

## **Enhancing Law Enforcement Training FLETC and University of Southern Mississippi Develop a Way**

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Ships with sails were replaced by steamboats. Transistor radios evolved from those with vacuum tubes. The computer has progressed from mainframes to minicomputers, desktops, laptops and now wireless and handhelds. After the Internet altered written publishing it began changing the music industry forever. These advancements occurred because those within these occupations committed themselves to constant improvement. Consequently, products and services became more effective and efficient.

Policing has embraced many crucial changes during the last twenty-five years. Herman Goldstein's "Policing a Free Society" served as a catalyst for change in 1977. James Q. Wilson and George Kelling revolutionized policing with their "Broken Windows" concept in 1982. The advent of DNA, AFIS and the Internet facilitated professionalism. Ironically, although few functions are more critical, the delivery of training has remained dormant. Never has there been such need to change.

Certainly nothing should replace classroom interaction with a skilled and motivated instructor, but there are two opportunities we must immediately seize. All 17,000 agencies should immediately start taking advantage of the incredible opportunity the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) offers through its 2,300 web-based courses. The thousands of agencies whose officers receive very little training will benefit greatly. Second, highly realistic simulation training has remained focused on use of force. We should rapidly expand video simulation to other topics and advance "scenario branching" to provide officers with greater decision-making experience. The University of Southern Mississippi, Department of Criminal Justice is taking the lead on simulation training.

### **Need More Complex, Difficult and Vital**

Contemporary American police officers face challenges, risks, obstacles, and difficulties of which officers of past generations could never have conceived. Today's workforce must possess the skills and knowledge to interact with a multitude of religions, races, ethnic traditions, languages, and biases. Yesterday's officer would be naïve and lacking the abilities required for an America in which the value of human life is so insignificant to gangs and terrorists.

The impact of domestic and foreign terrorism has forever changed the role of a police officer. The crucial question is whether policing will meet this unparalleled challenge with decisive, sound leadership. If so, the nucleus of any viable solution is to enhance the proficiency of the personnel on the front lines.

Of utmost importance are the abilities of line supervisors. It is the road sergeant who will be making the life and death decisions during the chaos of an attack. Furthermore, they and their field training officers shape the attitudes, culture, and degree of teamwork among all the scenes' first responders.

Never before have the tasks of line supervisors been so complex and their expertise been so important. The International Association of Chiefs of Police identified the work ethic and

attitudes of new officers as one of the major issues facing Chiefs of Police in the late 1990s.<sup>1</sup> The IACP study documented a nationwide perception of chief administrators that recent generations of personnel are difficult to supervise. When the results of this study are combined with the new demands of homeland terrorism defense, the necessity to take leadership training to higher levels of effectiveness is clear.

### **Urgency of Terrorism**

Regardless of a department's current training level, it is crucial that government officials do not procrastinate or impede the necessary training. The actions or lack of actions of unprepared initial responders will probably cause needless injuries and deaths. Obstacles must be overcome and remedies implemented without delay. The events of September 11, 2001 and the probability of future attacks have created an extraordinary national need to train emergency personnel immediately. The curriculum must be effective and the instruction has to be delivered with unparalleled efficiency. Highly realistic simulation scenarios can prepare officers to a level that is unparalleled by any other form of instruction.

### **Training Funds Reduced or Eliminated**

More evidence of the necessity to transform training delivery rests in the current and projected economy woes that have produced a nationwide budget crisis for state and local governments. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, governors are currently facing a \$25.7 billion deficit, and this scenario will continue to get worse. The 39 states reporting expect a combined \$68.7 billion deficit next fiscal year.<sup>2</sup>

Many state, county, and city governments grew much too fast in the 1990s. Elected officials did not plan for the possibility of an economic downturn and expanded programs that now must be cut. Some states are making serious efforts to control spending, but others are turning to tax increases to balance their budgets. Some state officials are trying to pass the buck for their poor fiscal management by pleading for a multibillion dollar bailout from Washington. "In May 2003, President Bush publicly announced to state and local officials last week 'Do not look to Washington for economic bailout.'"<sup>3</sup>

