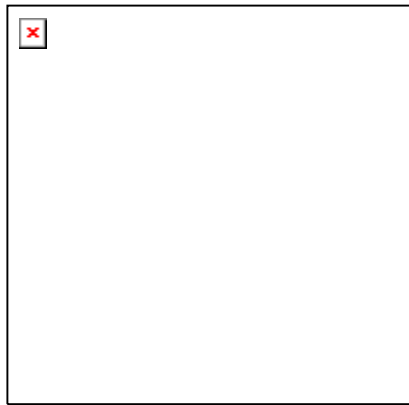


Houston Police Department

Problem-Oriented Policing Project



**Southwest Division
Burglary Apprehension Team
(B. A. T.)**

Summary

The Southwest Division of the Houston Police Department is responsible for a large geographic area that includes the Astrodome/Reliant Stadium complex, home of the Houston Texans Football team, the Houston Rodeo, and a convention center. The area includes mostly single-family homes. The patrol area is broken down into 2 of the 20 patrol districts for the city of Houston. The area is further broken down into 8 patrol beats. The division is responsible for 52 square miles and approximately 180,000 residents.

The one beat in the Southwest Division area of responsibility that continuously has shown an inordinate amount of felony crime, is the area known as 16E40's beat. This area, located in the farthest location southwest of the city, is located in a county (Fort Bend) separate from most of the city (Harris County). The location contains mostly small single-family homes. The economically disadvantaged neighborhood has traditionally suffered high crime rates, but has recently seen an influx of new residents from the Hurricane Katrina evacuation, settle in quickly-assembled prefabricated houses. Many of the residents do not have burglar alarms, which gives the criminal a target rich environment, especially when they observe their neighbors leave for work. The area has a number of pawn shops in operation, as well as auto body shops and scrap yards. The area has a major highway bordering it on one side, and the other three sides are bordered by two different cities (Missouri City and Pearland) and unincorporated county area. Inter-jurisdictional issues also favor the criminal element.

Scanning

The Crime Analysis officers noticed a large spike in the number of daytime residential burglaries in the 16 District, especially in 16E40's beat. Detailed information was relayed to the Captain of the Southwest Division, and he immediately met with the dayshift patrol lieutenant to combat the problem. The lieutenant selected his most veteran sergeant and together they scanned the data for information and came up with a problem-solving solution to decide what the exact problem was and how it would best be attacked. The sergeant and lieutenant reviewed the crime analysis data.

Analysis

Immediate action was necessary, so the analysis was done expeditiously. The Crime Analysis officers were able to pinpoint three specific locations where a high number of daytime residential burglaries were being committed. This area did not seem to suffer from a higher rate of other felony crimes such as robbery or murder, just burglary. Maps were made to highlight the specific areas, and to predict the area where the criminals would most likely hit again, and probably lived. Available data such as registered parolees and sex offenders was reviewed. The hours of the program and the workdays were then selected. The day shift Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. was chosen, since the crime was highest during the hours of 7 a.m. and 2 p.m. The early start would give the officers the chance to get a thorough briefing and speak with night shift officers about any suspects or incidents that might require their attention. The sergeant and lieutenant then reviewed the various officers' work history, internal affairs history, and arrest data to choose the most well-rounded, proactive officers available. The supervisors wanted proactive officers, but were also looking for veteran leadership and street skills.

Due to the need to respond to the problem immediately, the Burglary Attack Team (B. A. T.) later known as the Burglary Apprehension Team, was formed on October 23, 2007, and began the next day.

Response

Seven proactive officers from the dayshift were selected to start the program the following day. The officers were well known by their peers as hard working and dedicated. Within the call for service loop, it is difficult to do much proactive policing. The officers and sergeant, a 33- year veteran, all had significant time on the department and took immediate ownership of the project. The project was devised to have two major parts: saturating the pinpointed areas with relentless officers and a separate sergeant to develop and run felony warrants.

The first part of the project would include having a Crime Analysis officer come in at 5 a.m. daily, to give current information and look for crime trends. The sergeant would then hold a daily briefing with the officers. Data provided by crime analysis was dissected, and activities and responses were discussed. Immediate dissemination of this information would allow officers to optimize decision-making and utilization of their specific skills. The sergeants would be out on the street continuously, monitoring and coaching the officers. The lieutenant would also spend time daily in the beat, assisting the officers. The officers would use marked patrol cars and those already trained in the department tact team school, would use unmarked “cool” cars to provide surveillance.

The officers needed to be in the geographic area ready to race to a location, surround the house or location, and use all available resources such as helicopters, K-9, and later Crime Scene and fingerprint units, to catch, charge, and prosecute dangerous felons.

Pawn shops were targeted by team members in both uniformed and plainclothes capacities. The computerized list of frequent neighborhood pawners was investigated and used to figure out who could be fencing stolen property.

Another important step in the program was to conduct follow-up investigations immediately and thoroughly, whereas the officers in the call-for-service loop might complete an offense report on a crime, and it would be investigated downtown a few days later. The Burglary and Theft Division was contacted and a partnership was formed. The lieutenants concerned agreed that interviewing at the Fort Bend County Jail for burglars would be conducted in a more consistent manner. (The jail is over 30 miles from police headquarters) This resulted in a higher clearance rate of burglaries and other offenses.

The investigator with the most experience in this part of town was directed to focus on these cases. He had previously been a patrol officer in 16 District and understood the nuances of this particular part of town. The Pawn Shop Detail was also contacted and agreed to work directly with the officers.

