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Merging Community-Oriented and Crime-Specific Policing

Part Five of Seven

Youth and Gang Programs (*Continued*)

This is one of a series of bulletins describing the integration of community policing and crime-specific strategies among Texas police agencies. The strategies are categorized into Neighborhood-centered Approaches, Targeted Enforcement, Youth and Gang Programs, and Problem-oriented Tactics. Staff and consultants of the Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT) and the Texas Regional Community Policing Institute made over 20 site visits to Texas agencies employing these forms of crime-specific strategies. This year's Executive Issues Seminar Series, and this bulletin series, describes a sample of programs that appear to be working among police efforts to reduce crime in Texas.

In this month's bulletin, gang control interventions employed by three municipalities are described. Although sharing some characteristics, each has developed distinguishing foci.

Corpus Christi's effort focused upon aggressive curfew enforcement. In El Paso, the Drive-by Shooting Response Team has dramatically reduced the prevalence of these incidents. Kingsville's program represents an approach particularly appropriate for smaller communities where the formation of specialized units is impractical. Kingsville gives particular attention to community involvement. While no law enforcement response will likely eradicate youth gangs, the approaches described can substantially reduce gang membership and related crime.

**Special Bulletin
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Policing Institute**

*Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas
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Curfew Enforcement Corpus Christi, Texas, Police Department

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Program Summary

The Corpus Christi Police Department systematically enforces both a nighttime and a daytime juvenile curfew. The police department operates a curfew center within a sub-station as a site to which nighttime curfew violators can be taken, while the YMCA operates a truancy center as a repository for daytime curfew violators. The police department also fields a Juvenile Enforcement Team (JET) that emphasizes curfew enforcement. Due to the combination of a special unit and convenient facilities, curfew enforcement in Corpus Christi is given a high priority.

Site Description

Corpus Christi had an estimated population in 1996 of 276,880 and a land area of 139.7 square miles. The police department employed 395 sworn officers and had 207 nonsworn positions in 1996, responded to 353,152 calls-for-service and took 30,467 Part I crime reports. The department has two main bureaus headed by assistant chiefs—Field Services and Auxiliary Services—as well as Administrative Services, Community Relations, Professional Standards, and Emergency Management sections.

Program Description

Corpus Christi has had a long-standing and court-tested curfew ordinance, but enforcement was not aggressive before June 1996. In the months prior to June 1996, increased public concern about gangs and an increased incidence of drive-by shootings in the city led the police department to

examine its youth-focused tactics and programs. In May 1996, the department transferred the existing Juvenile Enforcement Team (JET) from patrol to Special Services and increased its staffing from 10 to 15 officers. One of the specific responsibilities given to the JET unit at the time of the transfer was increased curfew enforcement.

Curfew enforcement was then stepped up in June 1996. Initially, a two-week public relations campaign was undertaken to warn juveniles and their parents that a zero-tolerance approach would be adopted. Some community opposition was expressed, especially by a small group of vocal parents. However, community concern about gang-related problems was sufficient to overcome this initial opposition.

The police department recognized that the biggest impediment to enforcement in the past had been the significant amount of time that it often took officers to process a curfew violator. The actual paperwork required was simply a citation, but officers were also required to return the youths to their parents or other responsible adults. Often, parents were not at home, leading to a lengthy search for a place to deposit curfew-violating youths. Jail, of course, was not an option for curfew violations.

Corpus Christi did already have a truancy center located within a YMCA where officers could take youths picked up for violating the daytime curfew ordinance. This provided a reasonably convenient process for officers enforcing the daytime truancy curfew, but did not help solve the nighttime problem. After looking into several possibilities, the department decided to open its own nighttime curfew center in one of its sub-stations. It is staffed each night with one sworn officer on an overtime basis and also utilizes some volunteer counselors. Officers enforcing the nighttime curfew now issue citations and transport violators to this center where they leave them. Curfew center staff assume the responsibility for contacting parents or other responsible adults and for supervising youths

until they are picked up. Curfew center staff also take the responsibility for checking records to identify repeat offenders, and they issue the citations to parents when appropriate.

