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Organization



Summer Beach Patrol

By
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For years, the City of Huntington Beach, CA, has faced the problem of dealing with thousands of people who are attracted to its renowned beaches, water activities, and sporting events during the summer months. This article describes an economical, effective, and community relations-oriented program the Huntington Beach Police Department has developed to address this problem.

The police department has long recognized that the seasonal need for police services places a great burden on the department's budget and its 200 sworn officers. To provide these services for the city beach in a cost-effective manner and to reduce the burden on the department's resources, a pilot program was initiated in the

summer of 1973. This program featured a group of trained civilians who were hired as adjuncts to the full-time complement of police officers assigned to the summer special enforcement detail. The civilians, known as community liaison patrol officers (CLP), were supervised by a sworn officer. Although they worked a daytime foot patrol in the beach area, they were formerly considered to be a separate group from the sworn officers assigned to the beach contingent. The CLP worked with the philosophy of being very public relations-minded and used a low-key approach in dealing with violations of alcohol-related ordinances. CLP officers completed a training program which gave them limited peace officer powers, including the authority to cite and arrest for specific city ordinance violations. For example, persons drinking alcoholic beverages were requested to empty the containers of alcoholic beverages they held, and if they complied, the contact would end. This was in contrast to the high-profile enforcement efforts of the sworn officers who took more formal action in most instances of law violations.

After a successful start, the program was terminated in 1975 with the loss of Federal funding. In 1980, the program was reinstated, using a combination of reserve officers and high school teachers to form the community liaison patrol. Changes in the program included new personnel, modifications to the old uniform, increased responsibilities, and a new title—beach liaison detail (BLD). Changes in the sworn officer special enforcement detail included more uniform assignments as opposed to plainclothes assignments, the use of three-wheel, all-terrain vehicles, a name change to the tactical enforcement squad (TAC), and a



Lieutenant Biggs



Earle W. Robitaille
Chief of Police

merging with the beach liaison detail in the summer of 1985, which joined the two units for the first time into one coordinated unit.

Organization and Administration

In 1985, the beach detail consisted of six sworn officers ranging in experience from 5 to 16 years in law enforcement. Three of the officers were members of the 1984 TAC squad, one was a member of the 1980 TAC squad, and two had no previous beach experience. The sworn officers were selected for the beach detail in March after submitting a request for assignment. Factors which the selection board considered included the applicant's history of motivation, evidence of self-initiated activity, physical condition, ability to deal with the public and to present a professional appearance, and a demonstrated ability to make quick, professional decisions and apply them tactfully in crowded, pressured situations. The officers also agreed to waive vacations during their summer deployment. The unit supervisor (a patrol sergeant) and the patrol bureau commander (a lieutenant) reviewed the applicants' personnel files and memos requesting assignment. Their choices were reviewed and approved by the Uniform Division commander under whose command the beach detail functioned.

After selecting the sworn officers, the next step was to choose the civilian members of the unit. The organization chart for the detail required that civilians were to come from the faculty ranks of area schools. Only one member of the previous civilian team was available for the summer of 1985, with one other member available to assist

in the training of new civilians selected for the detail. The problems of how to select qualified people and train them adequately in a short time now had to be solved.

The recruiting and hiring of the civilians were handled by the Personnel Bureau of the Huntington Beach Police Department's Administrative Services Division. The former civilian members used their contacts with the local school districts to have a job announcement published in a teachers' publication. The announcement described the duties the candidates would be performing, their working conditions, and desirable qualifications. After this, two informational meetings were held, in which prospective applicants were able to hear a presentation on the detail given by the two previous members of the civilian team and ask questions. These meetings were also attended by the lieutenant assigned by the acting Patrol Bureau commander.

After receiving the prospects' applications, department personnel interviewed the candidates. The oral board consisted of the lieutenant under whose command the unit would function, an Administrative Services Division sergeant, and the personnel officer from the police department. The personnel officer conducted a thorough background investigation, including a polygraph examination, of each candidate. As part of the hiring process, the new civilians agreed to complete a training program on their own time, with the understanding that they would be paid for their time only if they completed it successfully.

The civilians hired for the 1985 program ranged in age from 32 to 38 years, with 5 to 12 years' teaching experience. The candidates selected included two science teachers, a wom-

en's athletic director, a special education teacher specializing in speech disorders, a social science teacher (who was also the returning experienced member), a high school basketball coach, and the athletic trainer in a high school. The police department specifically selected education system members for the program for four reasons: 1) Their availability during Easter week and the summer months, 2) their prior demonstrated ability to relate to teenagers and young people, 3) their ability to perform in the public eye and accomplish specific objectives, and 4) their ability to learn quickly and practice what they have been taught.

Training

The training program for the beach detail combined theoretical and practical aspects for both the sworn and civilian members in the classroom and in the field. Because of logistical problems, the classroom portion of the training program required that separate sessions be held for each group.

