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SINTON, TEXAS
MANPOWER ANALYSIS

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FOREWORD

This report presents the results of a Manpower Analysis performed for Sinton, Texas. The study was requested by the Sinton Police Chief, Thomas Lee, processed through the Texas Criminal Justice Council, Saadi A. Ferris, and authorized by N. T. Fisher of the Dallas Regional Office of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration under existing national contract (J-LEAA-016-72) with the Westinghouse Justice Institute. Mr. James D. Stinchcomb, a consultant from Virginia Commonwealth University, provided the analysis.

Sinton, Texas
Thomas Lee, PIO
Saadi A. Ferris
Regional

1.0 Introduction

This study presents the findings of a manpower analysis for the Sinton, Texas, Police Department. It identifies several areas where police functions are being performed with little or no margin for expansion of police services. Sinton's growth indicates that changes to the existing police role are needed to provide the required police service expected by the citizens of Sinton. This report identifies some changes that can result in improvements.

2.0 Sinton Police Department Resources and Needs

The police department of the City of Sinton, Texas, presently employs seven sworn officers, including the chief, and an additional four dispatchers. The department also utilizes several other employees, such as three female school guards, one part-time female clerk-typist, and two high school students working part-time to service traffic signing.

2.1 Dispatchers

Much of the focus of the public safety manpower issue in Sinton would seem to relate to the dispatchers who perform functions so numerous that it is difficult to even refer to them as dispatchers. One cannot help but be impressed by the fact that the four dispatchers, paid substantially less than patrolmen, are willing to engage in the varieties of duties which are required of them. Much thought has apparently gone into this matter, and only several months ago, there was some consideration given to placing the dispatchers under the jurisdiction of the sheriff. Since a local study indicated that no particular monetary savings would occur if this were done, the decision was not to consolidate dispatch services.

Of considerable concern to this report is the fact that dispatchers perform not only police, fire, and public works dispatching, but in addition, handle the departmental telephone, incoming calls, records, receptionist duties, teletype, mail, responsibilities of a clerk of the court, and a variety of other miniscule duties related to city hall, city council, the auditorium, and the fire department. Each dispatcher is responsible for maintenance of the upstairs jail, while also being responsible for accepting cash bonds and fine payments. Even in a relatively small organization located in a fairly confined physical setting, these unrelated tasks are numerous and time consuming.

These "dispatchers", by overworking, manage to accommodate the manpower shortage within the police headquarters. However, it should be noted that for their services rendered, the salary scale is inadequate. By using the dispatchers in so many different ways, there is increased justification within the police department to retain them rather than to contract with the county for these numerous services.

As an absolute minimum, the job of the part-time female clerk-typist (presently a high school student employed by arrangement with her work/study school program), should be expanded into a full eight-hour day. In this way, some of those tasks listed previously could be assigned to her rather than the dispatchers (i.e., record-keeping, filing, and responsibility for mail, to name a few). It is commendable that the chief has made arrangements through the high school to engage a clerk as part of her training program, but this should either be expanded to two girls working four hours per day each, or preferably, funds should be provided for one full-time departmental secretary. The goal of such a situation would be to relieve the dispatchers of many clerical functions, in which case, they could then be expected to devote their energies to jail supervision and dispatching exclusively.

In addition, for fiscal purposes, some costs for dispatching should be charged to both the fire department and the public works budget, since it is unrealistic to draw the total dispatching costs from the police department budget. This savings alone might release the additional dollars necessary for a clerk-typist to be employed through the entire workday.

2.2 Court Clerk

Related to this matter is the need for a part-time clerk of the court. Obviously, the corporation court judge could provide for this service under his budget. A very serious problem is involved here, since court services are totally provided for within the enforcement agency--specifically, at police headquarters.

