

# Managing Violent Civil Disturbances

Daniel Simovich

## *Abstract*

*Violent civil disturbances occurring in the future, somewhere in the State of Florida, are a very real threat based on forecasts from a variety of sources. Law enforcement administrators have a responsibility and an obligation to their communities and employees to be able to respond to these disturbances in the appropriate manner. This research paper reviews management of past violent disturbances by law enforcement in the United States, and specifically Florida, with an emphasis on the importance of planning by law enforcement administrators.*

## Introduction

As we approach the 21st Century, law enforcement agencies across the nation will need to develop strategies to manage violent civil disturbances in their communities. Florida recently received a wake up call in October and November of 1996, when riots erupted in the city of St. Petersburg. These riots perhaps underscore the need for planning for violent civil disturbances, as many law enforcement agencies have become complacent.

A panel of nationally recognized law enforcement experts who studied specific issues that will have a significant impact on law enforcement, forecasts that "by 1999, urban unrest and civil disorder (similar to that of the 1960's and 1970's) will take place throughout the United States. It is further expected that this future rebellion will eclipse the past turbulence and violence in magnitude, intensity and duration" (Tafoya, 1986 p. 592).

The panel considered social and cultural conditions, economic circumstances and political environments as factors in their forecast. Since this forecast, this country has had to contend with thousands of violent disturbances with varying degrees of intensity. Most of these disturbances were localized and received little national media attention, and consequently, we were unaware of many of them. During the Los Angeles riots, however, which occurred in April 1992, law enforcement agencies across this nation reported over 1,200 violent civil disturbances occurring simultaneously.

In a paper entitled Looking Over The Horizon: "The Likelihood of Civil Disturbances," submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation Critical Incident Response Group, in November 1996, Allen Sapp Ph.D. made the following forecast:

Race relations in America today are at a critical point where significant civil disturbances and urban unrest, particularly in larger cities with large minority populations, is highly likely to occur. Any actions by whites that are perceived to be racist may be enough to trigger major disturbances. In the past, the triggers for civil disturbances and rioting have ranged from an attempt to arrest one person to the assassination of a major black leader.

In my opinion, major civil disturbances and riots in cities with significant

black populations are most likely to occur in 1997 and 1998. If this forecast is accurate, the scope and intensity of the rioting will far exceed any seen in the past. The major riots of the 1960's involved throwing bricks, Saturday night special firearms and Molotov cocktail- type fire bombs. The riots of the late 1990's will involve illegally converted automatic weapons, assault rifles, street sweeper shotguns, semi-automatic handguns, homemade explosives and possibly military style weaponry (Sapp, 1996, p. 5).

Florida has experienced violent civil disturbances of various levels of intensity, duration, and destruction. Many of the violent civil disturbances which Florida has experienced in the past have been sporadic in nature. Most of them were preceded by some police action believed to be brutal or unfair in the eyes of the community. An example is the resurgence of riots in Florida which began with the 1980 Liberty City riots in Miami. This led to several days of rioting which had not been seen in Florida since the 1960's. The flashpoint for this riot was the acquittal of several police officers, stemming from a case of alleged brutality in which a black man died.

In 1982, another riot occurred in Miami, this time in the area of the city known as Overtown. The intensity of this riot, compared to the riot two years earlier, was substantially greater. Although there were many cases of arson in the Liberty City riots, as there were in the Overtown riots, the biggest difference between the two was that during the Overtown riot - the police reported *intense gunfire directed at the officers* which had not occurred on such a large scale prior to this.

On February 19, 1987, a riot occurred in Tampa, which was precipitated by a police shooting. A white Tampa police officer shot and killed a knife-wielding black man. This led to several nights of disturbances in the city. In 1989, Miami experienced a third, large-scale riot. This time the flashpoint was another police shooting in which an Hispanic police officer shot and killed a black man riding a motorcycle. The passenger on the motorcycle also subsequently died from his injuries. In October and November of 1996, the City of St. Petersburg had to contend with two back-to-back violent civil disturbances which were touched off by the shooting of a black motorist by a white police officer, and the eventual exoneration of the police officer by the grand jury.

The list of violent civil disturbances that have occurred in the state is lengthy, and not limited to the few aforementioned examples or to large cities. Florida's violent civil disturbances can, and have, occurred in communities with differing populations as evidenced by a disturbance in 1994 in Crystal River, a town of approximately 4000. The flash point for this particular incident was the shooting of a black man who had been arrested by a white police officer.

The one common focal point that seems to precede most major violent civil disturbances in Florida is some police action that is deemed inappropriate or brutal by the community they serve.

