

# Public Safety Intervention Strategies for Violence at Protests

Lieutenant Ricardo Ubinas  
Tampa Police Department



OCTOBER 22-25

ICMA 2017

**SAN ANTONIO**

103RD ANNUAL CONFERENCE • BEXAR COUNTY

# Protests Have Changed



# Sleeping Dragon



# Street Marches



# Protester Tactic Motivators

- Force Multipliers
- Intimidation
- Media Attention



# Additional Protester Tactics

- **Infiltration:** Gain employment, volunteering, or media access
- **Noncooperation:** Provide no name or information
- **Critical mass:** Ride bikes to elude on-foot responders
- **Construction Equipment:** Move barriers, fencing, dumpsters
- **Executing an Unarrest:** Pull away protest in process of arrest
- **Puppy Pile:** Jumping on the responder and holding them down
- **Overwhelm Transportation:** Intentionally overtax mass transit
- **Affinity Group:** Protest groups that plan and act independently
- **Cluster Group:** Protest groups that join together

# 1992 Los Angeles Riots

- Four police officers were acquitted of assault charges on Rodney King.

## Lessons Learned:

- Failure to interact early cost LAPD the chance to limit the damage from the crowds.
- LAPD was criticized for withdrawing officers from the first waves of unrest.



# Seattle World Trade Organization Conference, 1999



- Seattle PD established relationships with protest groups beforehand, but more than expected showed up.

## Lessons Learned:

- Mutual aid agreements need to include training together.
- Construction equipment and dumpsters should be removed beforehand.



# International Monetary Fund/World Bank, Washington DC, 2000



- Washington DC Metropolitan Police learned from the mistakes made in Seattle the year before.

## Lesson Learned:

- They were well prepared for protests and took quick action, mitigating disruption and damage from protests.

# Boston Red Sox American League Championship Series Win, 2004



- After the championship, fans spilled into Boston streets to celebrate. While dispersing the riotous crowds, Victoria Snelgrove was struck in the eye by a projectile fired from a FN303.

## Lessons Learned:

- Limit use of force to only what is reasonable and necessary.
- All officers using less-lethal weapons must be trained and certified.

# Ferguson, Missouri, 2014



- Riots, looting, and arson broke out after the shooting death of an unarmed teenager, Michael Brown, by a white police officer.

## Lesson Learned:

- The use of force and the use of surplus military gear by police attracted national criticism regardless of the circumstances.

# Baltimore, Maryland, 2015



- The death of Freddie Gray, a black man being held in police custody, sparked riots and wide-spread looting.

## Lessons Learned:

- Failure to interact early cost Baltimore PD the chance to limit the damage from the crowds.
- Baltimore PD was criticized for withdrawing officers from the first waves of unrest.

# Charlottesville, Virginia 2017



# Management and Intervention Strategies

## Management

- Maintain lawful activities

## Intervention

- Isolate unlawful activities

## Control

- Disperse unlawful assemblies

# Crowd Management, Intervention, & Control Strategies (continued)

- Isolate, arrest, & remove violators as quickly as possible
- Videotape action of police officers & violators
- Use amplified sound to communicate intent & gain compliance
- Use low-profile tactics--don't become the focus of the demonstration
- Escalate & de-escalate as behavior changes
- Request needed resources

# Crowd Management, Intervention, & Control Strategies (continued)

- Put control forces in place
- Consider a traffic plan
- Disperse unlawful crowds & arrest those who fail to disperse
- Move media to protected area
- If approved, deploy less lethal munitions to defend officers & disperse the crowd



# Graham v. Connor (1989)

Guidelines for determining if the use of force was objectively reasonable:

- The severity of the crime
- Whether the suspect posed an immediate threat to officers or others
- Whether the suspect actively resisted arrest or attempted to evade by flight

# Crowd Management Principles



- Safeguard Free Speech and Public Assembly
- Respect Everyone
- Know Community and Type of Crowd
- Explain Law Enforcement's Role to Crowd

# Crowd Management Principles (continued)



- Avoid Donning Hard Gear as First Step or Militarization of Law Enforcement



- Avoid Aggressive Appearance and Behavior
- Coordinate with Organizers

# Crowd Management Principles (continued)

- Isolate, Arrest, and Remove Law Violators
- Separate Opposing Factions and Establish Escape Routes
- Use Reasonable and Necessary Force
- Exercise Discretion
- Ensure Mutual-aid Agencies Receive Training

# Mass Arrest – Avoid This!



# Mobile Field Force



# Advantages of Team Tactics

- Builds confidence and reinforces correct reaction
- Intimidates opposition
- Counteracts militaristic tactics
- Prevents escalation of events
- Allows officers to target specific individuals or groups
- Demands a higher level of training

# Mobile Field Force

## Characteristics

- Planning
- Discipline
- Training
- Leadership

## Composition, Positions, and Size

- Reflects agency's needs
- Command and control structure