As planned, curfew enforcement increased dramatically beginning in June 1996, especially nighttime enforcement. The number (290) of nighttime citations issued in June was more than triple the number issued in June 1995, and for each of the first six months the number issued was more than double the number for the same month in the previous year. For the entire 12-month period, June 1996 through May 1997, 2,302 nighttime citations were issued compared to 1,170 the preceding year, for a 97% increase (almost double). Overall, a total of 2,713 daytime and nighttime curfew citations were issued during the year, compared to 1,672 the previous 12 months, for a 62% increase (the number of daytime citations actually dropped from 502 to 411).

Unfortunately, information was not available on the immediate dispositions of the curfew citations—e.g., fines paid, numbers dismissed, community service hours performed, etc. The general impression, though, was that the municipal court was treating the citations fairly seriously, and that in any event the enforcement effort had gotten the community's attention. According to department officials, officers were able to "pick up kids in droves" when the enforcement crackdown first began in June 1996, but that after the first four to six months it became more and more difficult to locate curfew violators. Thus, the reduced level of enforcement that developed by November 1996 was not due to decreased effort by patrol officers or JET officers, but rather due to fewer and fewer youths being on the street during curfew hours.

Program Effects

As indicated above, the immediate impact of the curfew enforcement initiative was substantially increased issuance of citations—especially for nighttime violations, which almost doubled dur-

ing the year beginning in June 1996. Department officials hoped that this increased enforcement would in turn have two types of effects: (1) decreased victimization of juveniles once they were off the streets, and (2) decreased offenses committed by juveniles.

Juvenile crime victimization did apparently decrease. The number of Part I crimes with a juvenile victim decreased from 1,549 to 1,487 during the first year of enhanced curfew enforcement, a reduction of 4%. More interestingly, the number of such victimizations occurring during nighttime hours decreased from 181 to 131, or 28%. Thus, during the hours when curfew enforcement was substantially increased, juvenile crime victimization was substantially reduced.

Whether offenses committed by juveniles were also reduced is more difficult to determine. First, of course, the police are not able to determine who commits most Part I offenses, so the proportion or number committed by juveniles is similarly unknown. Next, if arrests are used as the indicator of juvenile offending, they may increase due to special police attention, giving the impression that juveniles are committing more crimes when, in fact, they are simply being arrested at a higher rate. This latter phenomenon applies especially to Part II crimes such as disorderly conduct, alcohol-related violations, and drug offenses.

Total juvenile arrests in Corpus Christi did increase by 13% during the year following the beginning of the curfew crackdown. Unfortunately, the extent to which this increase was fueled by the curfew crackdown itself and/or by associated arrests (e.g., a curfew violator being found to have a weapon or to be in possession of illegal drugs) is not known. On the plus side, overall Part I offenses declined by 17% during the same period. It is quite possible that the increased curfew enforcement and associated increase in juvenile arrests contributed to this overall decline in crime in Corpus Christi, but such a relationship cannot be proven with the available data. Also, of course,

crime has been decreasing generally in Texas and around the country.

Critical Factors

Several factors, including some already discussed, seem to have contributed to the successful implementation of curfew enforcement in Corpus Christi. One is the establishment of the curfew center. This made curfew enforcement less onerous and burdensome for officers by reducing the amount of time and hassle involved in processing a curfew violator. Another was the increased staffing for the JET unit that assumed specific responsibility for curfew enforcement.

The curfew center concept is one that is likely to be feasible for some departments but not others. The Corpus Christi Police Department issued an average of 6.3 nighttime curfew citations each night during the center's first year of operation—that is probably a sufficient workload to justify the overtime costs of an officer to staff the center. Smaller departments, or those which simply have fewer youths on the streets late at night, might find that their volume of citations is not sufficient to make such a center cost-effective. Certainly, even the Corpus Christi Police Department would rather have a social services or juvenile justice agency operate the center and assume the expense. Unfortunately, few non-police agencies are willing to provide such services late at night.

