webb has stated that unless officials come up with "non-traditional" ways to save money, hundreds of city employees, including police officers will be laid off. Both of these agencies are facing difficult decisions in how to deal with their current budget

shortfalls.

Law Enforcement salaries are a major expenditure of governmental budgets. This one area typically comprises the largest portion of the budget. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics State and Local Law Enforcement Statistics, in 1997, local police departments cost about \$67,000 per officer and sheriffs' offices cost approximately \$73,000 per officer. Based upon these facts it is easy to see that salaries for law enforcement officers can exceed several million dollars. Conversely, a civilian trained to take reports is paid \$10.49 per hour, which comes out to less than \$22,000 per year (City of Fort Worth Job Opportunities Page – Clerical)

A study conducted by Roger Tarling titled Police Work and Manpower Allocation looks at the amount of time spent by law enforcement officers on a variety of tasks. This study, which takes place in England, was only one of its kind that could be located by the researcher. According to Tarling, Uniform Officers spend anywhere from eleven percent to twenty-six percent of their time writing reports. Researchers found that a patrol officer spent less than thirty percent of their time on patrol, with another ten percent spent on crime work. The rest of the time was spent on what had been defined as general duties with report writing making up the lion's share of the time.

In one study, Tarling found that patrol officers spent the vast majority of their time inside of police headquarters when compared to all other activities. Two Agencies found that officers were spending approximately half their time inside of the police station. Another agency found that fifty-six percent of their officers' time was spent inside. This study compared ten major metropolitan areas and found that the averages were generally consistent throughout. In every single agency, too much time was spent inside completing reports and

not enough time was spent on patrol.

Tarling concludes by providing resolutions to the problem of having officers spending too much time completing reports. His first is to streamline the report taking process. His second is the most intriguing. Tarling indicates that many European Law Enforcement Agencies have created Administrative Support Units. These units are comprised of mainly civilian clerical staff. They prepare and process much of the paperwork, freeing up officers for other assignments. His research has shown that agencies adopting this approach have enjoyed considerable success. They have experienced increased efficiency and reduced costs while at the same time increasing the operational availability of the officers.

There was another study conducted in 1993 of the employment of civilian police personnel in Great Britain. The University of Leicester Centre for the Study of Public Order conducted the research to provide an in-depth look at the history, current nature, and impact of utilizing civilian personnel in law enforcement. Pay increases for sworn personnel and other factors necessitate the use of civilians. As a result, there has been a major opportunity to increase the presence of the police service on the street. The civilians have been able to provide the needed support services that enable the officers to target high crime areas. This has resulted in a renewed sense of security for the citizens. (NCJRS 169720)

METHODOLOGY

Law Enforcement Agencies are experiencing great challenges in trying to meet public demands while facing budget shortfalls. The public demands safety but cannot always be relied upon to pay for it. Many states and local governments are facing unprecedented budget shortfalls and have to come up with alternatives to try to make ends meet. Such things as layoffs, pay reductions, benefit reductions, and opting to retain outdated equipment are becoming prevalent. All of these solutions destroy morale and have long lasting effects. There has to be a better way.

The largest budget of any governmental entity is typically in the field of law enforcement. The majority of the budget allocated to law enforcement is dedicated to salaries. The author will address this area. Success will be achieved not through layoffs or salary reductions, but instead through a new concept, one that will change the face of policing and bring policing into line with other professions. Most law enforcement agencies are experiencing vacancies that have yet to be filled. Instead of filling these vacancies with law enforcement officers, fill them with civilian personal. These civilians would perform such functions as report writing and evidence collection. The advantages to this are numerous. The cost of hiring civilians is less than half what it cost to hire a police officer. The civilians would be screened for their clerical skills and there would be an upgrade on the quality of reports being submitted. Finally, patrol officers would be freed up from these tasks to spend more time patrolling their beats.

Could supplementing the police force with civilians accomplish these goals? Would the departments see a noticeable reduction in budget expenditures while experiencing a higher quality of service to the department and citizens? The answer to these questions is

yes. The research will show quality of service can be improved while reducing the overall budget. An additional bonus to this concept will be the improvement of moral. Most police officers look on report writing and evidence collection with disdain. No longer having to perform these tasks will make for a more productive department with higher morale.

Research will be based upon periodicals and personal experience. Since this is a new concept, there is not presently a great deal of literature to research. As a result, the author's own personal experience will be utilized when needed. A survey will be conducted to find which agencies currently use this process and what their experiences have been. The author has also observed the Las Vegas Police Department, which is currently using this concept. By riding out with this agency, the author will have a better understanding of how this concept works in the field and the relationship between the officers and the civilians.

FINDINGS

The author had hoped to survey police departments of varying sizes and demographic makeup that are currently using a variant of this concept. The survey was intended to explore a diverse set of opinions from across the country and was to include questions relating to its implementation, effects on the department and citizens – both positive and negative, and if there were any financial savings from instituting this concept. As the author polled police agency after police agency it became apparent that this concept is on the cutting edge. The only police agency in the United States that was found to be using civilians in this fashion was the Las Vegas Police Department. Rather than conducting a one-sided survey, the author decided to use the personal observations obtained from a ride along with the Las Vegas Police Department.

The Las Vegas Police Department was found to be the only agency using civilians to take offense reports and collect evidence. The author had an opportunity to observe this operation first hand by attending a roll call and riding out with a uniformed patrol officer for an entire shift. The overall efficiency exhibited by utilizing this concept was impressive as demonstrated by the following example.