During the first day of training for sworn officers, an overview of the detail and its mission and boundaries within which it would operate were covered, in addition to a review of applicable rules, regulations, and department procedures. The second training day entailed the familiarization, care, and use of the three-wheel, all-terrain vehicles (ATV's) the detail would use. This practical demonstration of the use of ATV's occurred on the city beach and required the officers to demonstrate riding skills at an acceptable level of timed performance under open and obstacle-course conditions. Both training days were scheduled as part of the officers' regular 40-hour work-week and required no overtime.

The training for the civilian members of the beach detail began with a 40-hour training program required by the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training before receiving peace officer powers to arrest and cite. This course was conducted at the criminal justice training center of a local college and included instruction in the history of law enforcement, ethics, laws of arrest, search and seizure, firearms training, including their moral and legal use, discretionary decisionmaking, and methods of arrest. All civilian members of the liaison detail received 12 hours of arrest and control training from a member of the department who is a qualified instructor at the police academy. The trainees had to demonstrate their knowledge of the arrest and control techniques and their ability to perform them to the satisfaction of the instructor before they would be accepted by the department. Concurrent with the arrest and control training, the beach liaison members received training in the procedures, practices, and policies

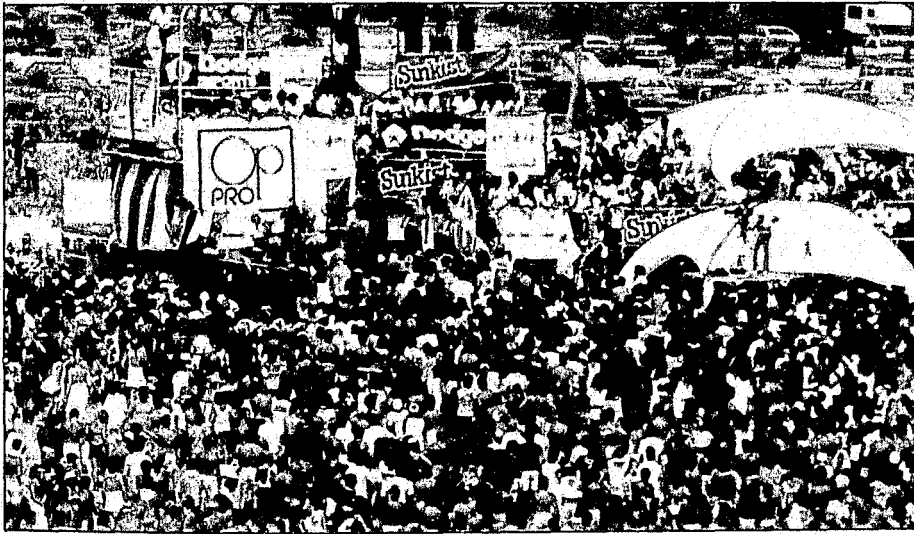
of the beach detail. Some of the areas covered in detail were report writing, issuing citations, arresting and booking procedures, evidence procedures including collection, preservation and booking, philosophy of the unit and job performance expectations, and orientation to and use of the radio.

During the classroom training, each liaison member received sample reports, citations, and condensed reference materials of applicable local and State laws and engaged in several in-class exercises to become familiar with the use and completion of official reports and forms. The members had previously received radio code books, and by self-study, had acquired familiarity with the most often used codes. At the completion of the classroom training, the civilians were sworn as special officers whose powers are restricted by ordinance to enforcing laws relating to State and local ordinances relating to beaches, bicycles, and parking violations.

The field training portion of the process began once the members had



“The use of civilians greatly reduced the cost of operating the beach detail.”



been sworn. Liaison members were paired with sworn officers and worked in uniform under the regular officers' supervision for 5 days, at which time two liaison members were paired and worked as a team under the supervision of a sworn officer for another week. The purpose of the 2-week, on-the-job training was to develop the trainees' practical skills to the point that they could function without constant supervision. At the completion of the 2-week training period, each member's progress and ability were evaluated by the sergeant supervising the unit, who decided whether the trainees had achieved a level of proficiency equal to the department's standards or if additional training was needed. Because of their motivation and enthusiasm, all the trainees passed the course and were given their assignments.

The mission of the beach detail was to provide a high level of police service to the beach community by enforcing a variety of laws and municipi-

pal codes pertaining to beach use. The duties of the sworn officers and liaison officers were similar in some ways, but different in others. Both were charged with the enforcement of the law and service to the community. The sworn officers were assigned to day and night shifts, working foot beats, mobile assignments on ATV's and four-wheel drive vehicles, and some plainclothes assignments. The liaison officers were assigned as support personnel handling transportation and prisoner booking assignments, along with foot patrols which included citing and arresting persons who violated the law. Liaison officers were assigned to daytime hours, working in uniform, and occasionally to a plainclothes detail working with a sworn officer.

