A Path Forward for Policing
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What lessons can police learn from the public safety response to Hurricane Katrina? It is critical that the police industry and other government agencies understand the dynamics of the responses to disaster and realize that we cannot afford to continue with business as usual. Those who would harm the United States most assuredly observed the government response to Katrina and saw opportunities for future attacks. If one subscribes to the theory that every crisis brings opportunity, the response to Hurricane Katrina presents policing with an opportunity to learn and improve upon our response to future natural and manmade disasters.

Policing Must Do More Than Pay Attention To Advances In Technology. We Must Participate In The Development Of Technologies.

It seems clear (but worthy of repeating) that policing has traditionally been and remains resistant to change, including technological change. Without a more innovative, adaptable attitude, policing will continue to be outdated by advances in technology. Our tendency is to be drawn only to those devices which we perceive as enabling us to capture the bad guy more efficiently or effectively, those devices that allow us to do our "traditional" jobs better….i.e., the law enforcement part of policing. Police administrators can generally depend on the rank and file to keep them fully informed (read that as nag them) when a new weapon is developed or on the horizon. The problem is that this is a limited view of the benefits of technology for policing.

It is important that the policing industry participate in the development of devices that enhance the ability to respond to disasters. One of the specific areas that we must

address in the near future is communications, and communications among agencies during emergency situations is a high priority. The International Association of Chiefs of Police has a "Communications and Technology Committee"[1] responsible for distributing information and making recommendations regarding the advancement of technology and its practical use in police service. In addition, much discussion occurs annually at the conference of the IACP's Law Enforcement Information Management section (http://www.iacptechnology.org/). While progress has been made, problems abound.

Communications is particularly critical when the traditional bureaucratic Incident Command System is implemented but is also vital in networking scenarios. This is true whether the emergency is due to a terrorist attack or a natural disaster. Communications difficulties were at the forefront of the problems in New Orleans during and after Hurricane Katrina. The inability to communicate in and around the city exacerbated a terrible situation and likely resulted in additional loss of life and property.

Communications failures between agencies – more often due to turf battles than to technology failures – are only part of the problem. Communications failures within agencies are legion. Some, as in the Katrina affair, are solidly based in technology failures – hardware died in the face of Katrina – but turf, hierarchy, and failure to decentralize, among other factors take their toll.

Policing must continually strive to develop communications systems that connect various first responders. Interoperability gets a great deal of attention, but the lesson from recent events may be that we need to think beyond agencies talking to fire departments or neighboring agencies. After Katrina hit, New Orleans' public safety

[1] http://theiacp.org/div_sec_com/committees/Comm_Tech.htm, accessed 03 July 2006.

radios and satellite phones couldn't be recharged. Landline telephones and cell phones went out (*Time*, 2005). We need to think how we do our jobs if the entire system is down. How do we respond if there are no phones? How many agencies have contingency plans and have trained for situations in which the telephone system is down and radios don't work? Undoubtedly, those bent on committing terrorist acts saw what happened in New Orleans. Whether communications are destroyed by terrorist act or natural calamity, police have to adapt. It is critical that we explore innovative ways to communicate when traditional communication methods are disrupted. In virtually all emergencies, it will be at least 72 hours before federal assistance arrives.

Police agencies and the industry need to become more involved in the use of technology that helps fulfill our mission. Robotics, for example, including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), can be valuable in critical incidents. These devices expand surveillance ability of the police to areas where it is too dangerous or impossible for a person to go.

There were opportunities following Hurricane Katrina to utilize UAVs. Unfortunately, these robotic, fixed wing aircraft and helicopters were not used to the extent they could have been. Rescue experts asked for assistance from the Center for Robot Assisted Search and Rescue (CRASAR), but the group was unable to enter New Orleans because of the lack of an escort and the escalation of disorder. These UAVs were successfully used in Mississippi to examine areas rescuers had been unable to evaluate. In the words of Robin Murphy, director of CRASAR, "Katrina was a series of frustrations, and a series of wonderful things from a scientific perspective" (Walton, 2005).

Murphy was talking about robotic tools. In addition, we learned much about communication and human behavior in such environs. As each disaster hits, our ability to detect and report in real time increases, and thus increases our capacity to collect lessons learned.

It is important that the policing industry embrace the use of technologies such as the UAVs. Such devices can extend the eyes of officers and permit a much more effective and efficient use of manpower. However, until policing begins to value building relationships with those who develop technologies – even neighborhood cybergeeks – we will remain technologically antiquated. That, in turn, will reduce our capacity to protect and serve.

