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**NORTH MIAMI BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
**North Miami Beach, Florida**

Final Report  
Major Crime Problem-Solving Project

This is the Final Report for the "Major Crime Problem-Solving through Pro-Active Integrated Response" Project funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, under Project Number 95-DD-BX-0019. This project covers the time period of May 1995 to September 1996.

Project Goals and Objectives

The goal of this project was to reduce the impact of major crime problems on the community and region through the use of a pro-active, integrated problem-solving methodology.

There were four objectives associated with the project goal:

1. Reduce the incidence of violent crimes and their corresponding caseload by 15-25%.
2. Identify opportunities leading to criminal events through input obtained from community partnerships.
3. Suppress and eliminate crime through problem recognition and community education.
4. Alter those circumstances and questioned behaviors leading to criminal acts.

Methodology

The operational plan was to modify the manner in which the investigative functions of the North Miami Beach Police Department (NMBPD) interacted with the other sections and units of the agency. The plan required the following major changes in routine operations:

- Increasing the speed in which offense incident reports were transmitted to the investigators.
- Upgrading the radio modem units of the police cars to a faster transmission rate.
- Adding a professional Crime Analyst to the investigation section personnel pool.
- Hiring additional sworn officers to serve as an investigative task force.
- Reorganizing the investigative staff into six specific work groups.
- Enhancing the level of public awareness campaigns in the area of crime prevention.
- Increasing assistance to crime victims and crime plagued neighborhoods.

Each of the above major changes will be discussed in this section of the report.

### **Transmission Speed of Incident Reports**

The NMBPD needed to increase the speed of transmitting initial offense incident reports (OIRs) from the field to the police station. This element was essential in order to put completed police reports into the hands of investigators and crime analysts in a timely manner. To accomplish this task, the agency consulted local communication and electronics experts who analyzed the department's radio modem transmission capabilities. They made recommendations on a suitable high-speed radio modem that would be compatible with the police department's current records management system (RMS) and any future software upgrades.

Based upon the recommendations, the NMBPD developed competitive bid specifications to purchase eighty (80) 19.2M baud rate intelligent high-speed radio modems. By the end of May 1995, the City of North Miami Beach had awarded a bid for "Mobile Data Radio Systems and Equipment" to Target International Corporation, who was the lowest responsible, responsive bidder. A contract was prepared and entered into by the City of North Miami Beach and Target International Corporation in the amount of \$274,184.00 for the furnishing, delivery, and installation of eighty modems as described in the bid specifications. The award amount was higher than the amount originally estimated to purchase the modems (\$260,200); however, the NMBPD elected to proceed with the purchase by making up the price difference of \$13,984.00 from its Law Enforcement Trust Fund (LETF).

The ordered modems were constructed, delivered and installed within 60 days of the signing of the contract. Field testing and fine-tuning modifications were made and deemed acceptable to the City, and the use of the new radio modems went into effect. It became immediately apparent that the new modems reduced report transmission time from patrol car to supervisory personnel. Prior reporting delays were now a thing of the past.

### **Crime Analyst**

For years, the NMBPD relied upon individual investigators, officers, and civilian support staff to sift through mountains of paperwork in order to develop useful crime trend profiles. With the purchase of the new high-speed radio modems,

NMBPD staff recognized that it would be beneficial to have a full-time professional Crime Analyst on staff. This individual would be used to review and analyze all major crime police reports (Part I and II Status Crimes) and then develop useful and timely reports that could be used by the entire agency to aid in crime prevention, increased law enforcement, and curing the major crime problems of the city.

The agency developed a job description for this position and advertised it in the local newspaper as well as through the City's Personnel Department. Within a week, the City had received numerous resumes, employment applications, and inquiries about the position. The resumes and applications were screened for minimum educational and professional qualifications, and interview appointments were made with the most qualified job candidates. In August, the NMBPD hired its Crime Analyst, and set him to work in developing useful reports to guide the agency's pro-active crime fighting direction.

The Crime Analyst reviewed the OIRs each morning, and developed reports of common modes of criminal operation (MOs). Each report summarized crimes by type, days of the week and times of occurrence, area of the city where the crimes occurred, and subject/vehicle descriptions. The report also contained intelligence information gathered by the Crime Analyst from other local, regional, and federal law enforcement agencies and task forces. A "best guess" of where the next criminal acts would occur was included in the report. This report was distributed to all divisions of the agency for use by rank-and-file officers and investigators.

