

The President's Task Force On 21st Century Policing

Topic: Mass Demonstrations

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The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's (CMPD) overall philosophy during the Democratic National Convention (DNC) was to provide a safe environment for attendees, citizens, and officers so that the democratic process could occur while providing everyone an opportunity to peacefully have their voices heard.

CMPD wanted to ensure that the DNC was able to tell its "story" without the security operations and interaction with demonstrators by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department being the focus.

With an estimated attendance of 35,000 convention attendees, 6,000 delegates, 20 governors, thousands of security personnel and 15,000 media on hand over a five day period, there was always the potential for mass demonstrations. However, due to nearly 18 months of planning, CMPD was well prepared for any demonstrations whether planned or unplanned to occur.

The following are fundamental recommendations other law enforcement agencies, regardless of size, should consider when handling mass demonstrations.

Recommendation#1: Implementing Comprehensive Training Strategies

Having officers properly trained for mass demonstrations is crucial. For the DNC, Mobile Field Force (MFF) training began in August 2011. Twelve hundred CMPD officers and over 400 officers from outside agencies in various support capacities were trained. The overall focus was on facilitating peaceful and lawful demonstrations by using tactics that kept demonstrators, the public, and officers safe.

To ensure a common operational picture, all outside agencies fell under the policies and command of CMPD. At times, this structure entailed outside agency supervisors of a higher rank reporting to a CMPD supervisor of a lower rank.

Training methods for police personnel included online delivery, tabletop exercises, field exercises and classroom lectures for internal and external participants. As a result, 65 training blocks of instruction, totaling more than 74,000 hours, were covered.

The scope of this training encompassed legal guidelines: First Amendment Rights, Passive and Peaceful Demonstrations, Use of Less Than Lethal Force, and Extraordinary Event Ordinance Training. Prior to delivering this instruction, CMPD consulted with local, state, federal and community partners to ensure a broad range of issues for each topic had been addressed.

In addition to training patrol officers, other large demonstrations were leveraged, such as the NATO Convention in Chicago, the Republican National Convention in Tampa, and tabletop

exercises for CMPD commanders to observe and practice strategies for dealing with demonstrations.

Recommendation#2: Using Resources Efficiently

To sustain any long term demonstration, an agency must capitalize on local and regional resources to staff the demonstration while still providing daily police services. Through the development of agency partnerships ahead of time, technology use, and multi-agency training, this can be accomplished.

This training should include command staff, Mobile Field Force units (bikes, horses, motors and field officers), and Public Information Officers. Incorporating these entities into the comprehensive strategy will help maximize resources and sustain a multi-day event.

Furthermore, having command staff members visible and actively involved on the streets during the event demonstrates to everyone that supervision and decisions can be accomplished immediately.

Agency Partnerships

Approximately 2,850 outside law enforcement personnel from 11 states and Washington, D.C. were used for the DNC. CMPD partners included 125 law enforcement agencies, with several providing more than 100 officers each. To ensure accountability, agencies were kept together by deploying a ratio of nine officers to one sergeant.

Mobile Field Force

CMPD deployed over 1,000 officers, 300 bicycles and 50 dual sport motorcycles to Mobile Field Force operations along with hundreds more that were trained and working in another capacity if needed. However, the ultimate goal was to be prepared for all types of security incidences, while keeping the majority of CMPD specialized and tactical assets out of public view.

Strategic Implementation of Technology

With one hundred twenty new cameras purchased for the DNC and access to nearly 500 other cameras, including those from the North Carolina Department of Transportation, Charlotte Department of Transportation, and private businesses, CMPD had a global operational picture.

Other CMPD technology included digital radios and license plate readers. Shot Spotter, which instantly and precisely pinpoints gunfire with accurate location data, also was used.

Recommendation #3: Developing After Action

As with any mass demonstration, after action is always important. The CNA Group was contracted by the Bureau of Justice Assistance to develop a best practices document to guide other cities hosting future conventions. Some of their observations included:

- The use of technology is a force multiplier and provides aerial oversight of operations.
- The use of intel to pre-position officers where demonstrations may occur were valuable.

- Deploying police leadership in the field who could engage demonstrators and quickly diffuse unruly behavior resulted in peaceful marches.
- Developing a system that would better track and report on officer assignments would have been helpful.
- Refine a plan that would streamline and track all personnel during demobilization.
- Be prepared to provide logistical support to all personnel working; to include feeding, transportation, lodging, and tracking of time for salary reimbursement.

In conclusion, preparation and communication are crucial. However, there is no guarantee as to how a mass demonstration will eventually turn out. If law enforcement agencies start with the end goal in mind of providing a means for demonstrators to express their First Amendment rights, while ensuring the protection of those in attendance, then they will be able to handle any size problem should it arise. Again, preparedness is paramount.