

SUMMARY OF
THE REPORT OF THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
WORKING GROUP OF MAYORS AND POLICE CHIEFS
REPORT,
“STRENGTHENING POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN
AMERICA’S CITIES.”

Completed by Eric E. Clingan, Commissioner, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors’ ad hoc Committee on Police Practices.

In light of various recent police-involved shootings and/or injuries to citizens it has been determined by the Conference of Mayors that certain social issues must be addressed including race, class, prejudice, poverty, and inequality.

These recent events have shaken some of the public’s perceptions of policing in America and of the criminal justice system.

The Conference Report recommends an emphasis in our cities on community policing.

Importantly, the Conference recognized that community policing is practiced in a constitutional manner by many police departments, and that the vast majority of police officers have developed trusting relationships with the communities they serve. Based on reviewing these success stories, and with an eye toward past failures, the Conference released this report.

This report, which was developed by a working group of mayors and police chiefs, provides a set of recommendations for local and national actions intended to improve police---

community relations in America.

The Report focused on six areas:

1. Building police---community trust,

- Officers must interact with the community, especially those communities where police distrust is at its highest.
- Police and communities can build trust with one another through problem-solving activities which aim to better the community.
- Police should seek out those who are considered community leaders and attempt to educate them on police concerns while equally educating themselves on the needs and shortcomings of the members of these communities.
- Transparency and demonstrated commitment to the betterment and safety of a particular community will give rise to improvement in trust of the police.

2. Improving police department practices

- The Chief of Police, not a subordinate, should be the face of the force during serious incidents and/or crisis management.
- Efforts should be made to recruit officers who represent the community in which they will serve. This includes assignments of officers to certain communities. Spanish-speaking officers should, for example, have a higher density presence in communities where Spanish is a dominant language.
- Training in peace-keeping and detecting/handling incidents involving people who are mentally or emotionally challenged should be a priority for the force.
- Audio/Video equipment use should be understood by

police and the communities as a tool to ensure EVERYONE's safety and to further trusting relationships, not "gotcha" relationships. Telling a suspect, even in a traffic stop, that the encounter is being recorded for everyone's benefit and safety is to be encouraged.

- Military style equipment and its use should have specific-use qualifications, understanding that much of the design of this equipment was originally with an eye toward intimidating a foreign enemy. That same equipment can be as intimidating to a U.S. citizen and can provoke a response that is not conducive to peaceful arrests.
- Police agencies should develop a method whereby more than crime rates and prosecutions can measure the efficacy and efficiency of police equipment use.

3. Ensuring timely and accurate communications.

- Optics are an integral thing all public agencies must now be fully aware of. Consideration should be given, paramount, to "Is this going to reflect positively on the police and encourage greater trust and support of our activities."
- Social Media should be used as a tool to inform and educate the public. However, it should be remembered that not all of the public are well served by social media. Many impoverished communities do not have the same understanding and access to Internet, Twitter, etc... So a two-pronged approach is still the preferred approach.

4. Conducting independent investigations

- Police departments should incorporate a plan to involve independent authorities when investigating any police-involved shooting of a citizen.
- The make-up of such investigating groups should take

into account optics, the need to maintain trust within the community and emphasizing transparency whenever not restricted by law.

5. Addressing racial and economic disparities

- Police Chiefs should reach out to individual communities through public meetings within smaller sectors of these communities.

6. Providing national leadership

- Police Chiefs should regularly update the Board of Supervisors or Mayors on conferences attended and the impact covered topics to the localities where they serve.

Submitted to the Sub-Committee on Police Communications

Eric E. Clingan, June 8, 2015