In addition to the terror which a violent civil disturbance bestows upon the community, disturbances are extremely costly in both the human element (death and injuries) and financially (police & city services, property damage and lost employment). Civil disturbances in the State of Florida have cost literally hundreds of millions of dollars

since 1980 (Tuscon, 1993, p.37). "Warned of impending upheaval, most managers still pursue business-as-usual. Yet business-as-usual is dangerous in an environment that has become, for all practical purposes, permanently convulsive"(Toffler, 1985, p.2). The future forecasts indicate an increase in violent civil disturbances. How much of an increase may remain unclear. As police administrators, however, we need to develop new management techniques to address both the tactical and administrative aspects of violent civil disturbances in Florida's future.

This research will attempt to determine the optimal way to manage violent civil disturbances in Florida from a police administrator's perspective. It focuses on the importance of planning, preparation, coordination and training, all of which are essential elements of the successful management of a violent civil disturbance.

### Method

This research seeks to review how law enforcement agencies in the United States, and more specifically Florida law enforcement agencies, have managed past violent civil disturbances within their communities. The research seeks to determine the tactical and administrative techniques utilized, and whether or not these techniques, when utilized under similar circumstances or conditions, are effective.

Literature obtained from these agencies itemizing the management of their particular violent civil disturbance (s) and how they implemented their tactical and administrative techniques and plans provided background for review. Books, periodicals, and journals, in addition to a review of official government documents, both current and historical, and after action reports, when available, provided resources for review.

In addition to a literature review, informal interviews, conducted with law enforcement officers and commanders from various law enforcement agencies throughout the State of Florida that were active participants in violent civil disturbances provided additional data and information. The final portion of the research was based on personal, observational research as a participant and law enforcement commander during the City of St. Petersburg's violent civil disturbances in October and November 1996.

### Background

Before we are able to effectively manage a violent civil disturbance, we must first understand the process and the various stages of a riot or violent civil disturbance. There are four major stages in the progression of a riot: 1) the precipitating incident or event; 2) the confrontation; 3) the Roman Holiday; and, 4) the open conflict. Russell and Beigel (1990) have defined these four stages in the following way.

#### Precipitating Incident:

Almost anything can serve as the precipitating incident to a riot. It might be a forceful apprehension by an officer or a routine traffic stop. It may not be an act, but only a rumor, that leads people to pour into the streets in agitation and anger. It may not be a single event, but rather a series of incidents and/or rumors that set the stage for the final incident

that triggers the riot. For example, in the summer of 1980, residents in Miami, Florida, engaged in several days of civil disturbance. The precipitating incident occurred when several police officers were acquitted in court of charges stemming from a case of alleged police brutality in which a black man had died (Russell & Beigel, 1990 p. 272).

More recently the precipitating incidents that led to the City of St. Petersburg's civil disturbances in October and November of 1996 coincidentally were a police shooting of a black suspect during a traffic stop, and a grand jury decision which cleared the officer involved. History has shown that in many disturbances, this is the point where quick response and interaction with the community by government officials, police and trusted community leaders, may avert the disturbance.

#### Confrontation:

During the second phase of the riot, the police must avoid either overreaction or under-reaction. Many confrontations exhaust the energy of riot participants and nothing further happens. However, in some situations a keynoting process may begin. This occurs when the angriest members of a crowd, or perhaps a single, more militant individual, urges more violent action. To counter this, moderate community leaders may try to persuade the crowd to disband, promising that a committee will be formed to channel protest to city hall. If these leaders prevail, the crowd will disband and the riot is over, but if militants or hostile keynotes win, the riot will escalate to the next stage (Russell & Beigel, 1990, p. 273).

#### Roman Holiday:

The Roman Holiday phase usually involves young males who are angry, hostile, and impulsive. Although their actions may have been planned in advance, a spontaneous reaction is more likely. They may begin to break windows, overturn cars or set them afire, and engage in other destructive actions. During this stage it is again important for the police not to overreact. If they respond with excessive force, interviews of the victims by news media will reach dissident communities and lead to further escalation. On the other hand, a permissive attitude may be construed as a go-ahead signal, and the result will be the same. When the Roman Holiday phase is not handled properly, more people, both adults and children, begin to take part in looting and stealing. Firebombs and guns may be brought into play, and the riot may escalate into open conflict (Russell & Beigel, 1990, p. 273).

#### Open Conflict:

This phase turns into open combat in the city. The police must now use force to contain the riot and restore order. Moderate to intense sniper fire can occur. Firebombing increases and is used as a selective weapon

by rioters. The police respond by using weapons. The National Guard is often called in. A dissident community, especially if agitated by militants, may arm itself and assemble its own firepower (Russell & Beigel, 1990, p. 273-274).

