

**The Bill Blackwood  
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

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**Intelligence-Led Policing:  
One Tool in the  
Law-Enforcement Arsenal**

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**A Leadership White Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Over the years, there have been many policing strategies that have come about as new ways to help the police community combat crime. As time goes on, there will always be a need for reactive policing, where police officers respond to crimes that have already occurred, but this does not always help in preventing crime. With the introduction of Intelligence-led policing, it can be utilized as a tool in assisting each police department combat specific crimes and criminals in specific areas. Intelligence-led policing allows for efficient use of department resources through the collection and distribution of criminal intelligence. Surveillance of criminals as well as the use of criminal informants assists in the collection of information on specific criminals. Intelligence-led policing has been around for many years, but it has been more popular since the events of September 11, 2001. The key components of Intelligence-led policing are “the targeting of offenders, the management of crime and disorder hot spots, the investigation of linked series of crimes and incidents, and the application of preventative measures” (Ratcliffe, 2008, p. 85-86). It is by this definition and key components that shows why law enforcement agencies should utilize intelligence-led policing as an effective tool to target specific criminals and guide police operations.

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## INTRODUCTION

The styles of policing in a post September 11, 2001 era have created a pathway for the introduction of, and the need for, intelligence based policing. The terror attacks that occurred on that day created a change in more than just the lives affected. These attacks exposed a threat that could have been prevented if the intelligence gathered would have been analyzed and distributed. These attacks revealed the importance of increasing the focus on law enforcement intelligence (Peterson, 2005). The traditional police culture encompasses the officer engaging in random patrol and a quick response to calls for service. It also includes the arrest of suspects after a lengthy investigation is completed. The data compiled from these random patrols, calls for service, and arrests are analyzed and utilized for the purpose of crime prevention (Phillips, 2012).

Intelligence-led policing acknowledges the fact that law enforcement requires the need for real time information (Ratcliffe, 2008). The concept of intelligence-led policing combines the the theory of problem-oriented policing with the idea of targeting offenders through proactive policing. The intelligence gathered through this process allows for the better allocation of resources, prioritizing crimes, and reducing the crime rate through informed decisions (Ratcliffe, 2008). In a world where advanced technology and the increase of digitalization in the world have become more evident, there is a need for the modernization of policing. The addition of computerized databases allows information to be cross-referenced, and the increased volume of accessible data provides the officer with an effective tool in policing (Ratcliffe, 2008).

The past introduction of other policing theories, such as community policing, problem-oriented policing, and Compstat have assisted in changing the view of policing

and acknowledge the failure of more traditional policing methods. Recent policing theories have influenced intelligence-led policing and are evolving the concepts that shift over time (Ratcliffe, 2008). In order to understand how intelligence-led policing evolved, it is important to understand the other three policing theories that preceded intelligence-led policing. Ratcliffe (2008) defined community policing as “a collaboration between the police and the community that identifies and solves community problems” (p. 67). Community policing places the burden of setting priorities and achieving these goals on the community and the officers that patrol these communities. The priorities and goals are specific to the community affected (Ratcliffe, 2008). Problem oriented policing places an emphasis on the the range of problems within a community and the police department is expected to correct the problem. The theory is that “by attacking and resolving the underlying cause of an issue, the police can establish long-term solutions to problems” (Ratcliffe, 2008, p. 71). Compstat includes the concept of making mid-level commanders accountable within their own divisions. Compstat encompasses four crime principles in crime reduction: “timely and accurate intelligence, effective tactics, rapid deployment, and relentless follow-up and assessment” (Ratcliffe, 2008, p. 76).

While community policing places the emphasis on the individual patrol officer and his/her relationship with the community, Compstat focuses on the mid-level managers and specific crimes. Intelligence-led policing is different in that the focus is on crime reduction through the use of crime intelligence focusing on specific offenders and is a top-down, hierarchical approach. Intelligence-led policing can best be explained through the 3-i model (see Appendix A). The 3-i model was adapted from the Australian

Federal Police, and it is designed as a conceptual model instead of a process-oriented model (Ratcliffe, 2008). There are three parts to the 3-i model: interpret, impact, and influence. The model is in the shape of a triangle, as each corner of the model feeds off the other corner. Crime intelligence analysis influences the decisions made by the decision maker, the intelligence gathered is interpreted based on the criminal environment, and the decisions made by the decision maker have a direct impact on the criminal environment (Ratcliffe, 2008).

