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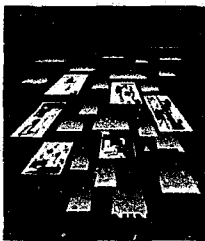
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Cover: In order to combat violent crime problems effectively, today's police officers must be properly trained and educated.

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William S. Sessions, Director

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The Evolution of Police Recruit Training

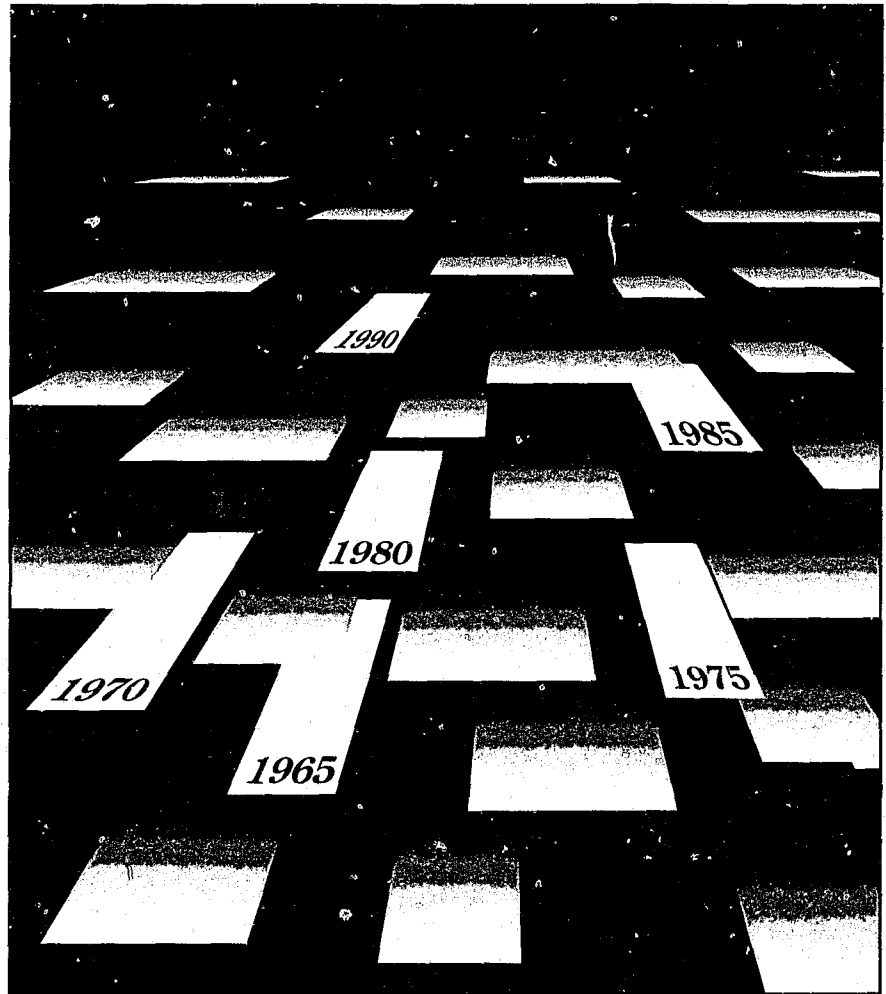
A Retrospective

By
THOMAS SHAW, M.S.

The year was 1965. The Vietnam War continued to rage. In Cleveland, Chicago, and Los Angeles, inner cities burned as riots broke out in black communities. Lyndon Johnson was President of the United States, and despite his promises of the "Great Society," the Nation's cities were crumbling at an alarming rate.

The year witnessed the deaths of such prominent people as Malcolm X, Winston Churchill, Edward R. Murrow, and Nat King Cole. One year later, the U.S. Supreme Court would hand down the *Miranda* ruling, which would affect the course of police conduct forever.