The uniforms worn by the beach detail members were easily distinguished as police uniforms, but they were different for the sworn officers. The sworn officers wore white short-sleeved shirts embroidered with POLICE across the back and had department patches on the sleeves, navy blue hiking shorts, black leather ath-

letic shoes, and white socks. Sworn officers wore fully equipped Sam Browne belts, including batons. Liaison officers wore tan wash-and-wear shirts with department patches and a cloth label reading BEACH LIAISON in place of a badge, tan hiking shorts, and white leather athletic shoes. They also wore Sam Browne belts equipped with radio holders and handcuffs. Although the liaison officers received firearms training, they were unarmed. Both sworn and liaison officers wore dark blue baseball hats with POLICE embroidered on the front.

Operation

The city beach is open all year from 5:00 a.m. to midnight, 7 days a week. Daytime crowds are normally largest from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., while nighttime beach goers are present on any night but especially on Friday and Saturday. To provide adequate coverage, the liaison officers were assigned a 5-day, 40-hour workweek with shifts from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Sworn officers, who are normally on a 10-hour day, 4-day workweek, were assigned two 12-hour shifts and two 8-hour shifts. To give maximum coverage to the beach, the 8-hour shifts were 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and on Friday and Saturday, the 12-hour shifts were either 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. or 1:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. Working the same hours as the liaison officers allowed all personnel to attend one briefing session and helped establish a professional bond between the two groups. Transportation and booking of prisoners on Friday and Saturday nights were conducted by reserve officers who worked 6:00 p.m. to 1:00

“The beach detail program matured into a successful, cost-effective operation which created a pool of trained liaison personnel.”

a.m. For the liaison officers, days off were at fixed times during the mid-week. The sworn officers rotated their days off; all officers worked Friday and Saturday, which experience showed to be the busiest days of the week.

Citizen Contacts

The most prevalent violations of law were possession of alcohol and drugs. These controlled substances were the basis for nearly all problems experienced by the beach detail. The use of discretion in enforcing the alcohol prohibition laws on the beach was encouraged, and guidelines for this use were covered during training. Basically, adults who were unaware of the alcohol prohibition were told of the ban and asked to comply with it. If they did so, no action was taken. Adults who showed knowledge of the law by concealing an alcoholic beverage in a separate container or with the use of camouflage were cited or arrested as needed, and in all cases involving juveniles, action was taken by the investigating officer. The alcohol in question was poured out at the scene and so documented in the reports. Action was taken in all cases of violators in possession of drugs. During the summer deployment, the beach detail was involved in more than 1,900 violator contacts. They also assisted in the location of 16 lost children.

There were few incidents in which violators were combative or uncooperative. Beach detail workers were especially careful to establish positive contacts with the public. Arresting officers routinely told violators at the beginning of the contact that they would be cited and released if no compelling reason to the contrary existed. This seemed to reduce the violators' anxiety levels greatly. The professional attitude and

demeanor of the beach detail members were commented on frequently and even drew favorable comments from some violators.

Program Effectiveness

The use of civilians greatly reduced the cost of operating the beach detail. In the past, the department had relied on sworn officers working overtime to fill the need; thus, the financial aspects of the situation were a great burden to the department. Another consideration in evaluating the program was the overall well-being of the officers involved in the assignment. Having civilians as part of the program allowed excellent coverage without requiring anyone to work the long hours necessary in the past. This created high morale and improved attitudes among the officers throughout a long, busy summer. The beach detail program matured into a successful, cost-effective operation which created a pool of trained liaison personnel. The civilian component of the program is now prepared to work side by side with regular officers during special events, such as Easter week, and during the summer months, as well as other times when a dramatically increased beach-going population presents a major challenge to the Huntington Beach Police Department.

The beach detail received many favorable comments about its performance from citizens visiting the beach, as well as beach area business owners. One comment from a first-year business owner, which was sent to the chief of police, read:

“We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you and your beach patrol for making our first summer at the beach such a pleasure. We are new in your business community and were very wary due

to all the negative feedback we received (about summertime on the beach) before opening. All our fears were proven groundless due to the excellent efforts of your beach personnel. Every time there were confrontations, your staff responded quickly and efficiently, taking immediate control of the situation.”

One frequent beach goer who is a retired police officer and now an administration of justice instructor in a local community college wrote:

“The ability of the civilian members of the beach detail to handle problems and convey a positive image of the police department became obvious over the course of the summer, as did their ability to interact with the sworn officers and be team players.”

The sworn officers assigned to the program also made many favorable comments about the ability and performance of the liaison officers. One officer assigned to the beach detail summed up his feelings by saying:

“I was somewhat skeptical at first about working with civilians in this type of setting, but after working with them over the summer, I would work with them anytime. They proved themselves.”

As this comment reveals, the interest and involvement of sworn officers in the training process, followed by daily contact with them, gave the regular officers ample opportunity to assess the abilities of the liaison officers. Overall, the program was a success and will be continued.

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