Plummeting investment revenues combined with years of overspending and tax cuts are causing severe consequences for municipal governments and their employees. All types of local government workers are being fired and significant programs have been terminated. In California, where they are facing a \$34 billion deficit, 25,000 teachers throughout the state are being laid off. Teachers in Oregon have agreed to work for two weeks without pay to keep public schools from closing. Firefighters across the country are standing on corners collecting cash in their boots to prevent needed fire prevention programs from closing.<sup>4</sup>

The alarming financial condition of governments is having profound repercussion for anti-terrorism preparation. Such extreme budget problems mean that police agencies do not have the revenue to pay for seminar fees, travel expenses or overtime costs associated with internal training. The traditional training model requires these customary expenditures. The new training paradigm does not.

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<sup>1</sup> The Ad Hoc Ethics Training Committee, International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick McMahon, State services fall with economy Washington state's debates over budget cuts mirror struggle across nation, USA TODAY, January 31, 2003

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> ABC News, Good Morning America, April 24, 2003

### **Manpower Shortage Aggravates Need**

Approximately 38,000 state and local jobs were eliminated nationwide in March, 2003. In Oregon, for example, voters recently rejected an increase in the state income tax of about 5% for most residents and decided to lay off 129 state troopers.<sup>5</sup> With no aid in sight, governments are cutting the most costly of all expenses, that being labor.<sup>6</sup> New York City is laying off 3,400 city workers to reduce the \$3.4 billion city deficit for fiscal 2004 and an additional 10,000 job cuts are being planned.<sup>7</sup>

The possibility of future conflicts is placing more strain on local emergency services because many members of the Reserve and National Guard troops are also cops, fireman or paramedics. When they are called to duty, departments must find ways to cope with their absence their for an undetermined length of time.

In addition, the president's tax-cutting stimulus plan could reduce revenues to states and cities that use an income tax based on federal definitions of taxable income. Metropolitan areas in the United States lost 646,000 jobs in 2002, according to a report released as mayors pushed for federal help to spur their local economies.

State and local governments have gone from one set of record-breaking situations to another set of record-breaking circumstances. In the 1990s they were able to cut taxes and build reserves, but that strong economy also hid the deterioration of the states' fiscal situation. A majority of state governments are facing one of their worst fiscal crises in decades. Many are cutting spending across the board, while others are imposing hiring freezes or laying-off workers.<sup>8</sup>

The reality of police, fire, and other emergency agencies having a severe manpower deficiency will hinder the ability to deliver anti-terrorism training. When departments are exceedingly understaffed they can not afford to send employees away for training even if there is sufficient funding to pay the expenses. Their highest priority must always be their ability to respond to emergencies. The solution, therefore, is to develop an effective way to take training to employees rather than demanding that workers travel to seminars.

### **Long-Term Problems**

Many occupations have neglected to orchestrate an effective campaign that ensures their personnel have the skills and abilities to be proficient leaders. Further, it is not uncommon that this lack of support for new supervisors often transforms energetic, vivacious young leaders into workers who feel unsupported, unappreciated and cynical a few years later. The detrimental consequences of this failure are profound and devastating, for these are the same employees who are most influential upon the organizational culture of any workplace. Law enforcement is not an exception.

From an administrator's perspective, the ability to address this universal difficulty is directly dependent upon the resources with which they have been provided for training. The bleak reality is that the most police chiefs and sheriffs in America clearly understand how unskilled,

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<sup>5</sup> Patrick McMahon, State services fall with economy Washington state's debates over budget cuts mirror struggle across nation, USA TODAY, January 31, 2003

<sup>6</sup> Richard Yamarone, Argus Research, New York

<sup>7</sup> Patrick McMahon, State services fall with economy Washington state's debates over budget cuts mirror struggle across nation, USA TODAY, January 31, 2003

<sup>8</sup> ABC News, Good Morning America, April 24, 2003

pessimistic field training officers and sergeants will demoralize other employees to the extent that many officers actually believe their leaders are adversaries.