Use of a special unit—the JET unit—to emphasize curfew enforcement is another approach that might not be practical or advisable for every department. In Corpus Christi, the JET unit serves essentially as a gang unit as well as a curfew enforcement unit. The unit targets gangs and gang members, gathers intelligence information, and responds immediately to drive-by shootings and other serious gang-related incidents. The twin missions—gangs and curfews—obviously overlap with respect to juvenile gang members, and enforcement efforts are complementary. Also, because of the twin missions the unit is fairly sizeable (15 officers), which makes major curfew crackdowns more effective. It is probably true that the existence of the JET unit does absolve patrol officers of some of their obligation to enforce the curfew laws. Given call-for-service workloads in the department, however, it may be that patrol officer curfew enforcement would not be very extensive anyway.

Department officials also indicated that Corpus Christi's gang and youth problems are not particularly concentrated in one or a few neighborhoods, but rather are distributed throughout the city. Thus, a neighborhood-focused response to the problem did not seem feasible; instead, more of a citywide response such as curfew enforcement was needed.

Drive-by Shooting Response Team El Paso, Texas, Police Department

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Program Summary

Following growth in gang activity and increasing numbers of drive-by shootings, the Drive-by Shooting Response Team (DSRT) was formed as an element of the department's response to gangs. The intent of the DSRT is to quickly and effectively identify and arrest suspects in gang-related crime.

Site Description

Located in the most western tip of Texas, El Paso is about 40 miles south of Las Cruces, New Mexico, and bordered on the south by the U.S./Mexico international boundary. It is the county seat of El Paso County, the home to both the University of Texas at El Paso and the Fort Bliss Military Reservation. El Paso is also the major shopping and commerce center for far West Texas, southern New Mexico, and the northern state of Chihuahua, Mexico. Covering 257 square miles, the population of El Paso is roughly 614,000 people of which 73% are Hispanic, 23.5% Anglo, 3% Black, and .5% Asian/Pacific Islander. In addition, El Paso has an undetermined number of undocumented aliens, mostly from Mexico, and is significantly affected by the Mexican city of Juarez on its southern border and home to some two million people.

The police department currently has 982 sworn officers (authorized strength of 1,182) and 230 non-sworn employees. The race/ethnicity distribution of the police department closely reflects that of the city. The department is broken down into two major divisions—Operations and Ad-

ministrative Services—and has five Regional Commands (patrol divisions or precincts) within the city. The police department operates its own academy for pre-service and in-service training. In addition, officers are sent to specialized schools as needed. Several command staff members regularly participate in the LEMIT Executive Issues Seminars and the LEMIT Graduate Management Institute. It is estimated that 95% of the department's personnel are natives of El Paso.

Program Description

As a result of escalating gang activity, in 1990 the EPPD Tactical Section was essentially made into a gang unit and given the responsibilities of investigating all gang-related crimes (except murder), enforcement, intelligence, and diversion. From 1990-1993, the Gang Task Force would be called out on drive-by shootings only if serious bodily injury was reported.

In 1993, there was a substantial increase in the number of drive-by incidents. The gang unit was changed to an "all enforcement" unit. Essentially, 50 to 60 uniformed officers worked nights saturating gang areas with stops and enforcement action. During this time, all gang investigations were assigned to the Crimes Against Persons detectives. These changes had only a negligible impact on the growing gang problem.

Current structure. In 1995, the Drive-by Shooting Response Team (DSRT) and the Gang Intelligence Unit were created. Intelligence keeps track of the different gangs and gang members, trends in gang activities, and provides on-going information and status reports on all gang-related activity in El Paso. The DSRT is responsible for all gang-related investigations, except murder; however, they provide substantial support in homicide cases. All five DSRT members work days but are on a 24-hour call-out basis and typically work cases "straight through" until arrests are made. (The DSRT has been given unlimited overtime authorization.)

The DSRT and Gang Intelligence are centralized units working citywide cases. In addition, the police department created CRASH (Community Response Against Street Hoodlums) units in each of the five regional commands. Working exclusively within their command areas, the CRASH units are uniformed officers working in marked cars that work during the nights in aggressive enforcement against gang members.