The key components of Intelligence-led policing are “the targeting of offenders, the management of crime and disorder hot spots, the investigation of linked series of crimes and incidents, and the application of preventative measures” (Ratcliffe, 2008, p. 85-86). It is by this definition and key components that shows why law enforcement agencies should utilize intelligence-led policing as an effective tool to target specific criminals and guide police operations.

## **POSITION**

In law enforcement there is an emphasis on the need to collect and analyze information with the emphasis of developing intelligence. In past models of policing, the information is gathered, but is not disseminated and utilized as a collaborative law enforcement approach. By combining problem-solving policing, information gathering, and enhancing the intelligence process it develops intelligence based operations (Carter & Carter, 2009). Intelligence-led policing allows for “the collection and analysis of information related to crime and conditions that contribute to crime, resulting in an actionable intelligence product intended to aid law enforcement in developing tactical

responses to threats and/or strategic planning related to emerging or changing threats” (Carter & Carter, 2009, para. 31).

In most police departments, there is an individual that collects data and stockpiles databases of known criminals. The purpose of this person is to store the information, but there has never been an emphasis of utilizing this information (Ratcliffe, 2008). The International Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Analysts define criminal intelligence as “ information compiled, analyzed, and/or disseminated in an effort to anticipate, prevent, or monitor criminal activity” (IALEIA, 2012, p. 28) By utilizing intelligence-led policing it allows for knowledge and information to be developed into criminal intelligence and utilized by police departments to create a plan of action. This style of policing places a primary focus on threats and specific targets by identifying variables and combining the surrounding environment with the evolution of crimes (Carter & Carter, 2009).

In the intelligence-led policing model, “Information is provided to decision makers about the changing nature, characteristics, and methodologies of threats and emerging threat idiosyncrasies for the purpose of developing response strategies and reallocating resources” (Carter & Carter, 2009, para. 38). The theory behind intelligence-led policing is that it is a top-down approach. It is up to the higher administration to control the “uniform, traffic, and detective resources” and determine the proper use of these resources (Ratcliffe, 2008, p. 86). Intelligence-led policing is referred to as a business model and a managerial philosophy where the decisions made are intelligence-based. The management of officers and enforcement strategies employed result in the targeting of specific offenders (Ratcliffe, 2008).

As cited in Ratcliffe (2008), "Law enforcement has a long history of strategies that respond to a current problem but rarely prevent or control an emerging or anticipated threat" (p. 177). The use of intelligence-led policing allows for the targeting of hot spots, and realizes that in most cases, a small percentage of people are responsible for the majority of crimes occurring in a specific area. The traditional model of policing, referring to random patrolling and reactive criminal investigations are inefficient methods of deterring crime. By being proactive through the gathering of intelligence and targeting potential offenders, police are creating opportunity for enforcement (Ratcliffe, 2008).

The United Kingdom's National Intelligence Model uses criminal intelligence to provide community safety, crime reduction, crime control, and the control of disorder (Peterson, 2005). The National Intelligence Model is similar to intelligence-led policing in that it develops strategies that focus on the priorities of responding to specific criminal activity. Examples of these instances are the control of narcotics or safe streets. This philosophy places a primary focus on directed enforcement in specific or identified hotspots as well as determines and targets specific career criminals. The number of crimes committed will be significantly reduced by apprehending these criminals (Peterson, 2005). One concept of intelligence-led policing that is already being utilized within law enforcement departments is identifying minor criminals that will lead to the arrest of larger, career criminals. By targeting these minor criminals, officers on the street-level can develop and utilize criminal informants (Ratcliffe, 2008). The idea of using criminal informants has been around for decades, but it was not until the mid 1990's that departments have developed guidelines for the handling and use of criminal



informants. These guidelines have been produced and put into place by the Association of Chief Police Officers (as cited in Newburn, 2008, p. 451). The use of criminal informants is a cost effective tool that can assist in the interpretation of the criminal world (Ratcliffe, 2008). Criminal informants aid police in identifying specific targets, assist in providing information on criminal backgrounds and their specific organizations, and provide information that will guide officers in surveillance operations (Ratcliffe, 2008).

