How Can the Law Enforcement Community Better Collaborate in Problem-Solving?

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Introduction

Various law enforcement agencies exist to help keep communities and the country in general safe from organized crime and from terrorist attacks. Although each agency has its own boundaries, policies, and procedures, the overall purpose is the same, to keep its citizens safe from harm. In doing so, it is important that these agencies are able to work well together when needed and to be able to pool their resources for problem-solving.

Failure to Cooperate

The tragedy of 9/11 resulted in detailed investigations on a number of issues. These investigations brought to light that law enforcement agencies fail to share information with each other. This failure leaves communities and the country at large vulnerable to crime and to such horrific acts as those that took place on 9/11. As a result, the investigative commission recommended that law enforcement agencies work together in sharing intelligence as part of the counter-terrorism strategies. It recommended "an information sharing system that transcends traditional government boundaries"[1]. It also notes that, "without such an effective system, the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies will continue to be unnecessarily limited and federal agencies will remain unable to exploit the information cumulatively maintained by law enforcement agencies"[2].

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[1] The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *"9-11 report"*, (U.S Government Printing Office: Washington), 2004.

[2] Ibid

Importance of Cooperation

There are more than 18,000 law enforcement agencies located within the United States at this time. Their main objective is to keep communities safe by reducing the chances of terrorism and other potential threats[3]. Even so, the attacks of 9/11 took place with no apparent warning to the American people or the agencies designed to protect them. The question that must be asked is how much knowledge various agencies had that, when shared, might have provided a more complete picture of the impending disaster. Could the terrorists have been stopped if the law enforcement agencies had a common procedure and followed it for regular sharing of intelligence?

We have seen first-hand that information sharing can help to eliminate or decrease terrorism threats in some parts of the world. For instance, Abdullah Ocallan, the head of a group of Turkish rebels, was apprehended in Kenya, due to the collaborative efforts of several law enforcement agencies. This collaboration was facilitated through the establishment and adherence to a number of policies for sharing of intelligence regarding criminal and terrorism behavior. These agencies together form Interpol[4]. It was Interpol that identified Ocallan as a person of interest, placing him on its most wanted list for alleged crimes. This enabled the various law enforcement agencies to be on the lookout for Ocallan, resulting in the Kenyan authorities being able to apprehend him in a relatively short period of time. This serves as a powerful example of how valuable collaboration is among law enforcement agencies everywhere.

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[3] Information Sharing Environment, Law enforcement sharing, March 3, 2013, accessed March 3, 2013. http://www.ise.gov/law-enforcement-information-sharing

[4] Michael, Radu, the capture of Abdullah Ocalan and the future of counter-terrorism, Chaos Manor Special Reports , February 18, 1999, Accessed March 3, 2013. http://www.jerrypournelle.com/reports/jerryp/ocalan.html

As common sense as information sharing seems to be, not all communities agree with this form of collaboration. For example, Seattle, Washington, had passed a city ordinance to block any information sharing from city law enforcement agencies without first going through a review process. However, the Seattle city officials have since then worked to eliminate the constraints in information sharing. It furthermore guarantees that information sharing is strongly encouraged and supported over the entire Pacific Northwest area of the United States. As a result, Seattle is a model city in this respect.

Examples of Cooperation

There are a number of collaborative efforts that have taken place across the United States. For example, the Department of Justice has a 30 year-old program that supports the collaboration of law enforcement agencies across the country nationally[5]. The purpose of the program is to combat a wide range of criminal activities, including drug trafficking, human trafficking, terrorism, and identity theft. These kinds of problems have plagued the country for a number of decades and called for the cooperation and collaboration of various law enforcement agencies in apprehending those involved in such criminal activities. At present, a national network with multiple centers in various states work on a regional, interstate level so that investigations are not confined to state lines. The network is funded with federal monies.

An excellent example of collaboration is the Intelligence Community (IC), which is comprised of 14 agencies that deal with a number of laws, policies and procedures, as well as directives and executive orders[6]. The overall purpose of the IC is to provide important

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[5] Information Sharing Environment, Law enforcement sharing, March 3, 2013, accessed March 3, 2013. http://www.ise.gov/law-enforcement-information-sharing
[6] The Role of Intelligence, Fas.com, last modified February 23, 1996. http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/int006.html

information to different groups, including policy makers. IC is charged with collecting,

analyzing, providing information, utilizing a procedure referred to as the intelligence cycle.

Information gathered and dispersed to the appropriate authorities includes potential terrorist

attacks, economic interference, human trafficking, drug trafficking, and other forms of organized

crime. It collects information needed for state and national security and is disseminated to the

President of the United States, secretaries of state and defense, and other individuals identified as

part of the executive[7]. Strategies for gathering intelligence include informants, analysis of

images, and various forms of correspondence.

<div align="center">**Conclusion**</div>

The importance of collaboration among law enforcement agencies on the local, national,

and international levels cannot be emphasized enough. Terrorism attacks around the world, for

instance, have been on the rise in very recent months. Security threats exist from terrorists as

well as from those involved in organized crime. Although law enforcement agencies do

collaborate, resulting in some very valuable results, more can be done to reduce threats to

homeland security. For instance, there should be more collaboration among police departments

between cities as well as between states. This exists to some extent with shared databases, but

more can be done.

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[7] Richelson, Jeffrey T. The U.S. Intelligence Community, fourth edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999.

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