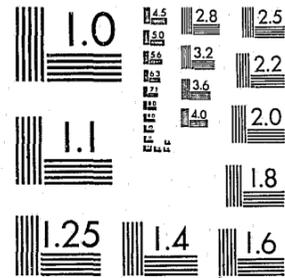


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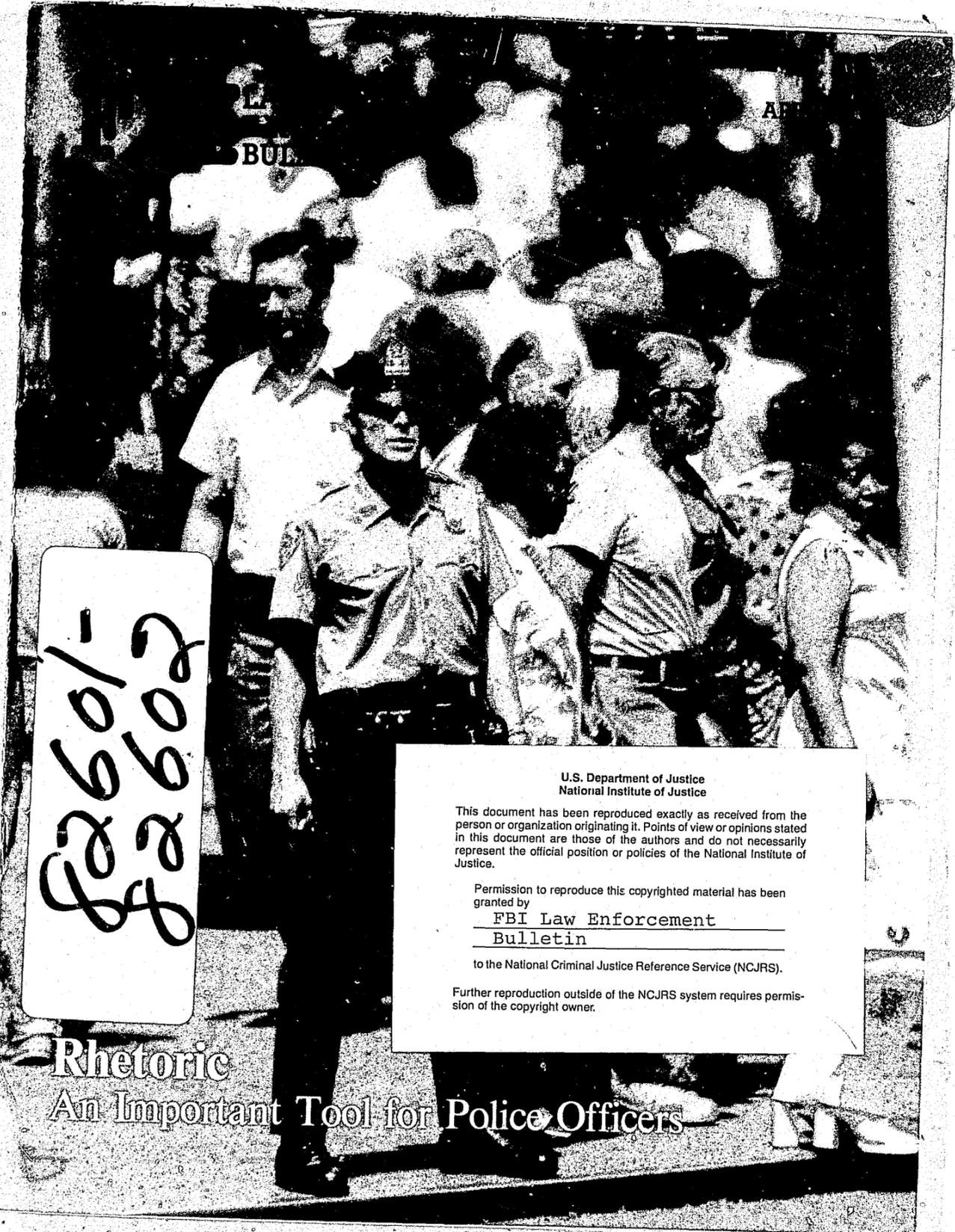