According to Ratcliffe (2008) "One defining characteristic of intelligence-led policing is that informants should be used in a more strategic manner, and if confidential sources are employed in a more proactive, strategic and targeted way, the benefits may outweigh the risks" (p. 134-135). Along with the use of informants is the need for surveillance to support the information provided by these criminal informants. Modern technology is guiding the future of police work; however, even with the advanced capabilities in technological surveillance, "none of the devices thus far invented have supplanted the more traditional use of informers" (Sheptycki, 2000, para. 1). The intelligence gathered through different means such as surveillance and informants is collected and analyzed to develop specific targets (Williamson, 2008).

## **COUNTER POSITION**

When considering intelligence-led policing as a policing model, there are a few discussions that have been made. In some eyes, there is an ethical issue in targeting specific offenders. The other issue that arises is the wanting of measurable results by law enforcement management and administrations.

The targeting of offenders is viewed by some as stereotyping. In recent years, it is believed that people are stereotyped based on their ethnicity. An example of this are people of Asian descent, who are purported as being devious, liars, and possible illegal immigrants (Newburn, 2008). The studies also show that “stereotypes of black people have been more consistent in that they are thought to be more prone to violent crime and drug abuse, to be incomprehensible, suspicious, hard to handle, naturally excitable, aggressive, lacking brainpower, troublesome and tooled up” (as cited in Newburn 2008, p. 612). It is thought that the decisions made are a direct reflection of local and organisational culture norms (Newburn, 2008).

In order for intelligence-led policing to work, the targeting of criminals is a vital part. Officers will need to justify their specific targets based on more information than just “selecting targets from the known local criminal population” (Edwards, 2005, p. 141). Most officers know their local criminals through experience. In most cases, a target will engage in some form of activity that will raise suspicion for the officer or there is a pre-existing justification for the selection. Through the use of surveillance and informants, the officer will develop intelligence to prove this individual is actively involved in criminal activity (Edwards, 2005).

While an officer is conducting surveillance, it is always a possibility that the officer will observe other criminal offenses take place. In some cases, this surveillance and intelligence gathering has been developing for several weeks, and confronting these minor offenses will jeopardize the current operation. It is customary practice to ignore minor offenses in order to apprehend the larger criminals. Most of the offenses that are ignored are considered victimless crimes and do not directly affect the public. Some

examples of victimless crimes are the use of illegal narcotics, disorderly conduct, and possession of illegal weapons (Edwards, 2005).

When contemplating if targeting offenders is unethical, one should consider the recent adoption of the Patriot Act by the United States government. The Patriot Act along with the 9/11 commission and the Department of Homeland Security proposed a new policing paradigm and Congress allows the use of surveillance by law enforcement agencies to collect information on US citizens (Jackson & Brown, 2007). As cited in Jackson and Brown (2007) "Through the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and the expansion of the FBI's role in domestic law enforcement and preventing acts of terrorism, both federal and local law enforcement are now able to spy on US citizens" (para. 15).

It is through intelligence-led policing and the use of target selection that results in the successful prosecution of repeat offenders. As stated in Ratcliffe (2008), "Intelligence-led policing uses crime intelligence for strategic planning and resource allocation, so that investigative action is used to target the right offenders and predict emerging areas of criminality" (p. 8). The use of intelligence-led policing as a police model allows for the better targeting of criminals and intelligence based managerial decisions (Ratcliffe, 2008).

The argument has been made that there is an inefficiency in the ability to develop measureable results as a result of intelligence-led policing. For example, one claim is that if an individual is addicted to drugs and his supplier is arrested, the individual does not quit using drugs simply because his source is removed from the equation (Newburn, 2008). According to Edwards (2005), "Modern policing strategies are very much driven

by the need to obtain measureable results, often in terms of an improvement in crime statistics” (p. 155).