A citizen had called in reference to people dealing drugs on the street corner. The officer responded to the call and observed a hand-to-hand transaction. Recognizing this as a drug transaction, the officer stopped and detained the individual. Upon his investigation, it was discovered that the individual was still in possession of narcotics. The officer effected the arrest and sealed the evidence in a plastic bag. He then requested the civilian support unit to make his scene. A short while later a small car without a light bar or other expensive equipment essential to an emergency vehicle pulled up. Out stepped a young female wearing

a uniform that was distinctly different from the officer's uniform. She explained that she was a cadet and as soon as she turned twenty-one, she would be attending the police academy to become a fully commissioned police officer. The officer approached her, handed her the evidence, and gave her a description of what had transpired. He concluded by handing her his business card which had all of his pertinent information. The officer transported the prisoner to the jail and released him to jail intake personnel. What was so amazing was that this whole process took the officer out of service for approximately twenty minutes, when this type of call normally ties up an officer for several hours.

During the remainder of the tour, this level of efficiency continued on a regular basis. The officer's morale appeared to be high. The officer stated that he enjoyed having someone else complete the offense report and tag evidence because it allowed him to be out on the street, "doing real police work". He advised that using cadets for this process had hidden benefits as well. By using a cadet in this fashion, it allows the police agency to observe an individual performing police related functions and interacting with the public over an extended period. Most people can be on their best behavior for the short period that they are going through the interview process only to let their true colors shine through after they have received the protective umbrella of Civil Service. The process of using cadets, who are at-will employees, helps to weed out these individuals before they have an opportunity to become a liability to the department.

The author had an opportunity to see this concept first hand. From an observer's point of view, it appears that the program is a success. The uniformed officers treated the civilians as equals, maybe because some of these officers had gotten their start the same way. The amount of time spent on patrol in neighborhoods improved greatly over the traditional

method of policing. The watch commander stated that the quality of reports was excellent with very few errors. The morale of the officers seemed to be high and everyone appeared to be enjoying their job. There was not the usual grumbling about having to take a report. In addition, there was not the usual allotment of officers hanging around the station house waiting to complete their reports and visiting with each other. The civilians appeared to be happy with their role in this process. They viewed their function as a proving ground that may one-day lead to them becoming commissioned police officers. The money spent equipping the civilians with uniforms and vehicles were appreciable. The vehicle itself was a small fuel-efficient unit that probably cost a third of what a fully equipped patrol unit would cost. These savings increased the overall efficiency of the Department by freeing up money for other ventures.

CONCLUSIONS

Is it possible to increase the efficiency of law enforcement agencies and reduce the budget at the same time? Law Enforcement Agencies are experiencing major problems both in budgetary concerns and in recruitment. Officer salaries and benefits are at an all time high. This coupled with the economic downturn facing many organizations and governmental entities has created a situation where innovative ideas are necessary. Currently patrol officers spend a great deal of their time completing offense reports and filling out routine paperwork. These processes take the patrol officer off the beat and leave the neighborhood without police protection for hours at a time. A second problem facing law enforcement is the lack of quality report writing. There have been numerous articles written about the deficiencies in police report narratives. A third problem is the lack of quality applicants. As the size of law enforcement agencies grows, it becomes more difficult to recruit and retain quality officers.

It is possible to reduce the overall budget and increase the efficiency of the law enforcement agency by using civilians. Using civilians to supplement patrol by taking offense reports and collecting evidence will allow the agency to operate with a smaller number of sworn personnel. Since the pay of sworn personnel is on average from two to three times the rate of pay for civilians, the savings will be appreciable. By hiring civilians specifically for completing offense reports, the quality of the offense report narratives will improve. This will translate into an increase in prosecutable cases, whereas before, some cases may have not gone to trial because of a poorly written report. Many patrol officers look at report writing with disdain. Removing this task from their list of assigned duties will improve the morale of the officers.

The concept of using civilians to perform functions thought of, as performed by sworn officers, is a new concept. There has not been a great deal of research conducted on this matter. The majority of studies, which is very limited, are found to be conducted in Europe. Even though their law enforcement practices may not be the exact same as ours, it is similar enough to draw comparisons. The research conducted has shown that using civilians to take reports has allowed for a greater police presence in the neighborhoods. Now instead of having officers sitting around the station completing paperwork, they are out on the street addressing crime. This has resulted in lower crime rates and increased morale of the officers.

Law Enforcement is now becoming recognized as a profession. With the recognition comes an increase in pay. This increase has created substantial financial problems for many institutions. Currently these problems are being resolved by leaving positions vacant and laying off others. Agencies are also delaying purchases of equipment and the reduction of benefits. All of these have severely negative impacts. Leaving positions vacant and laying off other employees reduces the quality of services provided to the community. Eventually these positions will have to be replaced with newer less experienced personnel who will require training before they can start performing their respective duties. Delaying purchases and maintenance of equipment has serious implications. Outdated and equipment past due on its scheduled maintenance can be dangerous and leave agencies open to possible litigation. All of these solutions save only a few dollars today but have a greatly inflated cost down the road. As a result, these solutions are not the best. Using civilians as described is. Using civilians, law enforcement can continue to grow as a profession. Law enforcement officials will have more time to address crime and will spend more time on the beat. This will reduce the overall fear of crime, as citizens will be seeing more police presence.

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