## Discussion

Since the City of St. Petersburg's riots, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement has hosted civil disturbance workshops in seven different regions around the state. These workshops were designed to bring both police and fire commanders together to discuss, not only the lessons learned in St. Petersburg during and after the riots, but also what future impact civil disturbances will have on law enforcement agencies across the state. These workshops provided a forum to discuss the capabilities, assets, and resources available on a local, county, and state level.

In addition to regional workshops hosted by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the Florida Sheriff's Association hosted a retraining conference in Daytona Beach, Florida, and the Florida Chiefs of Police Association held a conference in Ponte Vedra, Florida both of which included civil disturbance topics.

The consensus of participants at these workshops and conferences, which included many round table discussions with hundreds of police and fire commanders, was that managing violent civil disturbances requires four essential elements: 1) *Planning*; 2) *Preparation*; 3. *Coordination*; and, 4) *Training*.

### Planning

What is a plan? Webster's College Dictionary defines a plan as "a scheme or method of acting, proceeding, etc., developed in advance: *a battle plan*." The management of violent civil disturbances requires just that, a battle plan. Many agencies have mobilization plans, but lack a specific operational plan for managing civil disturbances. If they do have an operational plan, many have not updated the plan to conform with changes in command or reorganization within their respective agencies.

Most agencies have little or no experience dealing with violent civil disturbances. No one, however, expects any one agency to have the resources to manage a large scale disturbance without the assistance of both municipal services and outside assistance. As the management of a civil disturbance has such diverse tasks and most agencies have resource limitations, the plan should include other services such as public works and mutual aid from outside agencies.

A civil disturbance operational plan should include: 1) objectives; 2) prioritization of objectives; 3) means (or resources); 4) tactics (tasks), and, 5) assignments (for the entire command structure). The 1992 after-action report from the Los Angeles riots entitled "The City In Crisis," emphasizes that a civil disturbance is a chaotic environment, and roles for all participants should be planned in advance of the outbreak of a disturbance because of limited planning time after the outbreak of the disturbance.

The need for law enforcement mutual aid assistance should be included in the operational plan, as well as guidelines regarding the request for mutual aid assistance--who and at what level of command can request assistance and from whom assistance is requested. . During the most recent disturbance in St. Petersburg, the issue of mutual aid

caused some confusion. Although the state law enforcement agencies and the county sheriff's office had no jurisdictional restrictions, some other municipalities, e.g. the Tampa Police Department, who were requested to respond, could not respond because a signed mutual aid agreement wasn't prepared in advance. It is imperative that city police departments coordinate the signing of mutual aid agreements among other city law enforcement agencies in their regions. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement State Mutual Aid Office will assist any law enforcement agency with this task. The Florida Sheriffs Association has already coordinated this effort among the 67 sheriffs in the state, who have all signed a mutual aid agreement.

It is extremely important once a plan is developed, with input from all the various agencies who will assist, that all levels within the chain of command of the assisting agencies be trained in the plan. The plan should be reviewed, revised and emphasized in training at least annually to ensure that it meets the needs of the agency and the community.

In addition to developing a written operational plan to manage a civil disturbance, which includes the five elements mentioned above, planning has several sub-categories which require consideration by police administrators. The sub-categories that should be included in the planning process are as follows:

#### Organizational philosophy

A law enforcement agency should determine its philosophy in regard to civil disturbances prior to the outbreak of a disturbance. This may require the interaction of police administrators and political leaders to determine what the philosophy of the organization should be. This interaction in the planning stages may reduce internal friction during disturbances, a time when stress levels are at a maximum. An example of an organizational philosophy developed by the Miami Police Department is based on containment, communication, coordination, and control. This is a relatively simple philosophy that is easy to understand and follow. Every agency, however, should develop a philosophy that is tactically sound and politically acceptable for their communities.

#### Existing policies

Use of force policies are an extremely important component of civil disturbances. Planning and policies relating to lethal force, less lethal force, and use of force reporting methods must be carefully scrutinized. The policies should be clear, concise, easily understood, and most important shouldn't conflict with other agency policy. There are three areas of concern when revising or developing use of force policies for inclusion in the operational civil disturbance plan: consistency of the force policy with the overall organizational philosophy, consistency of policy for use of force between agencies in mutual aid agreements, and the third area of concern, which has emerged with new technology such as specialty impact weapons i.e. bean bag rounds, is that these weapons fall into a category which is "less lethal". If policies and philosophies among responding agencies involved in a civil disturbance have significant differences or are in conflict, this can create morale problems in the field, especially if the responding agency's policies are more liberal in the use of force area. A difference in policies or philosophies should not deter administrators from requesting mutual aid assistance;

however, it could affect how and where these agencies are assigned. An example and a good procedure to follow is to assign local law enforcement to the affected areas and utilize other incoming agency resources to work perimeters or unaffected areas of the city to free up local resources. Many agencies in Florida utilize the specialty impact weapon option and have already developed policy and procedure for the implementation of this option. If an agency is contemplating the use of this option they should contact other agencies that have researched this technology for guidance.

