

**PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON 21ST CENTURY POLICING
LISTENING SESSION 02/14/15 – TRAINING & EDUCATION**

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Thank you for the opportunity to address the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. My testimony includes the contextualized themes of more than 40 years of police service, including 25 years as a chief executive. I am a member of the International Chiefs of Police Executive Committee and the chair of IACP's Education and Training Committee.

I will explore several crucial questions today: Who are the police and what do we expect of them? How do we innovatively train, lead and manage our police? What about the hot topics of mental health and critical incidents? What else is needed for us to accelerate improvements in community-police engagement?

Who are the police and what do we expect of them?

The police do not exist to stop cars, write tickets, make arrests and apprehend criminals. The police exist to prevent crime. The police exist to help society maintain order. The police exist to do "something" about those "things" that should not be happening but are happening right now and about which "something" should be done by "someone." The police exist to intervene in acts of disorder, crime and violence on behalf of their public in the most diverse, challenged democracy on earth.

A free people expect a police presence that allows them to pursue the American dream and raise their children in safety.

The mission of the Milwaukee Police Department is, "In partnership with the community, we will create and maintain neighborhoods capable of sustaining civic life." This, at its core, is a form of nation building right here at home. Unlike the military, our frontline staff are authorized leaders. They are not privates following orders. We expect them to be ethical decision-makers not for fear of being caught, but out of a chosen responsibility for both the culture of which they are a part and for creating relationships to fight crime, violence, fear and disorder.

What kind of person can handle the emergency, the rapid response, the crime fighting, the communication, and the constant urgent need to build neighborhood capacity? A leader. A flexible, dynamic, insightful, thoughtful, ethical leader who is able to partner with community members to develop the informal social control and social capital required for a civil society to flourish. This takes a leader every bit as sophisticated as a Peace Corps member or a member of the Special Forces in some village in Afghanistan. We attract those people, but for too long, we have tried to train them differently than we have tried to use them.

How do we innovatively train, lead and manage our police?

We hire young, energetic, idealistic, morally driven people as our brand new police officers and teach them to forget the lessons their mothers and fathers taught them from birth: don't stare; mind your own business; don't ask embarrassing questions. It is contrary to their existence, and if we do not recognize this contradiction and account for it, we will do lasting damage to our officers, our agencies and our communities.

It is not about body-worn cameras and more effective sergeants. It is all about values, communication and relationship building, both inside the organization and throughout our neighborhoods.

We moved from a rules based organization in which we promulgated a rule prohibiting certain behavior every time someone made a mistake to a values based organization that recast its recognition and discipline systems around core values essential to the success of the organization and its members.

In Milwaukee, all of our officers are training in Fair and Impartial Policing, a curriculum designed to acknowledge the existence of unconscious bias in all human beings. We take this issue very seriously. It is not a new phenomenon, but our profession's willingness to tackle it is noteworthy. It is our core Standard Operating Procedure: SOP 001. One of the handful of national instructor trainers is a member of my executive command staff. The willingness to accept and continuously communicate the impact of our biases on our decision-making is the foundation of every single advance in police education.

For too many years American policing has trained entry level officers as though they were order following privates rather than decision making officers. Recognizing that the police needed officer-like training, the IACP modified a West Point leadership course and created the Leadership in Policing Organizations (LPO) model. I was the pilot site when I was the police chief in Arlington and in Milwaukee we have made it a core component of organizational and cultural change. LPO also has applications for leading community groups in developing the capacity of residents to work together with the police on common problems. To date, more than a third of our line staff and nearly all of our supervisors have completed the course.

Early in my tenure in Milwaukee, I realized that we did a poor job of engaging the great majority of children who were *not* in trouble with their parents, schools or the police and who *are* the next generation of civic leaders. I asked a team of officers to develop a program that would educate our young people in the role of police in society, their responsibilities as citizens to work with the police and the rightful expectations to be treated fairly and equitably. It has blossomed into a national award winning curriculum that engages children in our neighborhoods around the mutual relationship between police, residents, businesses and neighborhoods. To date, 1,647 children have graduated from the STOP program, providing thousands of hours of opportunity for real-life

conversations between young residents and their police about their respective expectations. This effort has been evaluated by social scientists and is being replicated in cities throughout the country. We are very proud of this program and continue to expand its breadth in Milwaukee. My hope is that a police academy class in the next year or two will include our first installment of STOP graduates as recruit officers in our city.

Realizing that police agencies throughout the country serve as the *de facto* primary (but often silent) agency of economic and community development, we have dedicated substantial effort and resources to highlighting these efforts. In addition to having a senior staff member assigned to oversee our community development partnerships, we are one of just three advisor sites for a COPS-funded project with LISC to develop a community development training curriculum for police officers.

