

**1999 Herman Goldstein Award
For Excellence In Problem-Oriented Policing
Application**

NEWTON AREA CAREER CRIMINAL UNIT

Abstract:

The Newton Area Career Criminal Unit (CCU) was implemented to identify and arrest those persons who are classified as "career criminals" and continue to commit crimes within the Newton Area. The large majority of these persons are parolees who have a high rate of recidivism. The individual elements of this program are based on long established and fundamental law enforcement techniques. It is the application of these techniques that makes this program innovative. The techniques are embodied in two basic strategies toward reducing the fear and incidence of crime in a community. The first strategy is to identify and analyze crime patterns within a police jurisdiction and geographically focus available resources. The second strategy is to investigate specific crimes with the goal of identifying and arresting the suspects.

This program was initially conceived by patrol officers frustrated by their own field experiences in dealing with career criminals. The officers' personal observations led them to believe that career criminals were responsible for a significant proportion of crime in the community. They prepared an analysis of career criminals and a proposal to form the Career Criminal Unit which was approved by their commanding officer.

CCU first identifies career criminals, primarily parolees, residing or frequenting the Newton Area, and then identifies the specific reporting districts (RD's) within which these individuals live or have been contacted by the police. These individuals are also classified using their criminal record as to the type of crimes they generally commit. An automated database with the ability to capture and retrieve digital photographs with relevant biographical and investigative information is also employed. Crime patterns are identified with the assistance of Crime Analysis Detail (CAD) personnel and Area detectives. CCU personnel also develop liaisons within the community utilizing both concerned citizens and traditional police informants. These resources are employed to identify those career criminals involved in specific crimes and effect their arrest. Additionally, information regarding career criminals who have been identified by detectives investigating specific crimes is forwarded to CCU personnel, who then employ their knowledge of these individuals to effect an early arrest. The early arrest of these persons prevents them from continuing to commit crimes within the community, thus enhancing community safety.

The Career Criminal Unit has been responsible for the arrest of several violent career criminals. It is difficult to quantify the proportionate contribution of CCU's efforts toward the reduction in violent crime in the area, however the impact is believed to be significant. The unit is viewed as a "work in progress" and continues to evolve in concept and implementation.

Description:

The following pages provide a detailed description of the Career Criminal Unit using the four-step SARA problem-solving model as an outline.

Scanning:

This program was initially conceived by patrol officers frustrated by their own field experiences dealing with career criminals. The officers' personal observations led them to believe that career criminals were responsible for a significant proportion of crime in the community. These officers believed that a unit dedicated to monitoring and arresting career criminals could have a significant impact on crime in the community and maximize the deployment of resources. The initial focus of the unit was to locate and arrest "parolees at large" (PALs). However, the unit was also utilized to locate and effect the early arrest of individuals wanted for open charges. The unit has recently been expanded with increased personnel and the merging of an additional program developed to address, at least in part, the same problem.

The Newton Identification System (NIS) was developed by detectives who believed that an automated database that could capture and retrieve digital photos archived with relevant biographical and investigative data would be a valuable investigative tool. These detectives' experiences in investigating various crimes led them to the conclusion that criminals commit crime proximate to the location in which they reside or "hang-out". This is particularly true with respect to gang members and is supported by distance-to-crime studies. Additionally, it was the detectives' experience that a limited number of individuals commit a disproportionate share of crime. However, victims are generally forced to view a series of mug books containing hundreds, if not thousands, of photos with the hope that they will be able to identify a suspect. A system that could track career criminals and produce quality color digital line-ups, or galleries that contained known career criminals likely to have committed a crime in a specific area, would increase the likelihood of identifications.