In 1965, despite the social changes taking place worldwide, the street cops in Arlington County, the City of Alexandria, and Fairfax County in Northern Virginia dealt with a fairly uncomplicated world. Situated across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., Northern Virginia was experiencing a low crime rate in most felony categories, with the exception of burglaries. Even so, the police chiefs of these jurisdictions decided to establish the first regional police training academy in the State—a bold concept for that era. They theorized that



by sharing resources, their recruit officers would be better trained to meet the challenges of the future. Thus, the Northern Virginia Police Academy was formed (later renamed Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Academy).

This article chronicles how police training in Northern Virginia evolved over the last quarter of a century. In many instances, it mirrors what transpired in police academies across the United States. The intent is not to champion regional

training over other forms of police instruction, but to examine how far recruit training has progressed since 1965.

THE EARLY YEARS

Curriculum Development

To begin, the three police chiefs assigned a training lieutenant from each of their departments to develop a curriculum for the first session of the newly formed regional academy. These men combined the best elements of their individual departments into the basic school curriculum. The first session consisted of 11 weeks of training that were divided into four segments—academic, firearms, physical training, and driver training.

The academic training consisted of an introduction to police science, police methods and techniques, government and law, police and community life, and laboratory techniques. In the firearms and physical training portion, recruits learned to fire a service revolver and shotgun and were taught basic calisthenics, judo, and close-order drill. This was followed by fundamental driver's training, which involved using traffic cones on a simplified course.

At the end of the 11 weeks, the recruits reported back to their respective departments for an additional week of training. At this time, the State of Virginia did not regulate police training; therefore, there were no mandatory State standards, either with regard to minimum hours or required subjects.

Even so, the curriculum was considered sophisticated and state-of-the-art for that era. The training

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As the more-enlightened police officer began to emerge, the academy staff and the training curriculum adjusted accordingly.

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Mr. Shaw is the Director of the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Academy in Arlington, Virginia.

reflected the needs of police officers who would be working in a well-educated society that had high expectations for its police forces.

Supervisory Staff and Instructors

Three training lieutenants managed the academy, one from each of the participating departments. One lieutenant would serve as the academy's director for 1 year; then the position rotated annually to the other two lieutenants. A training coordinator supervised the recruit school on a daily basis.

For the most part, officers who had experience teaching in their respective departments became part of the academy's instructional staff. However, several other officers were also selected, and if they had no formal instructor training, they attended a 1-week instructor's school before teaching at the academy.

While all instructors volunteered to teach at the academy, they continued to work full time at their regular assignments. In many instances, patrol officers would teach at the academy after working a complete 8-hour shift, or they would be scheduled to teach on their days off. Also, the academy relied on other agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to assist in the training.

No matter how highly motivated the instructors were, using a part-time staff had its obvious shortcomings. Teaching is a taxing and tedious activity, and many times, the level of training suffered because of the number of hours logged by the teachers. Oftentimes, members of the volunteer training staff were sent out on emergency calls, so they were not able to appear for class. Court appearances also interfered with their teaching assignments. To compensate for these

absences, the training coordinator had to reassign other instructors to fill in or show training films to occupy the class until the scheduled instructor arrived.

Other training inconsistencies also occurred by using a part-time staff. Even though each instructor was required to complete a lesson plan for the course, this plan primarily consisted of individual research, experience, and ideas obtained from previous instructors. In most cases, the teaching staff considered these lesson plans to be their personal property; when the instructors left, they took the plans with them. And, the academy did not maintain a permanent lesson plan file.

Student Profile

Recruit officers during this time fit a fairly precise profile. In the early years of the academy, the typical recruit was a white male, high school graduate, who had been discharged recently from the military.

Women, for the most part, were excluded from uniform patrol duty at this time; therefore, there were no female trainees. And, it was very rare for a newly hired officer to have a college degree.

