

**County of Henrico, Virginia
Division of Police**

**The Herman Goldstein Award
For Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing**

Regional Drug Summit

June 1998

ABSTRACT

The Henrico County Chief of Police conceived the idea for a regional drug summit with his peers in late-1995. The agency was awarded in Spring 1995 a Virginia flow-through Anti-Drug (Abuse Act of 1988) grant for a Narcotics Analyst to begin July 1995. The Chief's Staff approached the State funding source with the idea of a collaborative effort to faring law enforcement personnel together to discuss and start dealing regionally with drug problems in the area. The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services agreed in March 1996 with the proposal to use surplus grant funds from the first year award to pay the expenses for a regional drug summit.

When the Chief learned he could use the State monies for such a summit, he expanded his original idea of eleven jurisdictions to cover the entire central Virginia region. The all-day event was scheduled for May 21, 1996, at the Airport Hilton Hotel in eastern Henrico County. Over 165 representatives of local, State, college, and Federal law enforcement agencies attended, as well as prosecutors from State and Federal court systems.

A follow-up meeting was held August 15, 1996, in and for Henrico County. This half-day meeting brought together the varied entities within Henrico County to discuss and develop strategies on resolving illicit drug use and trafficking within this locality.

See the Appendices for copies of the original proposal requesting State grant funding, slides from the Henrico County Police Division's presentation, an article on the Summit from the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* newspaper. Phase I Report of the 5/96 Drug Summit, an analysis of the Drug Summit Evaluation forms, and an evaluation of the follow-up, Henrico County Drug Summit survey forms.

DESCRIPTION

Scanning and Analysis

The Division of Police's Research and Development Unit and the Information, Intelligence, and Analysis Unit examined the amount of reported narcotic violations and the number of narcotic violation arrests made in the County (and region). This examination was the basis for the Chief's presentation to the Summit. When event presenters were selected and invited, similar analyses were requested from each presenter. The use of handouts, charts, audio-visual displays, and videotapings helped make the presentations at the Drug Summit more meaningful and poignant.

With time as a factor for scheduling presentations and breaks, the agenda for the all-day Regional Drug Summit was full. From 0830 hours to 2100 hours, the event contained presentations, speeches, small discussion groups, and panel discussions. The keynote speaker was the Chief of Operations for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration who laid the foundation for the Summit by discussing the national drug strategy. Each of seven subsequent presentations built on that foundation by emphasizing the drug situation in the particular locality, region, or jurisdiction served (by that agency). These examinations summarily built the arch of knowledge upon which the keystone could be laid by the group discussions to follow.

Four groups were created: agency heads (or equivalent); deputy agency heads (or equivalent); captains and lieutenants (or equivalent); and investigators and support staff (or equivalent). The four groups met for almost two hours to come to agreed-to critical issues in or solution steps of drug usage and trafficking in the central Virginia region.

The first (main) Capital Region Drug Summit and the second (local) Henrico County Drug Summit were evaluated by the Henrico County Division of Police, using feedback supplied by participants. Copies of these evaluations are in the Appendices.

Response

The main problem in law enforcement when dealing with drug trafficking is the inter-jurisdictional nature of the drug trade. Plants may be grown in a neighboring locality or in another country. Processing and trafficking of the raw materials requires circumventing legal authorities — from local police to national Customs to specific drug enforcement agencies and/or task forces. This circumvention often entails violence, graft, and the corruption of entire segments of the involved communities. Then the processed material (illicit drug) must be sold to those who need, want, or are seduced to it. This selling, also, must circumvent legal and illegal entities.

The law enforcement agency trying to keep illicit drugs out of its community has to understand a great deal about the drug growing, processing, trafficking, and selling mechanisms. The agency, also, must be able to work closely with collegial, albeit esoteric agencies, some Federal and some State. In the central Virginia area, there are at least sixteen local police agencies with several more specific law enforcement groups, the State Police, six distinct Federal agencies, fifteen sheriff's offices, and numerous prosecutorial offices and parties. To work effectively with all of these different interest groups is a full-time job in itself; to fight drug usage and trafficking can get lost easily. Therefore, the idea of the central Virginia Regional Drug Summit was simple: bring all of these actors together to meet and interact with one another. Then, we would follow-up on that interaction with common policy and strategy.

As those 165 representatives came together and shared common problems, the purpose of the first Drug Summit was met. Since that first gathering, many solutions were advanced:

- Richmond Metropolitan Narcotics Interdiction Task Force; established to interdict and arrest narcotics couriers using public transportation — rail, air, bus, and parcel post.
- Renewed commitment to Richmond DEA Task Force by participating jurisdictional and increased co-operation by those who cannot assign full-time representative investigators to it.
- Renewed commitment by area Chiefs of Police to meet monthly to keep lines of communication open.
- Encouragement of line officers and criminal investigators to work closer with colleagues in neighboring localities when drug cases appear to cross political lines.
- Follow-up local drug summits (like Henrico County's on August 15, 1996).
- Follow-up annual regional drug summits.

On March 7, 1998, a cross-section of Henrico County Division of Police sworn officers met to review and develop drug and crime strategies. Officers and first-line

supervisors were divided into five workgroups, each one tasked to identify and make a presentation of issues and strategies. Afterwards, several of the group's recommendations were implemented immediately.

Assessment

Achieving the goal of bringing people together for a common purpose: the Capitol Region Drug Summit was a success. In recent decades, this was the first time that local, State, and Federal law enforcement agencies were brought together in one place for harmony, sharing, and consensus building. Although each agency had its own interpretation of the "To serve and protect" motto and its own constituency, these various and diverse entities came together for one purpose: how can *all* law enforcement in this area work in concert to stop illicit drug usage and trafficking?

From the camaraderie shown by the end of the event's daylong session to the renewed monthly meetings of Chiefs of Police, the Summit exceeded its expectations. The sheer amount of information (on estimated illicit drug usage and trafficking in and through the central Virginia region) given at the Summit removed some of the barriers between agencies towards full co-operation. By working singularly, law enforcement agencies in this region have a fragmented approach to narcotics law violations. By working together, these same agencies have produced significant increases in drug-related arrests throughout the area. Area-wide interdiction efforts have netted great increases in drug and asset seizures, drug and related arrests, and take-downs of drug kingpins.

The Metropolitan Richmond Drug Grand Jury — requiring adjudicated drug offenders to give the name or names of their suppliers — has proved quite valuable in taking down the larger dealers in the area. The information supplied has assisted law enforcement intelligence personnel to put together significant conspiracy cases, even two within the public school system in Henrico County.

Follow-up from the Drug Summit was in two areas:

1. Renewed commitment by the area chiefs of police and sheriffs to meet monthly (in smaller groups) and quarterly (in larger groups) to share information and strategies.
2. Regional approaches to drug interdiction through mutual effort task forces, grand juries, and specific case management meetings.

Institutionalization

The Drug Summit resulted in a lasting change in how this region approaches a multi-jurisdictional problem like drug use and trafficking; a problem which crosses political, ideological, social, racial, ethnic, and religious boundaries. Drug usage can affect everyone indirectly due to the high cost to society and to communities for the crimes committed to further the addiction and for productive and constructive lives lost to that addiction.

The Drug Summit idea can be replicated throughout this country when law enforcement agencies put aside idiosyncratic differences and agree to work together to resolve and solve a problem larger than the individual parties involved.

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