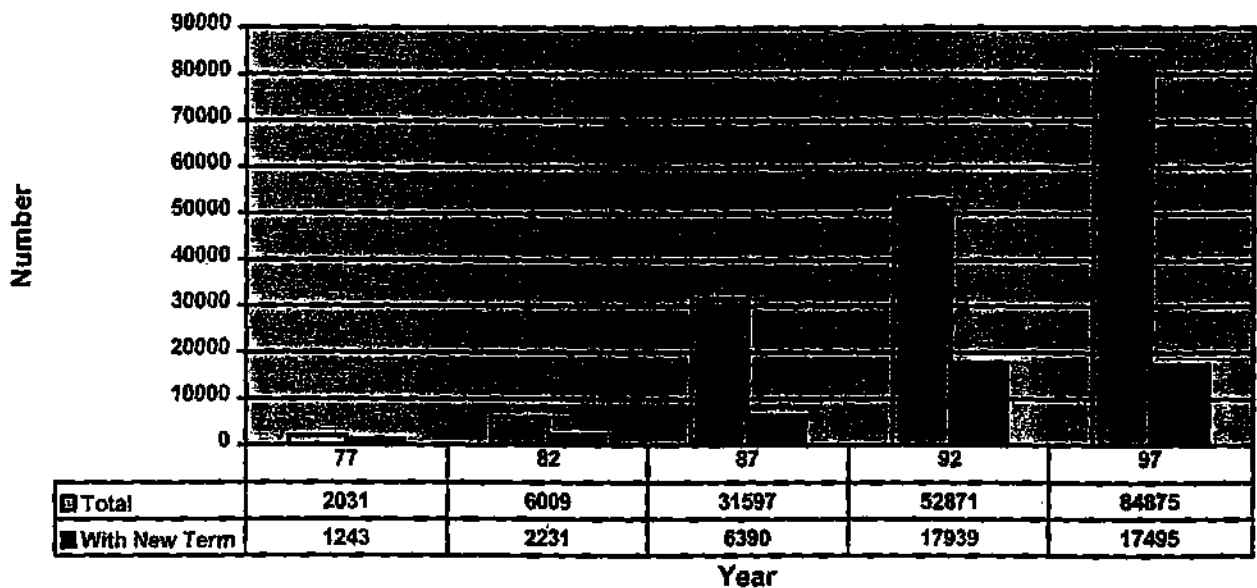
It also became obvious that there was a lack of structured flow of intelligence information, much of which is gathered by officers during their routine course of business and resultant community and arrestee contacts. Additionally, information is often received in "bits and pieces" which may not have obvious value on its own or at the time it is received. The structured flow of information and retrieval is a critical element to effectively targeting career criminals.

Analysis:

The initial analysis of the problem relied upon personal observations and experience, informal interviews or discussions with investigators and other law enforcement personnel, as well as a review of the California Department of Corrections data. The initial review of data revealed that approximately 70% of individuals on parole are returned to prison for a violation of the conditions of their parole or for a new crime. Additionally, analysis revealed that approximately 1,400 parolees reside in Newton Area and, when the number of individuals frequenting the area are included, it is estimated that the area is impacted by approximately 2,000 parolees. The total number of parolees in California currently approximates 112,000. The concentration of parolees in Newton Area approaches five times the statewide average. This limited base of information was significant enough to support a pilot program which resulted in the assignment of four officers to identify, track and arrest those persons who are classified as "career criminals" and continue to commit crimes within the Newton Area.

Subsequent analysis has supported the conclusions based upon limited data. The total number of parolees returned to prison in California for a violation of parole grew from 2,031 in 1977 to 84,875 in 1997, as shown in the following graph, Figure A.

Figure A - Parolees Returned to Prison



The above graph, Figure A, also shows that the number of parolees returned to prison with new terms grew from 1,243 in 1977 to 17,495 in 1997. The California State Department of Justice reported that 46,850 persons were convicted of felony crimes and sent to prison in 1997. This data compared to the data shown in Figure A indicates that 37% of the persons convicted of felony crimes and receiving prison sentences were on active parole.

Additional areas of analysis, which are ongoing, relate to information gathering and information management. It has been the experience of the officers involved in this project that information is poorly developed and disseminated within the division. With over 300 officers working in Newton Area, as well as numerous other specialized units, an automated system for collecting, managing and disseminating information is a critical element.