### Leadership

Developing supervisors who can be empowered to take command of an unplanned, relatively minor incident may avert a minor incident from turning into a major disturbance. The lack of confident field supervisors empowered to take action can seriously undermine the morale of the field units. According to Jimmie Brown, Chief of the Sheriff's Services Division, Metro/Dade, Florida, his department has a philosophy for dealing with an unplanned event. "An example of an unplanned event was when the original Lozano verdict was announced in 1989. A major element for dealing with unplanned events is empowering officials on duty at any given time when there's no command presence, so they can make initial decisions and take care of business as needed. He states that they should be able to set up a perimeter around the area, and work with other jurisdictions" (Tuscon, 1993, p.37).

The empowerment of field supervisors to take action is most important at the onset of a disturbance, but in no way is it intended to circumvent the command structure. It is only created to fill the gaps until a definitive command structure is on scene. After arrival of command staff, providing they are qualified to make tactical decisions, the chain of command structure should be streamlined to prevent miscommunications and confusion.

### Communications

Communications come in many forms and are a multi-directional function which can be critical to the successful outcome of an operation. It is imperative that the field units provide commanders at the forward command post with information relative to the disturbance, i.e. crowd size and type, as well as the level of violence and intensity. It is equally important that commanders provide the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) with this information so planners can determine what additional resources will be required. Additionally, it is imperative that field units be kept informed of any changes which will have a direct impact on them, or of any changes in the overall operation.

As most violent civil disturbances also involve widespread arson and serious injuries, the Fire Department and/or Emergency Medical Services should provide a liaison that is empowered to make decisions. This liaison should be assigned to the law enforcement command post in addition to any personnel assigned to the EOC.

### Financial considerations

Although property damage to both private and public property in violent civil disturbances can cost hundreds of millions of dollars, as it has in Florida, the communities next most expensive expenditure can be attributed to salaries of public

servants, involved in the disturbance, specifically firefighters and police officers. For this reason it should be addressed in the planning stages. Once a violent civil disturbance begins, if no plan is in place to track expenditures, many expenditures fall through the cracks because of all the overwhelming chaos and tremendous influx of personnel and resources during the early stages of a civil disturbance.

Agency administrators should meet with their fiscal personnel or county/city commissions during the planning stages and develop a method for tracking and recording expenditures, for future reference. Many agencies in Florida have already experienced problems related to documentation of expenditures during civil disturbances, or more frequently, hurricane disasters, either of which can devastate an agency or community budget in a relatively short period of time. For this reason, it is extremely important for agencies to determine exact costs after a civil disturbance, as federal financial aid may be available for reimbursement. The Emergency Federal Assistance Program, authorized under the Justice Assistance Act of 1984, is the program from which most agencies seek reimbursement for their costs related to civil disturbances. Not every agency, however, gets reimbursed for their expenditures, and the reimbursement process itself is very tedious and requires detailed expense reports.

### Intelligence

This is one area that could actually assist in preventing the flash point of a violent civil disturbance from occurring. Intelligence gathering can take many forms, from the uniformed or community police officer on the street to leaders of the community. The most important aspect of intelligence is the information gained from listening to the community, especially prior to the outbreak of violence. Some signs which may be an indication that a disturbance is likely to occur are increases of rock and bottle throwing incidents, bogus calls for service, and an increase in random gunfire calls. Although not one of these specific incidents may in itself cause a disturbance, combined with other events in the community, it may be all that is needed for a flashpoint to occur. This is the point where violence may possibly be averted if political and community leaders work together to defuse the situation. Many of the problems in a community are perceived problems based upon rumors and the lack of factual information.

If political and community leaders are unable to defuse a situation and a flash point occurs, some agencies have actually used their uniformed first responders to videotape the crowd. This videotaping of the crowd serves three purposes. First, it gathers intelligence. Second, it can identify inciters for future prosecution. Third, it takes away the anonymity of the crowd and puts a face with a specific action. This can have a calming effect when the inciters can no longer blend into the crowd.