Any hint of antisocial tendencies usually disqualified the candidate, and in some instances, a traffic record beyond a few parking or speeding tickets was grounds for rejection. Abuse of alcohol or drugs automatically eliminated potential officers. Yet, despite the rigid standards, the pool of applicants seemed limitless, and filling vacancies was not difficult.

TRAINING IN TRANSITION

Recruits

By 1975, the profile of the police recruit changed. Civil rights legislation, demands of minority groups, and court decisions altered the composition of the training classes. No longer did the white

male characterize the typical recruit. Now, the average recruit class consisted of females and minorities, as well as college graduates, Vietnam veterans, and former civil rights demonstrators, among others.

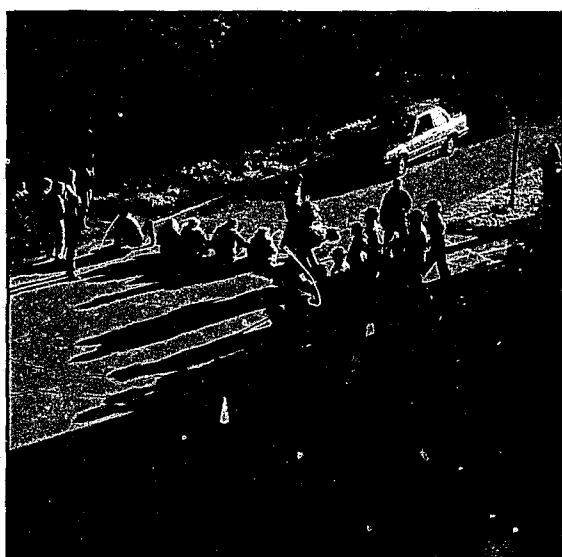
In addition, trainees possessed radically different points of view. Class discussions during riot training and community relations segments of the curriculum gave evidence to the diversity of class composition, as students freely voiced their opinions. Yet, this diversity added a new and different dimension to police training that never before existed. As the more-enlightened police officer began to emerge, the academy staff and the training curriculum adjusted accordingly.

Staffing Changes

The first step taken was the assignment of more trainers to the academy. This was in response to the significant growth of the member departments and the requisite need for training new officers. Also, the rotation of lieutenants as director of the academy outlived its usefulness; a permanent director was assigned to head the academy.

Besides increasing the number of instructors, training assignments became full-time positions for a minimum of 3 years. So as not to have a detrimental effect, the participating departments devised a staffing formula based on the size of department.

In addition, no longer did volunteer instructors make up the academy's staff. Instructors now had to compete for vacant positions through a competitive selection



"The academy's curriculum... mirrored the situations that officers were likely to encounter when they were on the streets."

process. But training became only one of their responsibilities. They also began to serve as squad leaders, providing day-to-day supervision of their assigned trainees, and as evaluators. Instructors completed a total of three student evaluations during the basic training school.

Another change that took place pertained to lesson plans. No longer could instructors consider lesson plans as their personal property. Training aids and lesson plans developed by the teaching staff became part of the permanent documentation file retained by the academy. Before each recruit session, lesson plans were submitted for approval by the supervisory staff, and a complete lesson plan file was established.

Curriculum Redesign

In 1970, the State of Virginia formed its first training commission to promulgate mandatory requirements governing both basic and inservice training. These rules and regulations stated that every sworn officer must receive 160 hours of basic training within the first year of employment; each veteran officer had to attend 40 hours of inservice training every 2 years. Establishing a minimum training standard across the State impacted significantly on the extent and type of training offered to officers.

Other factors that influenced police recruit curriculum were the change in community demands and the officer's new and emerging role in conflict management. Blocks of instruction on community relations, crisis intervention, and sensitivity training became part of academy's

curriculum. It was critical that recruit and inservice training evolve and improve in order to deal with the complicated problems of society.

The academy's curriculum also changed to incorporate performance testing, tactical decisions, judgmental shooting, officer survival, crisis management, and advanced driver

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training into the schedule of classes. Each of these topics added a new dimension to the training offered. But more importantly, they mirrored the situations that officers were likely to encounter when they were on the streets.