2.3 Sworn Positions

It would seem essential to this organization that it not lose one of the sworn positions which was actually established through a Federal grant from the Labor Department. On the one hand, the chief and city manager have demonstrated grantsmanship and initiative without which the department would have required funds for payment of overtime work. Yet, there is the risk, as always exists under Federal projects, of the Federal funds ceasing. At that point, the city manager should request the city council to continue this position, because without it, police services to the public will suffer greatly. Compensatory time, if not overtime payment, will have to be offered to the remaining six officers. Omitting the chief administrator and his night sergeant, one can readily see that the remaining force could not possibly provide the needed services and still work a forty-hour week and be given their deserved two consecutive days off. In other words, the work schedule of the Sinton Police Department is an admirable one designed to foster employee morale and minimize the likelihood of public safety being offered by tired and overworked personnel. A major step backward would occur should the most recently developed sworn position (i.e., that funded by the Labor Department) be lost.

2.4 Police Availability

As matters now stand, police officer availability in Sinton is really at minimal level, since a police car is often restricted to the station as a result of the officers' involvement in booking, record-keeping, and the like. Presently, the four reserve officers maintain considerable visibility and popularity in the community. While their dedication is commendable, particularly in supplementing one-man cars at nights and on weekends, it is also possible that the community regards them as part-time police and assumes that they are providing additional street services. The uniforms are similar and, of course, they are highly visible. Thus, administratively, they may be working to the disadvantage of the chief, who really does not have sufficient manpower to keep police vehicles moving in the community. Much of the time, the reservists are employed by private businesses for pay. In these cases, while doubtless helpful to those businesses, the community again may assume that there are more police officers than there actually are on the city payroll. Assuming the reservists are to remain, it might be desirable to furnish them with a white armband or a similar distinctive designation.

One function the reservists might perform, except where legal evidence is involved, might be the transporting of necessary matters to Corpus Christi. At a minimum, half of the day is lost each time a sworn officer must commute to Corpus Christi. In the case of transporting evidence to the lab, this requires the sworn officer's presence, but in other instances, perhaps reservists could be called upon. The loss of time resulting from travel further underscores the need to retain as a minimum the seventh sworn position.

2.5 Departmental Situations

A number of very positive points must be made about the Sinton Police Department, including the substantial salary increases that have occurred since the present chief was employed and the court time which can be paid to off-duty officers. Unfortunately, officers are expected to purchase all of their own equipment and uniforms, since the funds provided by the city for these expenditures are inadequate.

The strong training commitment within the department is apparent, and one is impressed that officers remain with Sinton rather than migrate to higher-paying enforcement jobs elsewhere. Morale seems quite good, and a healthy work attitude among the officers is apparent to the outside observer.

It is to be hoped that the younger officers, including the dispatchers, will follow the personal leadership of the chief of police and pursue higher education, since this is one credential which, ultimately, the city council could recognize as worthy of additional payments. Perhaps in time, an educational incentive plan could be established to reward those officers completing certain numbers of college credits. This is a trend which has had considerable success in the State of Texas.

Good record-keeping is evident in the Sinton Police Department, and this can be attributed to the present chief. Although a clerk-typist/departmental secretary is essential, there obviously has been some effort expended to organize, consolidate, and make available pertinent police records. In Sinton, the chief of police maintains his own files and records, and the dispatchers must come to the chief's office to obtain relevant information.

A note on community or public relations is appropriate. The chief should make greater effort to visit high schools and civic groups for discussions on public safety matters. It is not unique to this community, but there is an apathy about the police, and effort expended now might go a long way toward supporting future changes and improvements.

In terms of overall administrative controls, it is suggested that the present chief of police be designated as the director of public safety. The advantages to this would include a possible modest increase in salary for him and, more importantly, recognition that a specific full-time city employee has responsibility for the fire department budget. It is unacceptable to commit significant tax dollars to an agency which presumably has no city employee on its payroll. While it is understandable that there are costs for training, equipment, ambulance contract, and the like, distinct possibilities exist for joint controls and expenditures. This recommendation requires further study on the part of the city manager. For instance, are there duplications in purchases of supplies between fire and police? Is the fire training budget (for volunteers) justifiably three times that of the police? These are but a few observations made in passing to highlight the question of whether a public safety budget would be more appropriate and whether there are possible duplications between the two budgets.