### Laws and Ordinances

There are numerous state laws that can be utilized to affect the arrests of rioters during violent civil disturbances such as riots/affrays, unlawful assembly, disorderly conduct, and throwing a deadly missile. During the planning stages for civil disturbances police administrators should, in conjunction with city or county commissioners, develop an emergency curfew ordinance which can be enacted upon the outbreak of a civil

disturbance. Many jurisdictions in the state already have some type of curfew ordinance on the books which is usually intended for juveniles. An emergency curfew ordinance, however, can be developed to be more restrictive and include adults. The emergency curfew ordinance greatly enhances the ability of law enforcement personnel to eliminate crowds from gathering, and to clear the streets with legal authority.

### Media Relations

Dealing with the media during a violent civil disturbance can prove to be extremely challenging for press information officers. It is important during the planning stages for a civil disturbance that the plan include specifics on how to deal with the media. A good guideline is to designate a specific briefing location away from the operational/tactical law enforcement command post. All news releases should be composed and reviewed by all designated officials prior to release. There should be only one spokesperson who should address the media on behalf of all agencies, and briefings should be given every half hour. It is imperative that police commanders provide the designated spokesperson with the most timely, factual information about the disturbance so that the credibility of the spokesperson is not compromised, and the media will keep a presence at the briefing location. Although a briefing location, is desirable, it will still be necessary to deal with news crews in the disturbance area. A briefing location, will possibly, however, reduce the numbers of news crews that actually enter the area.

### Preparation

Preparation prior to the outbreak of a disturbance is critical to the operational readiness of the agency and the ability for the agency to function properly and professionally during a violent civil disturbance. The difference between being prepared or not could literally be the difference between life and death for law enforcement personnel in the field.

### Resource assessment

This is the one area which can have the most direct impact on the successful outcome of a violent civil disturbance and, the one area for which an agency can be planned for prior to the outbreak of a disturbance. Resource assessment can actually be broken down into four broad categories: 1) personnel; 2) equipment; 3) government services; and, 4) private companies and/or vendors.

Personnel assessment in the context of violent civil disturbance preparation doesn't just mean how many certified law enforcement personnel there are in an agency, but also how many can be assigned to an affected disturbance area and how quickly it can be accomplished. When assessing personnel needs, the following questions should be addressed: 1) How many law enforcement personnel will be required to maintain basic law enforcement services in the affected and unaffected areas of the city ? 2) If the civil disturbance spans the duration of several shifts or days, is there a contingency plan to go to 12 hour shifts? Is there a procedure in place to implement this contingency plan? 3) Do you have a way to recall law enforcement and civilian support personnel who are off-duty, and has it been established who has the authority to order this call up? This created some logistical problems for some of the state agencies that responded to the

St. Petersburg disturbances. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement is researching the feasibility of assigning alpha pagers or developing some type of a call up system for state personnel. 4) How many and what type of civilian personnel will need to be utilized during a disturbance i.e, additional communication personnel or additional telephone operators? 5) If outside law enforcement personnel are required under mutual aid, how many are available from the immediate area and how long will it take to mobilize them?

By no means is this list of questions complete. These sample questions are only meant to illustrate the level of complexity necessary when assessing personnel requirements. Questions regarding personnel assessment can be extensive but all the questions can and should be addressed *prior* to the outbreak of a disturbance. There are many variables that will affect the specific needs of personnel within your agency during a civil disturbance. That's why it is imperative that these needs be addressed in the preparation stages rather than after the fact.

The second category, equipment assessment, is much more straightforward than personnel assessment. In this category the first step is to determine what equipment each individual agency feels appropriate for their personnel based upon their communities or threat level. In addition to the threat level as a gauge for equipment purchases, there are other factors which police administrators will need to consider such as budgetary restraints. The one factor that most law enforcement agencies in Florida have in common is budgetary restraints and, because most equipment is expensive, this creates a dilemma for most agencies. There is federal military surplus equipment available through the Defense Revitalization Program, coordinated by the Department of Management Services Bureau of Federal Property Assistance in Tallahassee, Florida. This program has assisted many of Florida's law enforcement agencies in acquiring equipment such as ballistic helmets, gas masks, or peacekeeper vehicles at a minimal cost, in some cases literally pennies on the dollar.

The third category is government services assessment. Just as it is impractical for one police agency to handle a violent civil disturbance on its own, it is equally impractical for a city, county or state government to stand alone with its services during a violent civil disturbance when its resources will be depleted rapidly. It is extremely important that during government services assessment, law enforcement administrators interact with other governmental administrators to determine what services are available, how to access the services, and the time it will take to respond with these services.