TRAINING TODAY

Even today, the three principal components of the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Academy—trainees, staffing, and curriculum—do not remain constant, but continue to reflect the times. Individuals applying for the academy are better educated; many have college credits or advanced degrees. The organizational makeup of the academy is more complex and now includes a

director of training, two assistant directors (one for basic training and one for inservice training), and a training staff totaling 26 supervisors and instructors. However, it is the academy's curriculum that evidences the most change. The curriculum continues to develop in order to better prepare trainees for their careers in law enforcement.

Formal task analysis plays an important part in deciding which subjects are incorporated into the training. And, classroom instruction and discussion are now accompanied by a number of role play scenarios. The prevailing philosophy is to have trainees perform a myriad of tasks as soon as possible to reinforce what they learned.

Trainees are exposed to family fights, burglaries in progress, armed robberies, and shoplifting, to list just a few incidents, in true-to-life settings. Trainers evaluate the performance of each student using a checklist of tasks that must be successfully completed. Those failing to perform the tasks successfully are afforded remedial training and two additional opportunities. Every effort is made to ensure that each trainee receives the best and most complete instruction available.

Carrying on with the type and level of instruction incorporated into the curriculum in the 1970s, instructors still place a great deal of emphasis on judgmental shooting, officer survival training, and physical fitness. Students test their judgment and accuracy in shoot/don't shoot situations, which prepare them to make the most serious decision possibly facing any officer—whether to use deadly force. In

Focus on Training

officer survival, they are also exposed to improved search and handcuffing techniques, the use of force, active countermeasures, weapons retention, control holds, and take-down procedures. And, the physical fitness program includes lectures on proper health and diet, aerobic exercise, and a dynamic strength program.

Particular attention is also given to crisis management and advanced driver training. Crisis management training includes a segment devoted to crisis management theory, with discussions on the methods and techniques to use when dealing with crime victims. The trainers also instruct recruits on the causes of police stress, how officers can deal with stress and its associated problems, and the toll such stress can take on officers. And, police recruits receive 40 hours of both defensive and emergency response driver training.

CONCLUSION

The challenges and problems facing today's law enforcement officers are many. Accordingly, each officer should be afforded the most complete, up-to-date training available to ensure officer safety and well-being.

During the past quarter of a century, the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Academy has maintained a proud record of accomplishment. There are over 2,000 police officers and deputies from 22 law enforcement agencies being trained annually at the academy. The caliber of instruction remains high, as the staff continually strives to ensure that the curriculum reflects the training needs of today's police officer.

LEB



The FLETC Concept

By
Charles F. Rinkevich

Since 1970, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) at Glynco, Georgia, has provided consolidated training for Federal law enforcement agencies. The FLETC was established with the purpose of creating a state-of-the-art training facility staffed with professionally trained, full-time law enforcement trainers.

When the decision to establish the FLETC was made, law enforcement training within the Federal Government was both inconsistent and random, at best. Most agencies conducted training in inadequate facilities with part-time instructors, often on an intermittent or sporadic basis. For the most part, training programs duplicated the training of others or were inconsistent with the training that was being offered elsewhere. The FLETC's goal was to consolidate the training efforts of Federal law enforcement agencies, with the hope of alleviating these problems.

CONSOLIDATED TRAINING

Basic Programs

The FLETC's basic programs concentrate on the common skills and knowledge needed by all Federal law enforcement personnel. For example, the rules governing arrest procedures, search and seizure, and evidence collection are the same for all Federal agents, regardless of department affiliation. Similarly, defensive tactics, marksmanship, computer literacy, and defensive driving are other training topics that can be delivered in a consolidated training setting. Once trainees are equipped with the common skills and knowledge taught in the basic training program, they can then begin the agency-specific portion of their training.

Specialized Training

Specialized training is offered when two or more agencies require advanced instruction on a particular topic. These courses cover such law