

The BJA Executive Session on

# Police Leadership

2013

*The BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership* is a multi-year endeavor started in 2010 with the goal of developing innovative thinking that would help create police leaders uniquely qualified to meet the challenges of a changing public safety landscape.

In support of an integrated approach to creating safe and viable communities across America, the project directors recruited 20+ principals from a range of disciplines. The principals, in turn, led national field teams of practitioners focused on the work of policing and the organization of the future.

To gain new insights on leadership, the *BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership* engaged police chiefs in documenting their own paths and invited leaders to participate in various audio and video forums to tell their stories and discuss the future of policing and police leadership.

Please visit our website, <http://bjaleader.org>, to learn more about this project and to access a broad array of interactive, multimedia resources.

The principals are supported in their work by a team that includes project co-directors Darrel W. Stephens and Bill Geller, project strategist Nancy McKeon, and BJA Senior Policy Advisor Steve Edwards.

## Policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Leadership Challenges and New Realities

Private Security

by

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### Introduction

Police leaders have always faced difficult challenges in the effort to create and maintain safe communities. From the widespread civil disobedience of the 1960s and '70s to the Occupy Movement that began in 2011, and from gang warfare to Internet predators, the police have always needed to adapt to changing political, social and economic circumstances.

Some changes have been transformative in shaping contemporary policing strategies. Advances in technology, improved education and training, and increasingly sophisticated analytical modeling have all had significant positive impacts on the profession. Other changes have presented daunting challenges for police leaders. Managing communication in the hyper-connected world of social media is testing most agencies' abilities to balance transparency and investigative integrity. And, as departments

wrestle with the most significant funding cuts that current leaders have ever seen, a growing number of police observers suggest that current policing strategies in America are simply not sustainable because of the cost (Gascon and Foglesong 2010). As the police grapple with a diminished ability to deliver services, communities and businesses have turned to private security to improve their sense of safety. This trend leaves high-poverty neighborhoods, where crime is concentrated, even more vulnerable because police cannot be as attentive and cannot afford to fill the gaps.

The leadership challenges these issues present led the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to create the Executive Session on Police Leadership. Its focus is on developing the quality police leaders that America's communities need in the 21st century. One way of developing policing leaders is to identify the challenges they are likely to encounter and provide them with insight that might help address these challenges more effectively. The Executive Session has developed a series of brief white papers to describe the challenges and realities. This paper addresses private security.

## Private Security Growth

Fueled by increasing crime and fear, private and corporate security have been growth industries for the past 40 years. Despite recent declines in crime throughout the country, that growth is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the number of guards to grow by 20%, from 1 million to 1.2 million by 2020 (PRWeb 2012). Much of the growth is expected to come from private security doing jobs that were once held by public law enforcement (Stein 2013).

While public police increased by 25% from 1992 to 2008 (Reaves 2012), hiring slowed and then began to sharply decline with the economic downturn in 2008 as local governments looked for ways to balance their budgets. The number of public police is shrinking and not expected to return to pre-2008 levels for some time, if ever.

[I]t is not simply the case that private security is filling a void left by the public police. Today, it is more accurate to suggest that policing is carried out by a network of public police and private security that is often overlapping, complementary and mutually supportive. Within this context, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between public and private responsibilities.

Law Commission of Canada, 2013

The declining resource base of the public police will require new and different partnerships in the future. The once bright line between public and private forces has blurred and their paths are crossing much more frequently, and in ways not previously contemplated.

## Current Realities

Guards, alarms, access control, investigators, lighting, and other security measures have become routine household or business operating expenses. Increasingly commonplace, as well, are tracking or surveillance the activities of employees, business competitors, caregivers, and potential terrorists. In some cases, private security companies do things police do not—and should not—do as agents of government, such as enforcing rules on private property. In other cases, like responding to alarms, the police have been happy to relinquish responsibilities. However, this shift raises questions of how long people who can

afford the extra security measures will be willing to support the public police, and how funding will be divided among the various entities charged with keeping them safe.

The threat of terrorist attacks has presented new challenges for both the public police and private security. Eighty-five percent of America's critical infrastructure is owned by the private sector (9/11 Commission 2004). Protecting this infrastructure is a shared responsibility of private security and public police that requires effective partnerships.

The alarm industry is a source of tension for the police who find themselves burdened with responding to increasing numbers of false alarm calls in large part because they have consistently recommended installing alarms in homes and businesses. To address the drain on resources, the police have attempted (with sporadic success) to implement "verified response" policies that require confirmation of a criminal intrusion before the police will respond. While it is appropriate to consider procedures that minimize the number of false alarms, many policies give little consideration to the deterrent value of alarms. Do alarm systems lose their value as a deterrent if police respond only when they are certain a crime has occurred? Will the public continue to invest in alarm systems?

As private and corporate security grow, so too does the complexity of the work. And because increasingly sophisticated technology is playing an ever-increasing role in protecting physical facilities, in access control, and in conducting investigations, the professionalism of those in the industry must keep pace. This means that private and corporate security could become serious competitors of public police agencies in recruiting new employees.

## **Challenges for Police Leaders**

Police leaders face significant challenges in achieving the important goals of preventing crime and providing a sense of safety. Private security is an integral part of achieving those goals today and will be even more important in the future. These challenges include:

- Developing relationships with private and corporate security providers that are in the best interests of the public.
- Finding the appropriate balance between public police and private security as the funding challenges for police continue to grow.
- Defining the value proposition for a career in public policing vs. private security.
- Maintaining relevancy in the fraud and cybercrime world. The majority of credit card frauds are not reported to the police, and the banks repay the majority of victims' losses. The Internet has become indispensable to commerce and a tool criminals exploit.
- Creating an environment in which information can be readily exchanged between police and private security to achieve mutual goals while maintaining respect for privacy and protecting criminal intelligence information.

## Developing Police Leaders

The increasingly important roles of private and corporate security operations offers opportunities for developing future leaders. Aspiring public police leaders could:

- Review policies that cover areas in which there may be overlap between police and private security.
- Collaborate with private and corporate security personnel to identify problems and opportunities for partnerships.
- Participate in local American Society for Industrial Security meetings.
- Invite private security professionals to speak to departmental training classes.
- Create a police–private security committee to explore opportunities for collaborative partnerships.
- Develop joint training and educational opportunities.
- Engage various sectors of society in thinking through the complexities of who in this new century should legitimately and productively provide safety and security in a free society—and “who will watch the watchmen?”

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