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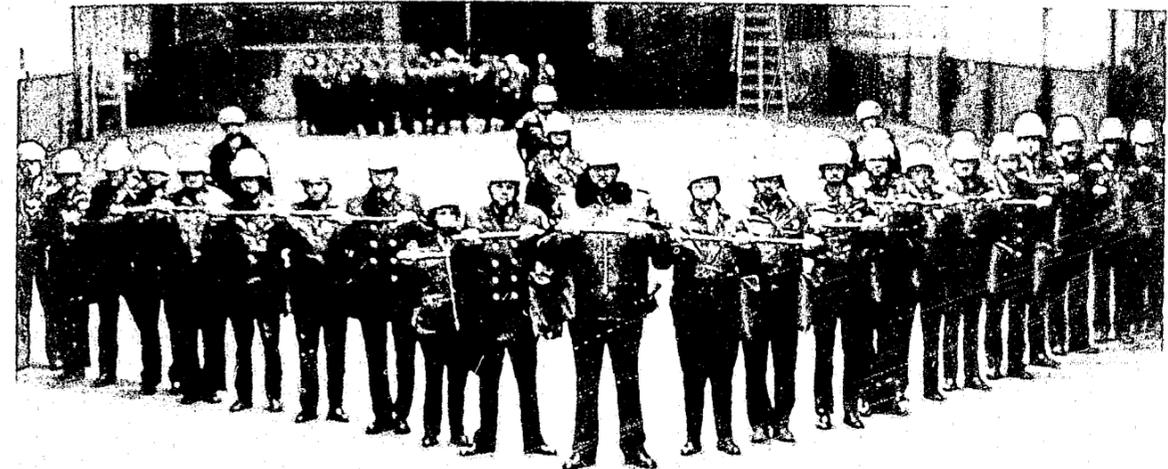
FBI Law Enforcement

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Rhetoric
An Important Tool for Police Officers



Assessing the Potential for Community Disorder

By
RICHARD J. BRZECZEK
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Chicago, Ill.*

A Management Strategy

The civil disorders which began on May 17, 1980, in Miami, Fla., drew considerable and protracted attention primarily because of the absence of such disorders in this country for almost a decade. The analysis and debate of the causative factors, the law enforcement response, and the aftermath are still alive in the media and academic and professional forums. The important question is, "Has anything been learned from the Miami riots?" The answer is obviously, "Yes," and this article attempts to treat the development of a management strategy which was learned from one analysis of the situation.



Superintendent Brzeczek

In August 1980, a report prepared by the Enforcement Division, Office of Criminal Justice Programs, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, U.S. Department of Justice (hereinafter referred to as the Justice Department Report) was issued.¹ It contained an analysis of the conditions in Miami leading up to the disorder, an overview of the disorder, and some very succinct and cogent recommendations for disorder planning and management. In my opinion, it was one of the best law enforcement-related reports ever published.

My interest focused upon the disorder control planning and management chapters. As a result, a committee consisting of approximately 20 high-ranking Chicago Police Department officers was formed. Their collective experience ranged from disorder management, planning, communications, law, and community relations to conducting investigations of excessive force allegations. They were given the initial task of reviewing the Justice Department Report and determining areas of potential applicability to the City of Chicago. A second committee meeting was held to identify the viable portions of the report. There was unanimous agreement in three areas:

- 1) The development of a *contemporary* disorder control plan,
- 2) Training for disorder prevention and control, and
- 3) The establishment of a community assessment center.

The Disorder Control Plan

The Chicago Police Department issued its first formal disorder control plan in 1969. Contained in two thick volumes, it was not only comprehensive and detailed but also complex, cumbersome, and virtually never implemented except during training exercises. The manpower mobilization procedures became archaic because unit strengths were drastically altered over the past decade to be responsive to new demands for manpower allocation.