Chiefs of police and sheriffs understand this virtually insurmountable problem better than anyone, for they are confronted with the both the predicament and its consequences every day. They do not have the funds to send supervisors away for effective training. In addition, even if training budgets were enhanced, widespread budget cuts have caused such severe manpower shortages that administrators could still not send their supervisors away for seminars.

Finally, for those who think the budget woes are over because the economy has improved, consider this quote from the Associated Press, in January, 2004, "Still struggling with money worries, state lawmakers head back to work to deal with some tricky problems: Medicaid cuts and higher education funding. Finding solutions will be tough, and made that much harder by lawmakers keeping one eye on fall elections. Some states - especially in the manufacturing-heavy Midwest - are struggling with the same economic difficulties that saw higher taxes and widespread cuts the last three years. Though Michigan resolved a \$2.5 billion deficit last year, it could be as much as \$900 million short again this year. South Carolina, Maryland, Georgia and California are among other states already seeing cash problems emerge."<sup>9</sup>

### **New Opportunities**

The Department of Criminal Justice at the University of Southern Mississippi and the Federal Law enforcement Training Center (FLETC) established a partnership during 2003. Their intention was to advance both web-based instruction and simulation training as an instructional tool for terrorist attacks. Following a year of development, Southern Miss is more committed than ever to ensuring policing realizes the full potential of video simulation. The Criminal Justice Department has dedicated itself to advancing "scenario-branching" capabilities and producing quality simulation scenarios in wide-ranging topics that are easily available and affordable to agencies across the nation. The initial scenarios being produced will address leadership and terrorist incidents.

Headquartered on a 1500-acre campus near Brunswick, Georgia, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) trains the majority of America's Federal officers and agents. It:

- Services 76 Federal agencies,
- Graduates approximately 50,000 students annually, and
- Is the largest law enforcement training establishment in the country.

The FLETC is also charged with providing training programs for tribal, state, local and law enforcement personnel through the Office of State & Local Training. These offerings are designed to meet training needs not generally available and to enhance networking and cooperation throughout the law enforcement community.

To assist in fulfilling its obligations to local agencies, FLETC now offers over 2,200 encrypted web-based courses. Any officer in America can reap the benefit of a training program that cost \$10,000,000 to develop by taking an unlimited number of the web-courses for only \$150 per year. In addition, "students" are given the ability to have internet conferences from two different locations for no additional cost. Plus, training documentation is provided by FLETC for no additional cost.

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Tanner, "Cash-Strapped States Face New Challenges," Associated Press, January 4, 2004

It remains one the best training opportunities anywhere. Inquiries for further details should be made to Bob Croach at 703-294-4131.

### **What the Future Can Hold**

Distance learning and simulation training will allow administrators to not only provide exceptional instruction to employees, but to do so with extraordinary efficiency and cost savings. Federal Law Enforcement Training Center internet courses virtually eliminate travel expenses, while the low annual fee is affordable to almost every department. Although it has taken two decades, highly realistic simulation scenarios that give officers the ability to face challenging dilemmas and decisions is finally being applied to subjects other than use of force.

It is likely that lives of both officers and civilians will be saved if we take advantage of these new opportunities. Never has the need for a paradigm change been so great. As the Department of Justice expressed in a recent document, "In this radically changed threat environment, the potential for harm has increased exponentially, new vulnerabilities have been exposed, and traditional law enforcement responses have proved inadequate. Members of Congress, leaders of the Executive Branch, oversight agencies, internal and external customers, among others, are rightfully demanding higher levels of performance." Contact FLETC or the Southern Miss Criminal Justice Department for details about seizing the opportunities.

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