An important element in the success of gang suppression is constant communications and information-sharing between the DSRT and CRASH units and Intelligence. In addition, the DSRT is physically located next to the Juvenile Probation and Juvenile Services offices with which there is a strong working relationship and communications.

Operations. Experience found that when a drive-by shooting occurred, gangs responded in several ways. One constant factor was that the victimized gang would immediately plan retaliation for the incident. This, of course, became an ever-broadening circle where one assault could turn into 10 assaults simply through on-going retaliation. Another factor which occurred was that assaulting gang members would get together to "get their stories straight"—all would tell the police essentially the same thing during interviews, thus significantly complicating the investigation. A third factor was that weapons would frequently disappear thereby making it more difficult to link the suspects to the crime. Finally, gang members would intimidate witnesses, threatening both the witnesses and their family, so that investigators interviewing witnesses would end up with "dead ends."

It was felt that the best way to overcome these factors was for investigators to make a rapid response to the crime scene. A key element was also to have the first responding patrol officers or CRASH units to immediately "freeze" the crime scene and keep all witnesses present and secure

(including keeping gang members separated from each other and from other witnesses).

The original intent of the DSRT was to investigate any drive-by shooting. However, it became apparent that as DSRT members and the Intelligence Unit became familiar with gang members, their graffiti "tags," and general gang behavior, that it was most effective for the DSRT mandate to be broadened into what is essentially a specialized gang crimes investigation unit. In this regard, the full DSRT would be called out and immediately begin the investigation when one of the following conditions existed:

1. There were injuries.
2. There was serious property damage.
3. The situation had the potential to escalate.
4. There were good investigative leads.
5. The field supervisor at the scene deemed it necessary to have the DSRT.

Program Effects

At its peak in 1995, there were an average of 21 drive-by shootings per month. After the DSRT was formed, their effects became rapidly apparent. Since the DSRT's inception, drive-by shootings dropped by 50% between May 1995 and January 1, 1996. Drive-by shootings dropped another 37% between 1996 and 1997. For all DSRT call-outs in the above five categories since the team's inception, see Table 1.

Roughly 90% of the DSRT's arrests occur within 24 hours of the call-out, and a significant number of cases result in a confession by the suspect. In addition, relying on asset forfeiture laws, the DSRT has seized a number of cars and other property associated with gang crime.

Other gang control factors/initiatives. The DSRT response is a key element of the El Paso gang suppression and control initiative. Other factors include:

Table 1. DSRT Call-outs Since the Team's Inception

	May 1995-Dec. 1995	Jan. 1996-Dec. 1996	Jan. 1997-Sept. 1997
DSRT Call-outs	40	75	14
DSRT Call-outs Cleared	35	70	13
DSRT Arrests	82	119	15
Weapons Confiscated by DSRT	26	27	6
DSRT Clearance Rate	88%	93%	93%

- Night curfew enforcement used primarily by the CRASH units.
- Graffiti abatement initiatives, including a new ordinance which will permit the city to clean graffiti from private property.
- An FBI Gang Task Force for the greater El Paso area which includes an EPPD DSRT investigator as a task force member.
- Diversion activities of potential gang members and youthful offenders by the EPPD Police Area Representatives (PAR) which are the primary EPPD community policing officers.
- Weekly gang meetings to share information and ideas. The meetings include DSRT, CRASH, Intelligence, PAR officers, and other law enforcement agencies in the El Paso area.
- Increased evidence of second and third generation gang members, whose parents were gang members who socialized their children into the gang culture.
- Graffiti and "tagging" have significantly increased.
- An apparent correlation of the growth of black gangs—notably the "Folks" originating from Chicago—found through the presence of some military personnel at Fort Bliss.
- The gang culture is moving into middle-class and upper-class areas where juveniles are dressing in gang clothing/colors (they are "cholod out") mostly as a trend of "wanna be" gang members.
- Prison gangs—which are more violent and involved in more overt organized criminal activity than most El Paso street gangs—are having an increasing influence on the street.