The new plan is simpler and represents, at most, approximately 20 percent of the previous voluminous material. Included in the response plan are two mobilization procedures—one using available on-duty personnel, the other describing the recall of off-duty personnel. Each mobilization plan has two phases to provide for an incremental buildup of police personnel, if necessary.

The response plan includes a treatment of various principles in disturbance control, e.g., the objectives and offensive, economy of force, maneuvers, and the unity of command, and the characteristics of disturbance control operations, such as psychological factors in crowds and mobs, methods used to incite crowds or mobs, and techniques employed by rioters and dissident leaders, to name just a few. The plan also gives considerable attention to staff and command actions, information handling and effective communications, command post and assembly area activities, dispersal operations, disturbance control formation, methods necessary to counter aerosol weapons, and most importantly, postincident debriefing procedures and reporting. The new plan deals with

“More positive conduct on the part of the police will reduce negative perceptions of police behavior by the public.”

specific problems common to most civil disorders, while maintaining sufficient flexibility to permit command personnel to adjust control operations contingent upon the nature and scope of the disturbance.

Training

Training to familiarize personnel with the concepts and maneuvers contained in the emergency response plan is the logical sequel to plan development. The Chicago Police Department's inservice training program in this area has been established as a 3-day block of instruction. Courses designed for the purpose of familiarization with the response plan include hostage/barricade situations, weapons operations, operation of protective equipment such as gas masks, and practicum involving the development of platoon and company responses, squad formations, and new concepts in crowd control techniques.

The inservice training program is undoubtedly the core of virtually every other similar training program designed for disorder control. But in the Chicago Police Department program, there is a substantial amount of time devoted to subject areas designed for the purposes of disorder prevention.

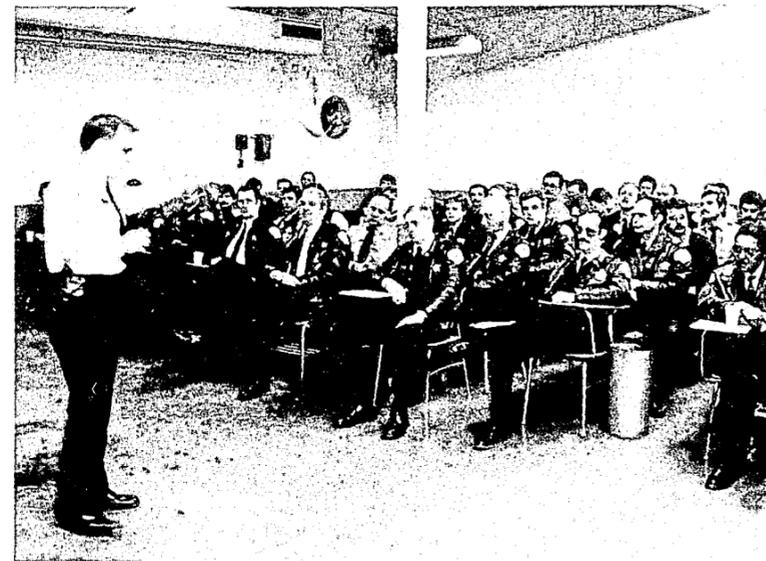
Regardless of the nature or number of identifiable causative factors leading to a civil disorder, the catalyst, all too often, is some police action usually involving the use of force, especially deadly force, directed at one or more members of a minority group. Not every such police action precipitates a civil disorder, but an inordinate number of civil disorders are ignited by some isolated police action.²

Law enforcement or the police as an institution has little, if any, control over the socioeconomic, educational, unemployment, or demographic characteristics of the community it serves. These characteristics are most prob-

ably affected by the political environment generally prevailing in a given community at any time. Yet, the police must operate in that political environment, facing daily tasks complicated in many instances by negative considerations such as employment, recession, inflation, etc.