Some limited examples of services that should be assessed are: 1) fire departments, specifically to determine if they have a contingency plan and what services law enforcement will need to provide, such as vehicle escorts. Many fire departments have standard operating procedures that restrict certain responses during a civil disturbance. The agency should know these restrictions prior to an incident occurring; 2) sanitation departments - they could remove debris, and empty dumpsters so they can not be set on fire; 3) transportation departments - they can provide road barricades, street sweepers and dump trucks with loads of sand to block vehicle access to an affected area. During the City of St. Petersburg civil disturbance on October 24, 1996, police commanders utilized city services extensively. Most visibly, was when the disturbance subsided, road crews assisted with barricades and street sweepers which cleared

debris from the roadway. This proved to be very effective in limiting access to rocks and bottles by the rioters.. Every agency will have to determine what government services should be assessed, based on their community and the resources available to them. It is very important that police administrators understand that a violent civil disturbance is not just a law enforcement problem, but a more global one that affects the entire region and impacts all facets of government services and the community.

The fourth and final category that requires assessment is private companies and/ or vendors. This category can be one of the easiest assessments for an agency to accomplish, but is also one of the most overlooked until a crisis occurs. It is very important that law enforcement agencies identify companies and vendors that stock significant supplies of disposable munitions. Stocking items in large quantities such as smoke, chemical munitions, specialty impact munitions (bean bags rounds) can be very expensive, and most of these types of munitions have an expiration date. In addition to identifying these companies, agencies should create a data bank with twenty four hour contact numbers in the event that an emergency purchase is required after hours or on holidays. The logistics of these purchases should be worked out prior to an incident so that bureaucratic red tape doesn't impede the tactical operation. Police administrators should not rely on mutual aid to replenish their supplies, as most police agencies in the immediate region will be concerned with collateral damage and flash points in their own jurisdictions and, therefore be reluctant to give up their supplies.

Law enforcement suppliers aren't the only vendors who need to be identified prior to a disturbance. One of the problem areas that has been identified in Florida's past civil disturbances was the lack of quality food and beverages for law enforcement personnel in the field and at the staging areas during extended operations. Law enforcement personnel assigned and deployed at a civil disturbance must function in a high stress environment and fast food is not a adequate diet to maintain in a high state of mental and physical alertness. Agencies should consider developing a contractual agreement with local vendors who can cater several hundred meals on relatively short notice. Another option that can be explored is the use of community groups such as the Salvation Army or the Red Cross for assistance with food. These groups however may actually become over-burdened with requests if the civil disturbance lasts for several days.

### Equipment

When we discuss equipment as it pertains to violent civil disturbances, there are actually three different categories that need to be considered. They are: 1) personal equipment which is issued to the individual; 2) department equipment which is utilized by all members of the agency; 3) specialized equipment which is utilized by specific members and/or teams of the agency who are authorized and qualified to use the specialty equipment.

Some examples and suggestions for personal equipment above and beyond regular issued equipment items are: 1) gas mask - fitted to the individual (with spectacle attachment if appropriate or: if needed); 2) ballistic vest; 3) helmet with face shield - fitted to the individual, it can be ballistic or non-ballistic, however the back of the helmet should have some sort of identifiable designator so the individual can be identified by

supervisors when they are working a line formation; 4) tactical clothing - individuals should have at least one tactical uniform with BDU type pants (extra pockets) and a long sleeved shirt clearly identifiable as law enforcement; 5) radio ear piece - which will fit under a helmet yet afford the individual wearer the ability to hear communications in a noisy, chaotic environment.

Department civil disturbance equipment is more generic and is not fitted or designed with a specific individual in mind, but can be utilized as necessary providing the individuals have received training with the equipment. Most agencies issue this equipment when the need dictates so it's available for on duty personnel. Some examples of department equipment would be: 1) shields--non-ballistic types; 2) 12 gauge shotguns--these guns can be utilized for both lethal and less lethal impact rounds; 3) flex cuffs--some agencies issue these to the individual, however, because of the quantity necessary during a civil disturbance, departments should consider having additional supplies on hand.

Specialized equipment has a much narrower usage and is usually utilized by specialized units and /or teams or specific members of an agency requiring additional training. Examples of specialized equipment are: 1) gas guns; 2) night vision; 3) counter sniper rifles; 4) peacekeeper rescue vehicle (armored vehicle); and, 5) less lethal weapons. Obviously, this list will vary with the needs of an individual agency.

#### Specialized units or teams

These teams are units and/or teams that have a particular expertise or mission that plays a support role to the personnel in the field. The specialized units which have been utilized extensively during civil disturbances in Florida are Flight, Canine, and SWAT.