The other part of the program focused on running and re-running warrants. Often warrants are run when they are new, but after a few unsuccessful attempts, are filed at the county jail. The sergeant would gather intelligence on the wanted suspect, and then go out with the officers and attempt to locate them. For those suspects that were not captured, the officers canvassed the area looking to develop new information on the suspect's whereabouts.

Interagency cooperation was another focal point of the project. This part of town is unique in that our area involves two counties. Besides the Sheriff's Department, these counties have their own Constables Offices that also perform traditional law enforcement functions. The mass transit system has its own police department, as does both independent school districts.

A monthly meeting hosted by rotating agencies was set up to discuss similar crimes, crooks, and techniques. At the first meeting, our officers discovered they were looking for the same suspect as the Harris County Sheriff's Department. The suspect was eventually arrested and then later rearrested for burglary of a habitation. The Crime Analysis officer was our liaison to the interagency effort and he also created a tip line for local residents to use to pass along crime information in a timely fashion.

During the program, the officers and sergeant attended the department's tactical team training school, which assisted the team in working together as a unit and surveillance activities. This has further enhanced the skill and knowledge base of those officers involved in the program.

Another part of the program involved the media. The use of the police-citizen partnership to solve problems was quite successful. These neighborhoods include many older residents who are home during the day and are the officers' best source of timely crime information. The B. A. T. program was featured twice on local television. The second show, known as, "The Wheels of Justice," was able to film the arrest of three burglary suspects who had just been involved in a crime spree that included three consecutive kick-burglaries. The victims were interviewed and provided a positive snapshot of the officers' work, and highlighted the partnership between the police and citizens. (See enclosed digital video disc) The team's accomplishments were documented at a Chief of Police press conference. The other agencies were a part of the program and the community was once again encouraged to participate in keeping their neighborhoods safe.

Assessment

The results were observed starting on the first day. Using the most recent crime analysis data, the officers were sent out to three specific areas. Within the first two hours of patrolling, a male was observed throwing a VCR over the fence of a house. When confronted by the officer, the suspect took off running. With the support of the team and a helicopter, the suspect was taken into custody after a lengthy foot chase. The suspect had burglarized a large number of his neighbors' homes. Crime in the area dropped significantly, with only one residential burglary on the block since that day.

The program's direction was monitored and adjusted when necessary, but time was given to observe the strengths and weaknesses of the program and the officers. Reports were originally documented up the chain of command daily, and information was relayed to the beat officers daily at roll call. A memo board in the roll call room was used to pass information between shifts and squads. The daily crime bulletin was posted in more conspicuous locations at the station and reviewed by the desk sergeant during roll call.

The way in which business was conducted by officers, the community, and criminals had fundamentally changed. The officers were able to go back to the part they most enjoyed about being police officers: proactively looking for criminals and having the opportunity to follow-up the cases. Officers were able to take ownership of the neighborhood and knew that they would have a large part in the decision of how and where to operate. The community could finally feel more comfortable when they left the house for work. This has led to a better quality of life for the citizens. The criminals could no longer operate freely without fear of being arrested and prosecuted. Numerous in-progress crimes were thwarted and property returned to its rightful owner.

The quantitative results are as follows (October 24, 2007 to May 26, 2008):

- **Burglars Arrested in the act: 27**
- **Burglars Arrested on Open Warrants and/or through further investigation: 23**
- **Murder Arrests (including warrants and investigation): 5**
- **Possession of Control Substance (Narcotics):84**
- **Total Felony Arrests (including in statistics above): 137**
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- **Arrests for Unauthorized Use of Motor Vehicle (stolen vehicle): 6**
- **Arrests for Burglary of Motor Vehicle: 11**
- **Miscellaneous warrants(DWI, theft, assault): 49**
- **Total Class A and B Misdemeanor Arrests (included in statistics above): 158**

- **Total Class C (city ordinance) Arrests: 27**
- **Total Citations (curfew, traffic violations, public intoxication, etc.) issued: 197**
- **Total Municipal Warrants: 231**
- **Total S.E.T.C.I.C. (Southeast Texas Criminal Information Center) warrants: 51**

As previously mentioned, the Chief held a press conference in regards to this program. The B.A.T. was selected for a Unit Citation to be presented by the Chief at an Awards Ceremony. One of the officers was a runner-up for South Command Officer of the Year for his actions with the squad.

Other observed results of the program included better synergy and cooperation between our agency and others. The tactical team and the B. A. T. were also able to work together to combat these crimes. Numerous leads relating to various crimes were developed and followed up on. A marijuana grow house was identified and closed down. Stolen property was recovered from pawnshops. The use of the plate reading police car helped track down some wanted vehicles.

Lastly, the visual deterrent of having saturated marked patrol units in the area, had a lasting effect on the community.

The effort was able to accomplish a number of the Houston Police Department's Goals: (dated September 27, 2004)

- **Enhance neighborhood safety by addressing crime, disorder, and traffic mobility issues**
- **Instill public confidence and trust by enhancing professionalism while providing opportunities for employee growth and development**
- **Improve customer satisfaction by enhancing quality services through community and government partnerships**

**Southwest Patrol
Burglary Apprehension Team**

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Captain D. J. Schindler

Lieutenant R. S. Lakind
Sergeant W. D. Chapman

Sergeant J. C. Carradero
Senior Police Officer J.P. Hicks
Senior Police Officer J. R. Watson
Senior Police Officer R. F. Benavides
Senior Police Officer J. J. Sparks
Senior Police Officer R. A. Walker
Senior Police Officer C. Pena Jr.
Senior Police Officer T. Canton
Senior Police Officer D. D. Richardson
Senior Police Officer J. M. Aldape
Senior Police Officer M. A. Flores

Crime Analysis

Sergeant C. Yorloff
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