Trends. Based on what the DSRT has learned and the implications from intelligence analysis, gang trends include:

Critical Factors

The success of the DSRT is tied to several critical operational and policy factors. Among these are:

- An immediately “frozen” crime scene and control of witnesses by the first officers responding to the scene.
 - A fast response to the crime scene by the DSRT regardless of the time of day or night.
 - The ability of DSRT investigators to work “straight through” a case.
 - Good ongoing intelligence and information-sharing between all police department units having gang responsibility as well as the Juvenile Probation Department.
 - Investigators getting to know gang members and their families, and “showing respect” when talking to gang members, whether during the course of an investigation or whenever they happen to see a gang member.
 - Ongoing development of reliable confidential informants.
 - Developing a strong, mutually respectful relationship with the county attorney and district attorney.
 - Having support from administrators to operate freely and creatively.
 - Having dedicated personnel who are willing to “go the extra mile” in their work effort.
-

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Program Summary

As a result of the emergence of gangs in the early 1990s, the Kingsville Police Department sought a method to suppress current gang activity and prevent gang growth. What resulted was a multifaceted program focusing on the schools, the parents, and at-risk youth.

Site Description

Kingsville, Texas, is located along Highway 77 in South Texas, about 30 miles south of Corpus Christi and 120 miles north of Brownsville. It is the county seat of Kleberg County and home to the Kingsville Naval Air Station and Texas A&M University at Kingsville (formerly Texas A&I University). Covering approximately 16 square miles, the resident population is approximately 25,300 people while the city's service population is estimated to be around 35,000. Roughly 5% of Kingsville's residents are African American and 60% are Hispanic.

The police department has 46 sworn officers, 17 non-sworn personnel, and two reserve officers. Pre-service training is generally completed at the TCLEOSE-certified academy at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi. In addition, the police department provides its own training as well as sends officers to other schools as needed. Both the chief and assistant chief regularly attend the LEMIT Executive Issues Seminars. The chief is a TCLEOSE commissioner and a graduate of the LEMIT Graduate Management Institute.

About one-third of the officers are Kingsville natives, over one-third of the officers have a bac-

calaureate degree, the chief and assistant chief have master's degrees, and two more officers are completing their M.S. degrees. Officers are given "flex schedules" to attend college while on-duty, and the department provides educational incentive pay (A.A.=\$50/month; B.S.=\$100/month; and M.S.=\$200/month).

Program Description

Historically, Kingsville has not had a gang problem; however, gangs were present in both Corpus Christi, 30 miles to the north, and Alice, a comparably-sized city 40 miles to the northwest. In the early 1990s, evidence of gangs began appearing in Kingsville, including the visibility of gang graffiti and clothing among youth.

Even though most of the youth were "wanna-be" gang members, the police department felt that action needed to be taken. The first tactic was a "routine police approach." That is, if kids looked like a gang member, they were treated like a gang member. They were stopped, put on the ground, searched, and interrogated.

Despite this approach, it was apparent the gang prevalence was spreading and membership increased. At an individual level, "gang members began to change their behavior, so we also had to change."

Two officers were assigned to assess the nature of the Kingsville gang problem and develop ideas for operational responses. At the same time, the chief explored policy and ordinance options that could be used for gang control.

Program Effects

An early recognition was that gang membership was not "black and white," but there was a continuum of affiliation. As a consequence, slightly different tactics may be needed for each level of gang association. As noted in the Kingsville Police Department brochure, "Gangs: What You Can Do About It," the following model was used

to assess intervention, prevention, and suppression tactics, based upon the youths' level of gang involvement:

- Level One: Fantasy (10% of gang membership). Knows about gangs, may or may not know real gang members, but sees gang members living out a fantasy. Aggressive behavior typically not exhibited.
- Level Two: At-risk (20% of gang membership). Knows about gangs and gang members first-hand including casual association with members. May admire gangs and like to dress in gang colors. May show some aggressive behavior.
- Level Three. "Wanna-be" gang members or associates (40% of gang membership). Knows and likes gang members through regular association; considers gang activity normal and finds commonalities with other gang members. Aggressive behavior is likely.
- Level Four. Gang member "in training" (20% of gang membership). An official gang member whose association is almost exclusively with the gangs, frequently to the exclusion of family and other non-gang people. Participates in gang activities and is likely to be violent.
- Level Five: Hard core member (10% of gang membership). Completely committed to the gang lifestyle, rejecting value systems other than the gangs. Will commit any act with the approval of or demand from the gang. Considered violent and dangerous.

