with Nancy Perry

IACP Quick Take: How data-driven policing reduces violent crime – Police one.com

Technology provides cops with real-time analysis to inform crime reduction strategies specific to their communities

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PHILADELPHIA — In response to an increase in violent crime, the Los Angeles Police Department is using data-driven approach to policing titled Operation LASER Smart Policing Initiative.

Central to the city's approach is a situation room – a physical space that brings together crime intelligence, data analysis and a suite of technology including gunshot detection software, crime cameras and predictive analytics. This technology provides officers with real-time analysis to inform crime reduction strategies tailored to the needs of the community.

At the 124th annual International Association of Chiefs of Police Conference, LAPD Deputy Chief Dennis Kato discussed the department's approach and offered insights about how other cities might implement similar initiatives.

MEMORABLE QUOTES

Here are some of Deputy Chief Kato's most memorable quotes from the presentation:

"This is a shift for veteran officers as to how we do policing, but the younger officers are waiting for this type of thing."

"When you want to abate violent crime you can no longer wait seven days for the weekly crime analysis meeting."

"We no longer have to tie up analysts' time making crime maps. Captains can make their own maps on a desktop."

THE OPERATION LASER SMART POLICING INITIATIVE

Operation LASER uses laser-like, non-invasive techniques to rid areas of crime and criminals through the use of appropriate data and analysis to drive decision-making.

It was initially implemented in Newton Division, which was experiencing an epidemic of gun and gang violence. The department identified five large crime hotspots using a geographic analysis of data on gun-related crimes, arrests and calls for service over a six-year period.

After forming a crime intelligence detail of analysts and officers, the department:

- Identified hot spot corridors
- Directed regular patrol, bikes and foot patrol into the hot spot corridors
- Created chronic offender bulletins and assigned them to patrol and special units
- Collected and analyzed data throughout the intervention period

The results were compelling. Newton Division ended 2012 with an all-time low of 16 homicides, a 56 percent decrease in homicides compared to 2011 and a 59 percent decrease compared to 2010.

Newton's success led to Chief Beck incorporating LASER into LAPD's strategic plan in 2015. This emphasis on smart policing was heightened in March 2016 when the city began to see a dramatic increase in violent crimes (13.6 percent) compared to the same period in 2015:

- Homicides were up 16.3 percent
- Shots fired incidents were up 11.5 percent
- Shooting victims were up 3.9 percent.

The Community Safety Operations Center (CSOC) was established to help quell the gang and gun violence. Deputy chiefs, commanders and captains from across bureaus and divisions came together to target violent crime in four divisions.

Three crime analysts collate criminal intelligence from the LASER zones to create the chronic offender bulletins. There has been an increased focus on missions, with special units deployed to support patrol in each division. The amount of time officers spend in corridors is measured, as well as the number of homicides and number of victims shot.

From March to October 2016 the department saw a successful reduction in homicides and shootings due to its proactive approach.

3 KEY TAKE-AWAYS

Deputy Chief Kato shared some of the key take-aways from the LASER initiative.

1. Departments need to develop laser-like strategies to pinpoint corridors of crime.

With 10,000 officers, the LAPD previously used saturation policing to address crime hot spots; however, this strategy was starting to lose effect.

"We knew we needed our officers to be more precise, so the goal of LASER is to locate the chronic offenders who drive the majority of criminal activity," Kato said.

The department sends out chronic offender bulletins to officers reminding them they while they did not have reasonable cause to stop those individuals, they should at least monitor their activity.

2. Data analysis has to occur often and be ongoing.

The officers leading the operations had daily conference calls seven days a week to analyze data collected over the previous 24 hours.

"When you want to abate violent crime you can no longer wait seven days for the weekly crime analysis meeting," Kato said. "We needed to be that nimble."

Because of the daily analysis, the department could alter resource deployment as it was immediately visible where to direct the LASER approach.

"Using the data analysis, we created specific mission maps of criminal activity to give to officers and told them to use their training and experience to find out what was causing the hot spots," Kato said. "We asked officers to find out why there were hot spots in certain neighborhoods. Is it an issue with a liquor store? If so, what tools can we use to abate the problem?"

3. What the data revealed.

The data started to show some interesting trends. For example, analytics revealed that assaults and street robberies peaked two times during the day: When teens were let out of school and when people were on their way home from work and were attacked at bus stops. This led to officers being deployed to troublesome locations at those times.

Motor cops were given CSOC violent crime hot sheets of cars used in robberies and asked to use their traffic enforcement skills to try to locate and see who were in these cars.

"Officer morale skyrocketed," said Kato. "Those motor cops now felt that instead of just writing tickets for traffic violations, they were actually doing something to combat crime by looking for these vehicles."