The total scope of the problem is significant, yet resources, human, physical and financial, are limited. An attempt to target 2,000 active parolees, which is not all inclusive of the career criminal universe, is not a manageable task in light of available resources. Further analysis involved the review of one year of Field Interview Cards (FI's). All FI's of individuals on parole or probation were retrieved, and criminal histories of these individuals were reviewed. This analysis yielded an initial group of approximately 400 career criminals.

Response:

The problem was addressed along two independent axis which were merged in recent months to create the current configuration of the Career Criminal Unit. The Career Criminal Unit was initially launched with the deployment of four officers, two unmarked cars for surveillance and existing Department resources. Based upon the limited resources of the unit, the initial focus of the unit was to locate and effect the arrest of parolees at large and suspects wanted by Newton Area investigators.

The second axis was the development of the automated databases. Community boosters were contacted for assistance in funding the acquisition of hardware and software. A search was

conducted for existing software that would meet the needs. An agreement was made with a software development company and the necessary hardware was assembled.

The current configuration of the Career Criminal Unit includes the deployment of eight officers, three unmarked vehicles and one dual-purpose vehicle. The Newton Identification System includes a video camera linked to a personal computer (PC), digital cameras, a photo scanner, color printers and a number of standard "off-the-shelf and custom proprietary software programs. The strategies which will be employed during 1999 are as follows:

1. Debrief as many persons arrested as possible about other crimes and track information received. A protocol has been implemented and a preliminary database has been developed to track information received. The database will be enhanced and a form will be developed for the use of patrol and specialized units receiving information from arrestees to be forwarded to CCU.
2. CCU will continue to expand its automated database of career criminals, including digital photographs. Color mug books will be produced from this database delineated by profile (criminal history), area of residence or "hangouts" (RD's), and description.
3. Patrol will continue to forward FI's documenting contact with persons on parole or probation to CCU to assist in the identification of the most active career criminals, providing a basis for the most effective deployment of available resources.

4. Information received from the Crime Analysis Detail and detectives, in conjunction with the Department FASTRAC Model, will be utilized to further focus CCU's resources.
5. Relationships with parole and probation will continue to be strengthened, including coordinated multiple-location parole searches.
6. Information regarding career criminals, who are identified by detectives investigating specific crimes, will be forwarded to CCU personnel who will then employ their knowledge of these individuals to effect an early arrest.

Assessment:

It is difficult to quantify the proportionate contribution of CCU's efforts toward the reduction in violent crime in the area, however the impact is believed to be significant. CCU has been responsible for the arrest of numerous violent career criminals. During 1998, the unit was responsible for more than 100 felony arrests, including 25 for murder and attempt murder, five for kidnap, 36 for robbery, 11 for Assault with a Deadly Weapon (ADW) and three for rape. Intelligence gathering efforts and the employment of the Newton Identification System have produced additional significant results. During a recent 45-day period, 102 arrestees were interviewed, with approximately 20% of those interviewed providing valuable information. A total of 11 persons were identified as suspects in ADW and robbery investigations. One of the identifications in a robbery investigation also led to the identification of a suspect in a murder investigation. Numerous staff resource hours have been saved by generating photo line-ups that are created in only minutes, as opposed to the manual process. The consistent quality and larger

image produced by the automated system has resulted in identifications of suspects not previously identified by booking photos. The ability to retrieve current photographs of more suspects soon after the crime, combined with narrowing the field of possible suspects, has increased the ability of victims and witnesses to make identifications.

The unit has only been operating for a short time at its current deployment level and in conjunction with the automated databases, which are still in their infancy. CCU is viewed as a "work in progress" and continues to evolve in concept and implementation. A detailed statistical log has been established to track the production of the unit.

Agency and Officer Information:

1. This program is being expanded in various forms in several other divisions within the Department.
2. Officers received training in problem-oriented policing and/or problem solving before this project began.
3. No additional incentives have been given to police officers who engage in problem solving.
4. Supporting materials were received during SARA Model training.
5. No specific issues/problems were identified with the problem-oriented policing model or the problem-solving model as employed in this initiative.
6. Resources committed to this project have been identified above.
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