This counter-intuitive engagement in community development is further evidenced by our active engagement in two federal programs: the Building Neighborhood Capacity Program (BNCP) and the Byrne Criminal Justice Initiative (BCJI). The core mission of building neighborhoods capable of sustaining civic life requires neighborhoods that have the capacity to problem-solve in partnership with their government agencies and these two programs provide technical assistance and match dollars for true, unvarnished community partnership work in some of our most challenged neighborhoods. We are the only city in the country to receive both awards. We are the only city in the country in which the police department was the author and fiscal agent for the grants.

The core mission of the BNCP is to help neighborhoods develop community capacity – the knowledge, skills, relationships, interactions and organizational resources that enable residents, police, civic leaders, public and private sectors and local organizations to create comprehensive neighborhood revitalization plans. A team of police officers and supervisors are assigned specific responsibility for the BNCP neighborhoods and are charged with coordinating the partners in problem solving efforts to reduce crime, fear of crime, and quality of life issues. This becomes a problem solving process that aligns expectations between police and community.

What about mental health?

We respond to over 8,000 calls for service involving persons suffering from mental illness each year. We convey over 5,000 people to a psychiatric hospital, not for criminal prosecution but for their own safety.

Recognizing that all of our officers will benefit from receiving the most up-to-date skill training, we have committed to training all of our nearly 1900 commissioned staff. There are fiscal and opportunity costs associated with this commitment, all of which I am gladly willing to bear.

Mechanically, we are removing the training silos to ensure that the so-called “hard” and “soft” sides of policing are taught in concert. Mental health courses and lessons from

Critical Incident Team classes are combined with weapons training because, unfortunately, many of our uses of force involve people suffering from some form of mental illness.

At the same time, we are consciously addressing the historic mindset that has been trained into police officers for generations: we are changing from “I must go home at all costs” to “we must go home at all costs.” Tactical disengagement can work. It is all situational specific. It is not implying that police have a duty to retreat in the face of danger. In truth, police officers have a societally-imposed duty to engage in the face of danger.

Two of my officers recently chose to disengage when they were lawfully and procedurally authorized to use deadly force against a mentally ill man armed with a knife. They ensured their safety, the safety of bystanders, and ultimately the safe disarming of a dangerous person. After the fact, they were questioned by their peers and have now produced a video being used to explain and discuss their decision-making with the entire department.

This is counter-cultural to our profession, but we have to address it. We need to maintain the willingness to constantly reexamine our training and protocols around the appropriate use of mitigating factors in deadly force situations.

What now?

Critical incidents will happen. No police department is immune from a critical incident that will challenge the trust of the community or be opportunistically used to marginalize the police department. We have to recognize that police are people of good will doing the best they can in a volatile environment with ambiguous circumstances in which sometimes things go wrong. When those things happen, it does not mean that the profession, the agency, or the individual officer is fundamentally flawed.

You can succeed at everything we’ve discussed and conceived of and still have critical incidents. Remember that we are the most violent and most heavily armed Western society. Police uses of force are the most publicly scrutinized government action, and they should be. Uses of force against human beings - no matter how righteous and justified - are never easy to watch. They are never pleasant. They are also not entirely avoidable.

Uses of force will occur. Errors in judgment will occur. Acts of malfeasance will occur. Eliminating the likelihood of bad outcomes in policing - both righteous and otherwise - is a fool’s errand. While we absolutely must hold ourselves accountable for these situations, they alone cannot drive the discussion on American policing.

The federal government has periodically played an essential role in the development of the profession of policing in America. I am in many ways a legacy of that intervention as I received my Master’s degree courtesy of the Law Enforcement Education Program which was an offspring of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration of the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. Indeed that program educated the future leaders of American policing, those who would implement the community-based, problem-solving strategies of the 1990’s that were also funded by strong and thoughtful federal education programs administered

through the Office Community Oriented Policing Services. We are now at a stage where the federal government can have a role to play building on prior successes and the advancements the profession has made over the last several decades in professionalizing itself. I would recommend the following: First when there is a local crisis, there is very seldom any contextual data to draw a distinction as to whether or not this incident is an aberration or a symbol of the dysfunction of an entire organization. The federal government needs to do a much better job of having central depositories of data collection for police uses of force, particularly police uses of deadly force as well as for deaths in police custody.

It would also be helpful to get a better sense of the what the citizens of this nation think about their policing if there were standardized surveys that could be given across jurisdictions for comparison purposes to identify the levels and approval of the police in every community in America. Identify those gaps in approval between majority and minority groups that should be targets for special attention for improving the perceptions of police impartiality and fairness. There are no such instruments now and there are no reliable gauges for when police are improving their connections with disadvantaged or minority groups.

Finally, I think it would be extremely useful if the federal government encouraged innovation in the development in the culture of leadership in police organizations. Building on the successes of the LPO and similar models, there is rich opportunity to acknowledge the complexity of the police role and the extraordinary amounts of discretion to perform it successfully and the requirement that discretion be exercised in a fair, impartial, and unbiased manner. That will be achieved through training in ethical decision making. Officers will perform ethically not because they are armed with body cameras, but rather because they have inculcated a set of values in a peer group that is disapproving of misconduct and biased policing.