### **Hiring Additional Officers for the Investigative Task Force**

The Investigative Section of the NMB Police Department had an assigned complement of one Lieutenant, two Sergeants and nine Detectives. The Section had the responsibility of investigating all felony and misdemeanor crimes that occurred within the jurisdiction of the North Miami Beach. Detectives were assigned primary responsibility for the following major crime categories: Robbery/Burglary Crimes, Auto Theft Crimes, Economic Crimes, Gangs/Juvenile Crimes, Domestic Violence/Sexual Battery Crimes, and Vice Crimes.

In order to meet the project objectives, it was necessary to create within the Investigative Section an Investigative Task Force (ITF). The ITF's function was to provide additional covert and overt manpower to the entire Investigation

Section. ITF members were assigned by the Section supervisors on a daily to weekly basis to specific major crime categories as indicated by crime analysis. For example, crime analysis reports indicated that auto thefts were increasing in the Government Center area of the city on Tuesday through Friday between the hours of 2:00 PM and 9:00 PM. The Investigations Section supervisor would then assign the ITF to adjust their work schedule to be in this "hot spot" during these days and hours.

With this concept in mind, the agency announced its plans to create the ITF. Officers from other divisions of the agency were given an opportunity to interview for the ITF positions. Following the interviews, two experienced police officers from the patrol division were transferred to the Investigative Section for the ITF. At the same time, the agency hired two new full-time police officers to replace the officers who were transferred from the patrol division. The ITF was now formed with two experienced general investigators from the Investigations Section and two new officers from the patrol division.

#### **Reorganization of the Investigations Section Staff**

The Investigations Section was reorganized into six major crime categories as described in the above section. The ITF was made a part of the Investigations Section and fell under the supervision of a Sergeant. One of the four ITF members was designated as the "lead" ITF member, and coordinated all work schedules and activities of the ITF with the Sergeant and other Detectives.

The ITF worked a flexible duty schedule. As "hot spots" developed, the supervising Sergeant, lead ITF member, lead detective, and crime analyst would sit down together to review the crime trends, look for patterns, identify possible subjects, and formulate a "game plan" for the ITF. The ITF members were briefed on the problem and "game plan", then set to work.

#### **Enhancing Public Awareness of Crime Prevention**

At the same time that the project activities were being implemented, the agency enhanced its campaign of increasing public awareness about crime prevention measures. The agency's Crime Prevention Unit put on a series of crime prevention talks and public appearances at local community centers, recreation

centers, condominiums, and shopping centers throughout the city. The talks and appearances focused on the major crime areas being targeted through this grant project.

### **Increased Assistance to Crime Victims and Crime Plagued Areas**

To assist the Investigations Section and ITF, the officers assigned to the Community Patrol Unit (CPU) were given the responsibility of making a follow-up contact with crime victims on cases where no suspect information or leads were known. This contact served two purposes: to verify the information obtained and contained in the original incident report, and to provide an opportunity for the officer to offer whatever assistance might be needed to the crime victim to lessen the impact of their crime experience.

Following a brief training period with the lead detectives of each major crime problem solving area, the CPU officers were assigned "C" cases on a daily basis. "C" cases are defined as criminal cases where there were no leads to the identification of the subject (s) and a simple follow-up contact with the crime victim would result in suspension of the investigation.

The CPU officers were assigned to specific neighborhoods throughout the city that had a long-standing history of crime events. Through their daily citizen contacts, the CPU officers would assist these neighborhoods with problem-solving, empowerment concepts, crime prevention education, personal and family counseling, and intelligence gathering for the ITF.

### **Evaluation of Project Activities**

Through this project, the NMB Police Department was able to purchase eighty (80) intelligent high speed-radio modems, hire two full-time police officers, hire a crime analyst, create and provide financial support for the operation of a newly formed Investigative Task Force (ITF), increase public awareness about crime prevention, and increase assistance to crime victims and "high crime" neighborhoods in the city.

The project activities were conducted as outlined in the project grant application, within the confines of the established project budget, and within the normal operations of the agency. A separate accounting of the project budget was kept in accordance with the prescribed and accepted accounting practices of the City's Finance Department. All required progress reports, financial status reports, requests for reimbursement, and audit information requests were filed in a timely manner with the Federal Government.