Murphy noted that it takes government an average of seven to eight years to begin to utilize new technology (Walton, 2005). In our view, Murphy is not realistic. Much of government relies on technology decades old. Even new technology is often trammeled unnecessarily with old constraints. For instance, when some criminal justice record checking systems moved from teletype to computer monitor, the same inflexible text formats were maintained.

In light of recent events and the criticism leveled at government response, one would hope the seven-to-eight year time frame can be shortened. Advanced technology could be useful to policing in a variety of scenarios – from looking for lost children to conducting surveillance. That UAVs and other technologies are useful in more routine ways will expedite the adoption of new technology. If we get used to using drones in everyday policing, implementing them on a widespread scale will happen quickly.

Policing Must Foster A Self-Reliant Attitude In The Public, The Rank And File, And The Leadership In Policing.

Just as in policing in general, the voluntary cooperation and assistance of the public is critical while dealing with natural or manmade disasters. The ability of the public to cope with and over adversity is frequently underestimated. It is too often assumed, particularly by the police that people will panic and have to have assistance from the government or others. This can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Sociologists who study disasters characterize the assumption that people panic during disasters as a myth. Russell R. Dynes, one of the founders of the Disaster Research Center, states that "The panic myth is a consistent one. The idea of social breakdown—I'm even pretty damn skeptical of that. One of the problems here is TV. If you take a film clip and run it for five hours, you create a notion that something's happening" (Glenn, 2005). In other words, people respond to repetition as if it signals increased importance, which often it does not.

Disaster sociologists suggest that the idea of people panicking after critical incidents is a problem of semantics. When they are asked what happened, they state that they panicked. They then describe actions that are logical and which protected themselves and others. What they mean by panic is that they were very frightened. Disaster sociologists believe that people generally do well when faced with a crisis. They may need assistance with food, water, and shelter, but they may <u>not</u> need direction and control provided by the military and outside authorities (Glenn, 2005). What they could use, however, is clearly stated expectations that they will be on their own, and some knowledge and skills to use if/when the opportunity arises.

Since citizens have more abilities and strengths than they have been given credit for, government's role should be to empower citizens to address the problems head on. Police (and the government in general) should be less paternalistic and instead assume a role of cooperation and partnership with citizens after disasters. The talents and expertise of the citizenry must be tapped in order to appropriately respond to terrorism and natural disasters. While this might occur spontaneously, as it did on 9/11 with the boats ferrying people off Manhattan (Glenn, 2005) and citizens helping others after Hurricane Katrina, this self-reliance must be fostered and developed. Indeed, this cooperation has occurred with Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), [discussed in more detail below].

Before this self reliance can be effective, the initial question might be whether or not policing will accept this assistance. The police have not exactly been receptive to accepting any outside assistance. The resistance from the rank and file to community policing and other attempts to work with those being policed has been well documented. This reluctance to give up control is also evidenced by the chasm between many police departments and fire departments. We don't always work well with others when we think we're not going to be in charge. The policing industry needs an attitude adjustment, a paradigm shift in thinking, if the use of the expertise of others and a shift to self-reliance in critical incidents is to take place.

Police are used to being the hub in the wheel of community policing. We need to get used to being simply one of the spokes. Perhaps that is one of the best parts about the Incident Command System (ICS). The training and exercises inherent with ICS should force the mindset of cooperation and coordination with other agencies and entities. Although examples abound of separate command posts for police and fire (and anecdotes

aplenty in police stations and fire houses of non-cooperation), there are examples of these agencies working well together to accomplish goals. We recommend there be more examples of ICS that incorporate groups and individuals and private sector entities not considered traditional emergency servants.

It is axiomatic that this shift in thinking and ability/talent/whatever to utilize expertise will require not only that the leaders of police agencies change their views, but also that the rank and file adjust their attitudes. Policing in general is not good at change. If policing is to foster self-reliance, we must get better at fostering change. Under some circumstances, we will have to get better about accepting decentralizing, a shift in the locus of leadership to those trenches.