Police agencies around the state have utilized law enforcement helicopters for a variety of missions during civil disturbances, such as an observation platform to gather intelligence on the size, intensity, and the direction of movement of a disturbance. Helicopters play a significant role in counter sniper operations. When field personnel can't get close enough to locate snipers, helicopter personnel are able to pinpoint a sniper's location from their airborne perspective. The use of helicopters at night which are equipped with night sun and FLIR (forward looking infrared) enhances officer safety tremendously by illuminating suspects who attempt to conceal themselves by cover of darkness. The use of helicopters in this manner reduces ambush situations on field personnel. The major drawback to the use of helicopters is they are susceptible to small arms fire from the ground when they hover or are operating at a altitude necessary to make the night sun or FLIR effective. On November 13, 1996, the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office Flight Section, while operating helicopter missions over the St. Petersburg civil disturbance, received incoming small arms fire striking the helicopter and wounding a pilot. In after action debriefings of the flight crew, both pilots indicated that, if helicopters are going to operate during a violent civil disturbance under 1500 feet, they should not hover and pilots should always have an emergency landing site available.

Police canines, if properly deployed, can be a very effective tool during a civil disturbance. If not properly used, they can be a public relations nightmare and

substantially increase an agency's liability. When people hear that police dogs are going to be utilized in a civil disturbance they reminisce of the horrific scenes of police dogs attacking rioters in the 1960's riots. When canines and their handlers are trained properly, however, canines can be an asset. Canines can be used to track suspects who ambush field personnel, or to cover the flanks of response teams that are on foot, provided the canines are on leashes. Canines can also be used to protect or guard a fixed location, reducing the number of personnel required to accomplish this task.

SWAT teams (Special Weapons and Tactics) can provide field personnel with the necessary increased firepower, counter sniper capability and support officer rescue operations required in a violent civil disturbance. The key to the successful deployment of a Swat team during a disturbance, however, is not to overburden these teams with functions which can be handled by other field personnel. These teams should be assigned to a specific geographical area, the size of which should be determined by the number of teams at your disposal. These teams should serve as direct support to the field personnel in their designated area. They should patrol the designated area and respond to "shots fired" calls, support officer rescue situations and provide counter sniper capabilities as necessary.

#### New technologies/products

Since the riots of the mid to late sixties, many new technologies and products have been developed to assist law enforcement and many of these technologies have civil disturbance applications which law enforcement has tested and utilized effectively and successfully. Many manufacturers of chemical munitions have developed new and improved methods of deployment for their products which are safer in an urban environment. Some examples of improved products are non-burning and reduced residue chemical munitions. These improved products are safer to utilize and don't require exhaustive clean up to restore an affected area back to normal after they have been deployed.

One of the most recent technologies to be deployed by civilian law enforcement agencies across the country and which may have the greatest future impact on law enforcement use of force policy, is less-lethal impact weapons, also known as speciality impact or kinetic energy weapons. Examples of such weapons are bean bag rounds and stinger grenade projectiles, which are manufactured with rubber, foam and other synthetic products. These projectiles are designed to temporarily incapacitate suspects and be less-lethal when used properly. These weapons provide law enforcement with additional options when confronted with certain types of violent situations, but it is important to realize this is only an additional option. This should in no way impede the use of deadly force by law enforcement when it is absolutely necessary to save a life. In the past, specifically in Florida, during civil disturbances when confronted by individual suspects who were throwing rocks, bottles or pieces of concrete that could inflict serious injuries or death, law enforcement had very few options. First, by law they could utilize deadly force to neutralize the suspect, which is almost sure to escalate an already volatile situation in the community. Second, they could leave the area and give the looters and rioters free rein in the community. Now, with impact weapons such as bean bag rounds or stinger grenades law enforcement can choose the third option which is less-

lethal force. Less-lethal force, when applied correctly, can reach out to a suspect and briefly immobilize or incapacitate a suspect long enough to effect an arrest, or at a bare minimum neutralize the suspect and stop the violent behavior.