Through this project, the NMB Police Department was able to apply problem solving principles and practices to the investigative functions of the police department in order to reduce and prevent crime incidents and enhance enforcement activities. As a result, the agency was able to draw the following conclusions about the practical application and usefulness of intelligent high-speed radio modems, crime analysis, ITF as a means of accomplishing major crime problem solving in law enforcement, public awareness campaigns, and assistance to crime victims and crime plagued neighborhoods:

#### **Radio Modems**

The use of intelligent high-speed radio modems is essential for the rapid transmission of police reports to the police department's mainframe computer. When received via this means, original offense incidence reports can be quickly reviewed and approved by a supervisor, then made immediately available for a crime analyst's compilation and analysis. The practice of hand-writing and batch processing of offense incident reports and other slower methods of data entry of report information is a hindrance to modern-day processing, analysis, and distribution of crime trend information.

#### **Crime Analysis**

The use of a dedicated crime analyst offers significant benefits for law enforcement. The Crime Analyst in this project obtained and reviewed information from a variety of internal and external sources, including but not limited to computer files and databases, arrest logs, crime information clearinghouse, citizen complaints, intelligence briefings, queries with other agencies, and investigative links.

Within our agency, the Crime Analyst reviewed original offense incident report data on a daily basis via a computer format that was easy to understand and interpret. With this information, the Crime Analyst was able to form an intelligent opinion on crime trends and patterns, crime suspects, and "best guess" forecasts of where the next criminal acts would occur.

The Crime Analyst was responsible for preparing and distributing a weekly "Crime Analysis Report" for use by department personnel. The report provided information and comments on the major crime problems, the days of the week and times of occurrence, and a breakdown of crimes by dispatch zone. In addition, the Crime Analysts prepared other specialized crime analysis reports as required by the ITF, detectives, and the command staff.

### Use of Investigative Task Force

The creation and use of an ITF within the Investigations Section of the agency yielded positive results in terms of pro-active apprehension of criminals and reduction of crimes. In our agency, the ITF was assigned to specific major crime problems areas based upon crime analysis data and apparent crime trends. A small ITF of four members was able to adjust their work schedules (days and hours) in order to meet departmental needs. Working closely with the Crime Analyst, Investigations Section supervisory personnel, lead Detectives, and the agency's Command Staff, the ITF was able to focus on emerging crime trend patterns and identified or suspected criminals to make apprehensions.

A comparison of the incidence of reported crimes for the time period of October 1, 1995 to September 30, 1996 (the grant project time period) to the same time period of the previous year (October 1, 1994 to September 30, 1995) was made. The following figures reflect the net increase/decrease in major crimes:

- Auto Related Crimes – decreased from 593 to 561 (5.41%)
- Robbery Crimes – increased from 259 to 288 (11.19%)
- Burglary Crimes – decreased from 1,891 to 1,718 (9.15%)
- Domestic/Sex Battery/Abuse Crimes – decreased from 415 to 367 (11.57%)
- Economic Crimes – increased from 140 to 153 (9.28%)
- Vice and Narcotic Crimes – decreased from 82 to 60 (26.83%)
- Gang/Juvenile Crimes – decreased from 23 to 17 (26.09%)

Overall, there was a 27.59% net decrease in reported major crime incidents during the project period.

### **Public Awareness Crime Prevention Campaign**

The agency's crime prevention campaign focused on raising the public's general awareness of the factors involved in crime and crime prevention. While the ITF focused on the persons who commit crimes and the places where they commit criminal acts, the crime prevention campaign focused on the public who are potential victims of crime. Through this campaign, the public learned crime prevention target hardening measures in order to reduce opportunities for crimes to occur against persons and property.

The crime prevention campaign was accomplished through personal appearances of the agency's crime prevention personnel at shopping centers, community and recreation centers, public meetings, condominium meetings, and homeowner association meetings, and through the distribution of crime prevention literature in the form of letters, flyers, booklets and pamphlets.

### **Assistance to Crime Victims and Crime Plagued Areas**

The use of CPU officers to support the ITF and Investigations Section of the agency had a beneficial effect upon the clearance rate of criminal case investigations.

This concept of allowing specially trained, non-investigative officers to assist detectives in case clearance proved its worth in terms of allowing detectives to focus their attention on solvable cases and bolstering community relations with crime victims through personal contacts.

The CPU officers were assigned to six specific neighborhoods in the city that had a significant past history of criminal activity, including but not limited to drug sales, robbery, burglary, auto theft, prostitution, and civil disorder. The daily interaction between the CPU officers, community leaders, and city residents has a positive "community relations" effect for the agency.