Obviously, a drug addict will not quit using drugs because his supplier is arrested; however, areas identified as drug havens are prone to promote other offenses as well. The identification of these hot spots, and the removal of the primary target, will result in the relocation of minor offenders and the possibility of drug users to seek help through treatment facilities (Newburn, 2008). In this case, an outcome evaluation can be assessed. In an outcome evaluation, the operation is evaluated to determine if the desired effect was achieved. Questions are asked such as “was crime reduced?” or “was an organized crime group disrupted?” (Ratcliffe, 2008, p. 189).

The difference in evaluating intelligence-led policing initiatives and crime reduction strategies is that intelligence-led policing is a business model and not a policing tactic. Intelligence-led policing provides information to upper-level management so that informed decisions are conducted to combat crime (Ratcliffe, 2008). Crime reduction programs such as Compstat are designed to measure success by crime reduction. Local crime levels are monitored and mid-level management are pressured to be more objective. Compstat relies heavily on the use of crime mapping to develop crime patterns, but this process lacks the major influence in crime problems, the crime attractors (Ratcliffe, 2008).

The use of intelligence-led policing is not measured by numbers and statistics. The results are measured by the outcomes of specific operations. With this process, officers are able to identify and target specific offenders, and by targeting these prolific offenders there is a successful reduction in crime. In this case, the long-term benefits

far outweighs the short term gain, and “The benefits of incapacitating active offenders can last beyond the time frame of the police operation” (Ratcliffe, 2008, p. 195).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

In a post 9/11 world, the need for change in policing is becoming even more relevant. Gone are the days that a law enforcement agency can rely on reactive policing alone. As technology advances, opportunities for law enforcement agencies to collect, analyze, and distribute intelligence grows. Intelligence-led policing allows for the use of surveillance and criminal informants to give law enforcement agencies the ability to collect real time data and use the intelligence gathered to target specific criminals. The use of criminal informants is an inexpensive method of gathering current data. In most areas, small groups of people commit a larger portion of crime. By targeting these criminals, there is a significant reduction in the areas affected by the high crime rate. By using surveillance, the officer is able to directly observe the operations of the targeted criminal and assist in the directed investigation of these specific criminals.

When utilizing intelligence-led policing to target criminals, some argue that targeting criminals can be seen as stereotyping. It could be seen as stereotyping if these specific criminals were targeted just because of the crime they committed or the mere fact they had a criminal history. With intelligence-led policing, law enforcement agencies use criminal informants, conduct surveillance, and gather evidence to support their reasoning for targeting a specific criminal. These targets will be criminals and conduct criminal activity whether they are being targeted or not. By focusing on specific targets, it will aid in the disruption of his or her criminal enterprise.

Another area of concern for some agencies is the need for obtaining measurable results. Some administrations rely on statistics as a form of determining success. With intelligence-led policing, results are measured by the success of the operation. The purpose of intelligence-led policing is the reduction of crime and the disruption of criminal activity by a specific offender. The results of intelligence-led policing will be seen well into the future after an operation has ended.

Intelligence-led policing is not designed to replace traditional policing methods. There will always be a need for officers to patrol their streets and respond to calls for service within their city, and the crimes that have already been committed will still need to be investigated by the investigators. Intelligence-led policing is just another tool for law enforcement agencies to utilize in targeting specific criminals, in a specific area of town or those criminals committing specific crimes that directly affect their city. Using intelligence-led policing, the intelligence gathered is current information that allows upper management to make informed decisions that result in successful operations, and by engaging public support, law enforcement agencies can assist communities in recognizing the benefits of intelligence-led policing in their community.

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## APPENDIX A

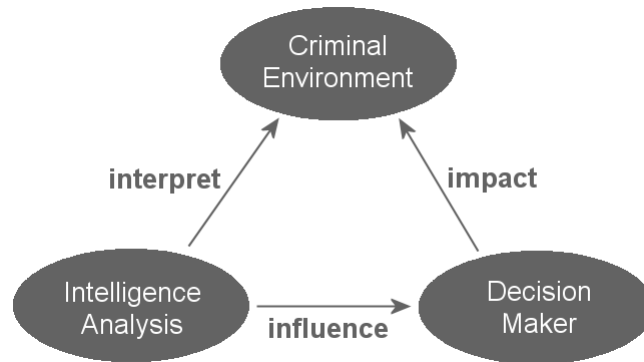


Figure 5.6 (Ratcliffe, 2008, p. 110)