

**Executive Summary:**

The “Challenges and Innovations in Combating Urban Crime” one-day meeting took place on November 5th, 2013 at the University Club in Washington, D.C. The meeting was jointly sponsored by the Law Enforcement Action Network (LEAN), Research Strategies Network (RSN) and the Critical Incident Analysis Group (CIAG) at the University of Virginia. The meeting’s mission was to develop an agenda of key issues in policing strategies that can be amplified by way of research projects, future conferences, and action programs. A meeting of this type would allow police leadership to better understand the challenges currently faced by law enforcement agencies, to understand what work is currently being done in this area, and to identify existing knowledge gaps in order to enhance law enforcement capabilities for the preservation of public safety. The discussion topics were identified using input from the participants and included the following:

- (1) Social Networking in Policing
- (2) Human Trafficking
- (3) The Appropriate Use of Force and Paramilitarization of Police
- (4) Safety and Wellness of Police Forces
- (5) Command and Control during Active Shooter Events
- (6) Stop, Question, and Frisk: The New York Experience

## Innovations in Policing | Meeting Report

The meeting provided an international group of top leaders in law enforcement the opportunity to discern and understand the current issues and innovations germane to policing. With the rapid growth of technology, specifically the Internet, techniques in policing need to be commensurate with the availability of large quantities of data. In this age of “big data”, police forces worldwide can observe the same things that criminals observe and use this ability to better predict behavior and outcomes. However, despite the obvious positives such as technology growth, expanded information technology also has a darker side, allowing those with criminal intent to plan, engage, and execute acts in very little time. The use of social networking as a tool in policing is an important innovation that deserves more attention. The potential to share information within and across countries can provide the necessary means to prevent and combat crime in real time. While we make strides in preventing crime, it is equally important to have the capacity to accurately identify evolving categories that are of particular interest to leadership. In the case of human trafficking, the issue has been grappled with in the international community for a long time; however, recognizing it as an important issue in the United States is an important step forward. This issue is enhanced by corruption within particular communities in the United States. As a result, these corrupt communities aid in propagating and proliferating the trafficking of humans as a business venture. Without community support, law enforcement cannot effectively combat this issue. With the recognition that human trafficking is indeed a critical issue in policing, law enforcement agencies, judges, and prosecutors

## Innovations in Policing | Meeting Report

need targeted resources to better engage community members to step forward and curtail the expansion of networks of human trafficking in the United States.

On the topic of police utilizing appropriate force and paramilitarization, the answer is clear: police must act within legal boundaries at all times. However, a combination of legislation and media efforts has sought to limit the abilities of police forces to respond to critical incidents that necessitate the use of force. Both legislative and media efforts are using a small fraction of incidents that portray an inappropriate use of force (where mistakes have admittedly been made) as fodder for diminishing the capability of law enforcement to combat crime. SWAT teams and related tactics are crucial in certain incidents but guidelines must be in place for their selective use. These guidelines must be communicated to the public to foster greater understanding. Further, it is important to recognize that leadership both at the command and operational level needs to be aware and understanding of the established guidelines. Doing so would ensure that this issue is not taken out of context by people that want to see less powerful police forces.

In policing, it is important to remember that the key element in whether law enforcement is successful is the individual police officer or first-line supervisor. Ensuring that the individual police officer has the necessary training to be in the field and has the mental and medical capacity to effectively perform is vital to the mission of every law enforcement agency. How do we keep officers from being burned out or being immobilized by major trauma? How do we ensure that officers are not

## Innovations in Policing | Meeting Report

emotionally “hardened” by the day-to-day events they must observe and endure? Readily available access to mental health and medical support is thus essential. Commanders and senior staff need to prioritize the safety and wellness of their officers while providing the resources necessary to ensure that each individual officer is fit for duty. It is indeed possible to be a top police officer while at the same time never having to draw a gun.

In light of recent mass-casualty events like the Aurora Theater Shooting in Aurora, Colorado, the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, and the U.S. Naval Yard Shooting in Washington, D.C., it is imperative that all law enforcement agree upon common definitions in order to understand the nature of these active shooter events, and to benefit from future research. In addition, research into active shooter response protocols can assist in further refining existing templates for response, particularly with regard to command and control challenges in these events. The outputs of this research can help ensure that police forces are prepared and equipped with the resources and knowledge to effectively address active shooter events. While several books and media reports have been dedicated to studying and understanding this issue, it is critical that we train police forces and establish protocol for dealing with these events. Training and education to police forces nationwide can be provided and sponsored with the help of the Federal Government. Specifically, the existing infrastructure of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) can be utilized in working with state and local police to train and educate officers.

## Innovations in Policing | Meeting Report

While this one-day meeting dealt with police leadership and command level decision-making, it also focused on operational decision-making challenges facing the individual police officer in the line of duty. The issue of stop, question, and frisk provides such a focus. It is apparent that the nature of a police stop is predicated on the attitude and demeanor of the police officer. Thus, it is imperative that the well-being of officers is given priority so that street officers are capable of working with community members to ensure public safety. Greater communication between police forces and the community on the duties of police officers and their role in ensuring the safety of all citizens is essential in recognizing the value of appropriate implementation of a stop, question, and frisk policy. Doing so may require police officers being deployed to attend community meetings and gatherings, acting as a bridge between the community and law enforcement. Ultimately, it is important to note that the need for individual decision-making by police officers in order to prevent crime is not unique to New York City. As such, police officers throughout the country make determinations daily about when to stop, question, and frisk. Coaching individual police officers on conducting community engagement and addressing their mental and medical needs is crucial to the effectiveness of policies like stop, question, and frisk.

Innovations in Policing | Meeting Report