Police do have an inherent responsibility in public service. The historical duties of saving lives, protecting property, and enforcing laws still exist. But the foremost and primary mandate of the police is to protect the rights of all persons. Included in this command is that the police themselves do not infringe upon the rights of citizens. The public's perception, real or imagined, of persistent and patterned abusive practices brings the social woodpile very near its kindling temperature. Then, it takes only an isolated incident of some notoriety involving at least the perceived abuse of authority to ignite the situation, or as experience has taught us, actually ignite blocks and blocks of urban areas.

Because the perceived conduct of police is so important as a factor leading to civil disorder, the Chicago Police Department's inservice training program places significant emphasis on police behavior. Special attention is given to State statutes and department policy delineating guidelines regarding the use of deadly force and the use of nondeadly force. Also included in the “use of force” emphasis are classroom and range participation sessions involving the “shoot/don't shoot” concepts, review of department proce-



Police officers of all ranks receive the same classroom instruction.



Police officers discuss potential community trouble spots.

dures concerning the investigation of firearms discharges by police officers using, among other materials, actual case studies, discussion of use of force reporting procedures, and an overview of the philosophy and necessity of internal affairs operations.³

One can readily observe that training focused upon the preventive aspects is basically nothing more than a reinforcement of acceptable police conduct standards. The more management can reinforce those standards through clear policy statements, training, and sanctions (when deviations occur), the more disciplined the organization will be and the less likely police officers will act beyond the scope of their authority. More positive conduct on the part of the police will reduce negative perceptions of police behavior by the public.

Community Assessment

The overabundance of litigation filed in the past decade challenging police intelligence activities has resulted in an examination, redefinition, and a new limited application of those formerly acceptable practices. The litigation has put restraints on intrusive police behavior directed at constitutionally protected activity. However,

nothing in any of those law suits has diminished law enforcement's responsibility to be aware of the indicators or predictors of future criminal or disruptive conduct. Therefore, law enforcement officials can monitor certain indicators of community tension without engaging in conduct violating anyone's privacy or other right protected by the Constitution.

The Justice Department Report has a 5-page chapter entitled "Assessing the Potential for Disorder."⁴ In my opinion, this chapter is the highlight of the report. It succinctly points out the following factors that each urban department must consider if it is to be prepared for the potential disorder:

- 1) Disorders rarely happen spontaneously but are generally the culmination of long-standing tension in the community.
- 2) Some departments may not be sensitive to or even aware that community tension exists.
- 3) There are certain indicators of community unrest and tension, although this list is not all inclusive:—disturbance calls involving con-

- licts between groups,
- incidents in which the responding police officer finds himself/herself the target of abuse over what is considered routine police action,
- incidents of stoning police or fire vehicles responding to calls for service,
- assaults between groups,
- assaults against police,
- citizen complaints of excessive force by police officers,
- changes in media coverage of police events or incidents,
- lack of citizen willingness to assist police in routine matters.

- 4) Many times, no single person or unit in a department has the responsibility for collecting and analyzing these indicators of unrest.
- 5) Information concerning community tension must be disseminated, both within the agency and to appropriate and responsible community leaders.

While these considerations are not exhaustive, they do represent an important basic framework from which one can build an assessment function.

As mentioned previously, the Chicago Police Department command staff committee studying the Justice Department Report identified the community assessment function as an indispensable ingredient in disorder prevention. This decision led to the establishment of a community assessment center within the department's Bureau of Community Services and the issuance of a department directive delineating the philosophy, function, and procedures of the center.