David Brin, author of *The Transparent Society* and *The Other Culture War: Beleaguered Professionals vs. Disempowered Citizens*, suggests that there were two lessons from 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina. First, resilient citizens can be prodigious assets in a crisis <u>if</u> they are empowered. Second, when resilient citizen action is quashed, the crisis will grow worse. He views what happened in New Orleans as an example of the latter. What he calls the Professional Protector Caste (PPC) has been downplaying citizen resiliency in an effort to protect turf. This protectionism is instinctive, he says, and not the result of evil intent. Nevertheless, according to Brin, the one-shared theme throughout government action during Hurricane Katrina was "a nearly uniform reflex to quash autonomous citizen action" (Brin, 2005, 4).

According to Brin, the PPC reflexively protects its turf by resisting citizen empowerment. He worries that without change, this could result in a culture war between the PPC and empowered amateurs. Because policing has fomented the 911 mentality –

call emergency responders, and they will take care of whatever ails you – we have made this kind of problem much worse. The change he hopes for (but does not see coming without struggle) is a time when educated, technologically-empowered citizens participate in maintaining a robust civilization by looking over the shoulders of professionals and backing them up as needed (Brin, 2005). Will policing permit this to be imposed on them, or will police recognize that this is the future and embrace it? Our future (and the future of society) will be more attractive and easier if we embrace it. Resistance in this case (as with the Borg) would be futile.

The individual police officer must develop a self-reliant attitude. The same lessons Brin applies to the relationship between the government and citizens are applicable to the relationship between police administrators and the rank and file. As was seen in several cases in New Orleans, in critical incidents without communication, the beat officer of the future must think outside of the box, not wait for orders from above, and illustrate an innovative spirit. After Katrina, officers improvised by commandeering vehicles, rescuing stranded citizens, searching flooded areas, and generally operating autonomously (Perlstein, 2005). Training to handle critical incidents must include instruction and direction on improvising responses. Officers must understand how far they can legally go in emergency situations. The defense of necessity must be understood to permit appropriate responses.

Police administrators will have to not only permit but foster innovation and improvisation in their troops. Innovation and improvisation are not characteristics for which the industry is known. To the contrary, police administrators have traditionally had difficulty relinquishing control to either citizens or the rank and file. Both of these groups

have expertise that must be tapped. Police administrators must be particularly careful to not overreact to actions taken during times of emergencies that would not be appropriate in the absence of crisis. When communications are down, when people need food and water, when lives are at stake, the rules must be relaxed. Just as the law recognizes a defense of necessity, police administrators must as well. Just as most citizens recognize that leadership can emerge quite separate from the formal hierarchy, administrators must recognize the same.

The lesson to government and particularly police administrators is this: Get out of the way of citizens and the rank and file and allow them to use the expertise, knowledge, and creativity they have. Channel the expertise and energy for the good of society. Leave the turf battles behind.

Police Training And Critical Incident Exercises Must Be Changed To Address People And Situations That Have Never Before Been Included.

The police have trained with other public safety agencies in the past, and these have not always been pleasant or effective experiences. In some cases, the joint training has almost been like getting a vaccination: Time for the annual ICS exercise; assign the least senior lieutenant or captain to the fire department's command post and get through it. In the future, police must make better use of this training and these exercises. In addition to being fully engaged with other entities, we must incorporate as many of our personnel as feasible. In addition, we should foster interdepartmental connections when there is no need. Relationships must be built and maintained outside of an emergency context if they are to be effective inside an emergency context.

We must also include citizens. One type of group that is already in place is the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) created under the Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA). This group might be reminiscent of some of the civil defense exercises and block wardens of the Cold War Era. CERT members are trained in disaster response skills including fire safety, medical operations, and search and rescue. Citizens who take the CERT course may be better able to respond and cope with the aftermath of disasters. In addition, if the community so desires, CERT members can be utilized as auxiliary responders (FEMA, 2005). Police training, tabletop exercises, and field exercises are critical and must include citizens and CERT members. In addition, police agencies should encourage the formation of CERT where the teams don't currently exist. Brin calls CERT a glimmer of hope and notes that it is a step in the right direction. (Brin, 2005).

CERT teams could also potentially connect to other developing constructs within the world of policing. For example, Neighborhood-driven policing (Levin and Myers, 2005) provides an expanded theoretical home for CERT. Both CERT and neighborhood-driven policing are compatible with decentralization, initiative, and empowerment necessary for functioning in the case of disaster. Consider the time-worn notion of the cop as street-level communicator, the beat cop who knows everybody and garners and applies resources from citizens to citizens, the problem-solving facilitator rather than the combatant. Perhaps that beat cop's best time is during disaster.