An obvious duplication and overlap exists in the functions of the city jail and those of the county jail. This is not peculiar to this community, and as long as there are two separate agencies in charge, there is not realistically much that can be done. It is mentioned here because some very real costs are being duplicated, and two jails are fiscally indefensible.

2.6 Crime Scene Equipment

The request for crime scene equipment, including photographic materials, has been submitted through the Council of Governments. This could put Sinton in the coordinating position for the area police departments (i.e., Odem, Taft, Portland, etc.) and would allow them to provide crime scene services to others. Regrettably, no staff is allotted in the grant, and it is recommended that at least one person be assigned to this project. That crime scene investigator could be made available throughout the area, and if he were not assigned to the Sinton Police Department, he could work for the prosecutor's office. The advantage of having him located in Sinton is obvious, in that he could offer major investigative services, thus relieving uniformed patrol officers from this responsibility.

2.7 Expanded Police Needs

In the past two years, Sinton has annexed both south and north, and increased demand for protection can be anticipated. City council should include questions on public safety as annexing occurs. There are indications of police services being rendered outside of the city jurisdiction. Records of such services should be carefully kept for council's review. Fights, drunkenness, and accidents occurring in communities immediately adjacent to Sinton and handled by the Sinton Police Department should be compiled monthly as an indicator of workloads outside the city limits. Sinton possesses some very vulnerable targets for armed robberies. Ideally, two patrol cars should be visible on the streets as a deterrent. Perhaps some contract arrangement could be made for unannexed areas to justify the use of city police on such calls. The mutual aid arrangement, which does exist, provides protection for the officer in terms of legalities and insurance, but does not indicate to the city officials the amount of time being spent rendering service to residents of outlying areas.

The visibility, but not necessarily availability, of other enforcement agencies such as the sheriff's department and the highway patrol causes Sinton residents to believe that there are more police in town than is the case. This is not an uncommon phenomenon in policing situations, and it has to do with apparent police availability versus effective enforcement. Even though two sheriff's cars and two highway patrol cars may be parked or in motion somewhere around Sinton, the effective strength of the police department rests with a patrol car that may not even be in service. The present chief has increased visibility considerably by changing uniforms, marking cars, and in general creating a more positive image. But realistically, without some modest personnel increase, the police department cannot implement any plan for better usage of its uniformed force.

Moreover, the crime problem in Sinton does not totally involve local residents, but transients as well. As the only "wet" town in the area, evening drunk calls increase, only to be replaced by burglary calls later in the night. This workload will not disappear, and even if the seventh position (presently Federally-funded) were to dissolve, the duties will be absorbed by officers who already are heavily committed. When the patrol car(s) are tied up transporting prisoners, operating radar, escorting funerals, or handling highway traffic, there is simply no one else available.

3.0 Summary

This report has attempted to point out that Sinton police services are being maintained only at an essential level, and little is being done that could be described as innovative or prevention-oriented. The excellent information available regarding personnel, activities, workload, court time, and even overtime is only beneficial if it is used to plan for better protection and security. This observor strongly suspects that a sizeable percentage of Sinton officers' time is consumed on arrests of citizens who frequent the town because of the bars. If a chart were to be prepared

comparing alcohol-related offenses (arrests) between Sinton residents and those of adjacent communities, it might provide evidence that the Sinton Police Department actually handles alcohol-related cases out of proportion to city dwellers. This excessive use of patrol time, if it can be documented, may alone justify additional patrol personnel.

In view of these observations, it is recommended that a special project be funded by the State LEAA Office with regard to crime prevention. This project director, as a sworn officer, would provide direct preventive services to stores, homeowners, schools, etc. for hardening the target and thereby reducing crime victimization risk.