The guiding premise is that some police programs may need to differentiate between the levels of involvement.

After analysis of the gang situation, several new initiatives were started.

- While Kingsville had an evening curfew, the chief learned that it was dated and may not meet current court standards. Borrowing from the experience of other cities, he developed a new curfew ordinance which was adopted by the city council. With the revision, a day curfew was also instituted (9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.). As a provision, after at least two curfew violations, the parents were likely to be cited (although this is a case-by-case provision).
- The high school liaison officer also became a gang officer who received special gang training and provided training and assistance to the school staff on gang-related activities as well as getting to know gang members.
- A patrol officer on each shift was designated a gang officer in order to monitor gang-related activity and report the information to other patrol officers as well as the gang officers. This permitted constant intelligence-gathering and information-sharing.
- A "Parents on Patrol" program was implemented (although as the program developed, one did not need to be a parent to participate). The program includes:
 - A seven hour training session for participants.
 - An extended "Ride-A-Long" program with Kingsville patrol officers to assist officers as "eyes and ears."
 - Hallway patrol in the schools.
- As a method to occupy youths' time during the summer, as well as to develop a positive experience between at-risk youth and officers, a "bike clinic" was created. The police department gathers abandoned and donated bicycles in a community center, provides tools, and assists youth in

repairing and fixing the bikes for the kids to use. The popular program has been in place for two summers and has provided activities and bicycles for over 100 young people.

- The police department worked with the schools to provide information about gangs—including clothing or “colors” and symbols—as well as training about gang weapons and how they are hidden. The school also reacted by, first, banning gang clothing from the dress code and moving to “coordinated school wear,” which is essentially a broad approach to a uniform.
- A graffiti eradication program was instituted wherein community service workers from the probation department paint over graffiti. The police department provided training to both officers and the “Parents on Patrol” members to recognize gang graffiti so that it could be identified for eradication in this program.
- It was learned that tobacco was an important gang recruitment tool, so the chief was able to get a city ordinance passed prohibiting tobacco possession for those under age 18. The ordinance is one of the tools used by officers to initiate contact with gang members and potential gang members.
- Because a number of fights at the schools were gang-related, the gang officers had meetings with gang members in an attempt to stop the fights. This proactive approach was largely effective and illustrates how the police department attempts to react creatively and quickly to gang-related problems which surface.

Critical Factors

The police department is quite candid in noting that its gang-related initiatives have not eliminated gangs in Kingsville, but has:

- Reduced the intensity of gang influence on other youth.
- Kept gangs “under control” in Kingsville.

The police department feels that gang suppression and prevention initiatives need to remain in place in order to:

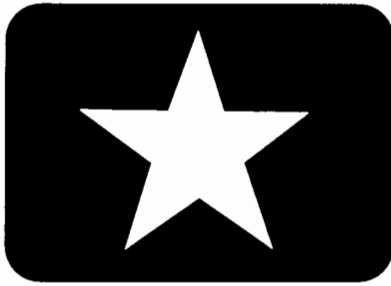
- Maintain continued control of gang activities.
- React to serious gang-related incidents which flare up.

Based on their experience, the lessons learned from Kingsville are that police departments must:

- Recognize and admit when a gang problem exists.
- Understand the dynamics of the gang problem within the specific communities where they exist.
- Develop responses which are specifically tailored to the character of the gang problem and community.
- After major problems are under control or suppressed, make the initiative a maintenance program of gang control.

Interestingly, a comparably-sized city near Kingsville with similar demographics has a gang problem that has grown significantly over the same years as that of Kingsville. However, the other city has no particular gang control program and instead tends to respond to activities on a reactive basis. As the Kingsville problem has significantly diminished, the other city’s problem has grown. This provides anecdotal support for the value of some type of gang control initiative.





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