Most of us saw television reports of evacuations of from New Orleans and Houston during the recent hurricane season. It's not surprising that in those areas where hurricanes frequently occur, evaluation plans are more refined and training occurs more

often than other parts of the country. Still, the products generated by these plans and training remains unimpressive.[2]

The current (November 2006) *Nationwide Plan Review* does not mince words.

> The current status of plans and planning gives grounds for significant national concern. Current catastrophic planning is unsystematic and not linked within a national planning system. This is incompatible with 21st century homeland security challenges, and reflects a systemic problem: outmoded planning processes, products, and tools are primary contributors to the inadequacy of catastrophic planning. The results of the Review support the need for a fundamental modernization of our nation's planning processes.[3]

It is hard to find comfort in that statement.

Recent events also bring to mind those areas of the country that are NOT subject to hurricanes. In the Midwest—tornado alley—the disaster springs up without time to consider evacuation. Instead, the emphasis is on shelter. But what if a weapon of mass destruction or an epidemic targets the Midwest or other areas without experience in massive evacuations? Sheltering in place may not be either possible or safe – even with all the duct tape in the world. Training in the incident command system must include potential scenarios that include evacuations – even in areas that don't normally experience hurricanes.

Exercises must also include scenarios involving massive outbreaks of disease and include quarantine planning and training. To address the possibility of a super-flu epidemic, the federal government has outlined guidelines in the event of a pandemic. If the bird flu mutates to more easily spread among the human population or if another super-influenza strain strikes, travel restrictions could be imposed. In addition, state and

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[2] For example, see http://www.dhs.gov/interweb/assetlibrary/Prep_NationwidePlanReview.pdf , accessed 03 July 2006

[3] Op. cit, p. viii

local governments would be charged with rationing medication. They would triage the ill to prevent overwhelming hospitals and spreading the disease (CNN.com, 2005). The possibility of terrorists spreading disease also exists. Whether a natural epidemic or by terrorist act, will local law enforcement be prepared to deal with these situations? Imagine a scenario in which officers are assigned to prevent anyone from leaving a city or state. Is it possible that an officer might let his or her family or friends out of the quarantined area? Is it even possible that an area can be effectively quarantined in a country that doesn't have the fortitude to effectively seal its borders?

At least some in policing are considering the issues involved with quarantines. The International Association of Chiefs of Police has suggested that agencies first determine their legal authority to institute quarantines (Friend, 2005). Then agencies should plan, prepare, and train personnel in the process. Radical though it may seem, input from the community should be solicited. Absent such a solicitation, any methodologies adopted risk disaster upon implementation. The call from IACP to prepare for quarantine should be echoed by others in government and police administrators need to ensure that rank and file personnel are prepared.

Community cooperation will be critical in the success or failure of isolation and quarantine efforts. It is self-evident that understanding and communication facilitate new ideas and change. If the public and the rank and file in policing are to cooperate in the event of a natural or manmade disaster, they must understand the necessity of actions. This means joint training and mutual participation in the planning, and it must be relevant participation – symbols will not suffice. In other words, the public and line officers must be brought in from the beginning. This cannot be a duct tape solution that is forced upon

people. The intelligence, innovation, and expertise of street officers and the public must be utilized. See the discussion above regarding CERT. If your neighbors helped plan the evacuation or quarantine and they explain the need, you will likely be more receptive to following instructions. This is particularly true if you were advised in advance and helped make preparations on a local level.

Conclusion

It would likely take outside pressure, unrelenting and powerful, to blast policing off of the tradition-bound role of what we believe we ought to be. While we choose not to speculate as to possible sources for such pressure, recent events – natural disaster as well as terroristic – may serve as a catalyst.

When public sector technology fails – and in disasters it often will – we must learn to think outside of the box. Solutions abound if only we will look for them. They range from horseback messengers and privately owned boats to renting network capacity from private sector providers who have found a way to stay operational. Policing's bias against change must give way to the changes in the world we serve.

Unless we recognize the need to participate in the development of technology, unless we understand that people are no longer content to follow blindly the dictates of government, unless we understand that citizens have as much information at their fingertips as the government does, policing runs the very real risk of being left in the dust, functionally irrelevant. The new paradigm can be forced on us or we can participate in designing the new policing model for disaster response. The choice is, as it always has

been, ours. We need to recognize it and step up to the plate with a little less (a lot less?) attitude about our expertise and what is needed.

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