No proactive intelligence gathering is employed. All reports coming into the center are reports generated by other units in the normal course of

"Preparation is fundamental. Plans are indispensable. But prevention is only accomplished by working together with the community . . . to foster an understanding that we need each other."

business. Each unit having primary responsibility for preparing the reports is identified in the directive, along with the type of incident it is required to report. Examples of these are:

- 1) Shooting of/at police officers/firefighters/paramedics,
- 2) Assaults on police officers/firefighters/paramedics,
- 3) Damage to police/fire vehicles, facilities, or property,
- 4) Citizen attempts to remove arrestees from police custody,
- 5) Demonstrations directed against public figures, agencies, or facilities,
- 6) Looting incidents,
- 7) Hostage/barricade/terrorist incidents/threats,
- 8) Bomb/arson incidents/threats/patterns,
- 9) Attacks on other governmental personnel, vehicles, or facilities,
- 10) Large-scale school disturbances,
- 11) Volatile recreational areas,
- 12) Gang conflict,
- 13) Racial, religious, or nationalistic incidents,
- 14) Calls by police for assistance,
- 15) Shootings of civilians by police,
- 16) Excessive force allegations,
- 17) Media reports focusing on police, identifying community tensions and projections of future unrest, or of criminal proceedings of specific concern to the community,
- 18) Conflict between community groups.

While the list of categories is probably never complete, it is believed that review and monitoring of the items listed gives us a fairly accurate profile of the degree of tension and unrest in any given community or neighborhood.

In addition to monitoring the reports generated within the department, every other department head in the City of Chicago has been briefed on the concept and is requested to assist the police department in examining the indicators. Complaints of poor service, such as in garbage pickup, street repair and cleaning, or any one of the hundreds of other categories, could very well be clinical symptoms of tension and unrest in the community.

As the analysis process takes place, information is disseminated to Patrol Division command personnel for specific attention to the potentially difficult areas. The Bureau of Community Service works with community leaders on the analytical reports to garner community support and assistance to diffuse a potentially dangerous situation. Other support units, such as the Detective Division, Youth Division, and Field Tactical Services, have a responsibility for reacting to the analytical reports. While being informed on a daily basis as necessary, the mayor receives a monthly summary report which can be used to assess the quality and deployment of all government services.

There is no formula, set of plans, or technique which will guarantee that, if implemented, a civil disorder of any magnitude will not occur. Disorder prevention is a sought-after goal but can never be regarded as absolute. In past generations, the likelihood of a civil disorder occurring was minimal and police management paid little attention to planning the tactics. Even when we were forced to react to actual disorders, as in the 1960's, we didn't do a very good job and looked even worse trying to deal with them. The Miami

riots of 1980 resurrected some of those horrible memories of ineptitude and lack of preparedness. With the public and media accounts that the frustrations caused by socioeconomic policies and unemployment may be tangibly manifested in the streets of our urban areas, we as the leadership of law enforcement cannot sit idly, hoping that any storm heading in our direction will change its course and bypass our community. Preparation is fundamental. Plans are indispensable. But prevention is only accomplished by working together with the community, on a daily basis, to foster an understanding that we need each other. **FBI**

Footnotes

¹ *Prevention and Control of Urban Disorders: Issues for the 1980's*, U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, University Research Corporation, August 1980.

² In July 1980, almost 2 months after the Miami riots broke out during a hot weather spell and with the editorial analysis of Miami still in the headlines, three Chicago police officers were accused of beating to death a black man subsequent to his arrest for smoking on a subway train. The officers were immediately suspended without pay, and several days later, indicted for murder by a county grand jury. Many speculated about the incident as a potential catalyst to ignite a disorder. Swift action by department officers and prosecutors was received favorably, including complimentary and supportive editorial comment. Two of the officers were subsequently convicted of involuntary manslaughter and official misconduct.

³ The implementation of the training program in late 1980, along with a modification of the deadly force and weapons policies in December 1980, and the requirement that the deadly force and weapons policies be discussed at rollcall training at least once a month, has contributed to a substantial reduction in the number of persons shot by Chicago police in 1981. More importantly, in only one case were administrative charges filed against an officer for violating the department policy. No officers were charged criminally during 1981.

⁴ *Supra*, note 1.

END