### Logistics

Attention must be given to logistical support during violent civil disturbance preparation stages. The logistical support for a large scale civil disturbance, one which has several hundred law enforcement personnel in the field at any given time, can be overwhelming if an agency hasn't prepared in advance. The logistical support for a civil disturbance which involves many different agencies and services, requires a tremendous coordination effort. Some consideration should be given to the following areas during the preparation stages of logistical support: 1) *Transportation* - for both law enforcement personnel and suspects who have been arrested; 2) *Staging areas* - large enough for hundreds of vehicles, command post, and helicopter landing zones which is close enough to the disturbance yet far enough removed that it won't get consumed by the disturbance; and, 3) *Communications* - radio communications proved to be one of the most difficult logistical problems to overcome when managing a civil disturbance. Unfortunately, not every agency has a compatible radio system, thus compounding the difficulty with communications. Host agencies should create radio designations in advance for all incoming mutual aid agencies to reduce confusion and for better control of resources directed through the host agency's communications center; 4. *Food and lodging* - host agencies must be able to provide mass feeding for several hundred personnel in the field. In addition to feeding large groups of personnel, many incoming mutual aid personnel will need lodging; 5) *Mass arrests* - procedures for mass arrests should be developed in advance. Some of the key issues that should be considered when developing procedures are: a. Will there be an abbreviated booking process? b. Will suspects be printed and photographed at the staging area? c. Will the arresting officer be photographed with the suspect? Who will take the photograph? d. Will the suspect be transported out of the disturbance area by the arresting officer or will a transportation van enter the disturbance area to retrieve the suspect? 6. *Equipment* - during civil disturbances, many different agencies receive assignments that require close interactions with other agencies which, because of operational necessity, requires the loaning of equipment among these agencies. Accountability for equipment becomes an issue during and after a civil disturbance. For this reason a system should be in place to address this accountability issue. During the St. Petersburg disturbance, portable radios were issued to numerous agencies and the accountability system for these radios insured one hundred percent return rate. The system that was utilized was a video camera on a tripod. Each person who received a loaner radio looked into the camera and stated his or her name, agency and then the individual read the serial number off the radio. This system was fast, easy and it proved very successful. Obviously, this partial list of support areas which requires logistical preparation just scratches the surface of the preparation required to manage a violent civil disturbance, but it gives you some insight into the enormous task logistical support personnel have to contend with prior to and during a disturbance.

### Field assignments

This includes both uniformed and non-uniformed personnel assignments. Assignments can vary from fixed site security posts, road blocks, and perimeter containment teams to mobile field force emergency response teams, all of which are equally important to the successful outcome of the operation.

A good procedure to follow is to have local law enforcement work within the containment disturbance area rather than mutual aid personnel because they are more familiar with the local community and they have a vested interest in the end result of the disturbance. Mutual aid uniformed personnel can be used to provide local law enforcement with support, if required, and for containment posts around the affected area. These uniformed personnel can also back fill uniformed services in the unaffected areas of the city. When assistance from the state of Florida is requested, they can provide uniformed law enforcement personnel as well as non-uniformed personnel such as the Florida Department of Law Enforcement agents. These non-uniformed personnel actually can serve as a force multiplier for local law enforcement by utilizing them for such tasks as fixed-site security (pawn shops, gun shops, liquor stores) and follow up investigations in unaffected areas of the city and the processing of prisoners. All these tasks require certified law enforcement personnel but not necessarily uniformed personnel.

### Tactics

Most agencies in the State of Florida have adapted some variation of the Miami field force concept and conformed it to their needs. The field force concept is designed to provide a rapid organized response to civil disturbances and gain quick control of the situation. It can be deployed to restore order, move crowds, rescue victims and isolate problem areas. Field force emphasizes group rather than individual action.

When deploying uniform field forces or emergency response teams to a violent disturbance area, a good rule to follow is to commit one third of a force to the mission and keep one third in support of the first third and the last one third should be held in a reserve status.

### Community Programs

These programs develop bridges within the community. And involve community leaders working in conjunction with police agencies. This can be an excellent tool to control rumors and in some situations, if deployed quickly after an incident occurs, may actually avert a flashpoint and prevent a violent civil disturbance.

### Coordination

Coordination is the one element that actually influences the success of the other three elements: planning, preparation, and training. Coordination begins with inter-agency cooperation, with a common focus, and organizational philosophy. The second phase of coordination, which requires much more effort and resources, is intra-agency coordination. This requires team work among many different agencies both law enforcement and non-law enforcement working towards the common goal, which is the

successful management of a violent civil disturbance. Some examples of agencies that should be involved in the coordination process are: law enforcement, fire departments, emergency medical services, city services, national guard, and at some point, representatives of the media. All these agencies will have to interact at some point during a violent disturbance, and it is advantageous to law enforcement administrators to have any major philosophical differences or problems worked out in advance of an actual disturbance.

### Training

Training gives law enforcement personnel the ability to successfully complete the tasks delegated to them. Training should be as realistic as possible and should include exercises that apply stress to the people on all levels of the command structure. The 1992 Los Angeles riots after action report emphasized the importance of training. Specifically, it stated:

Training is even more critical in the business of emergency response, where there is no time for on-the-job learning. Given the condensed time frame of, and chaotic environment surrounding, emergency response to a civil disturbance, training is an indispensable element for all participants in the response (Webster, 1992, p.91).

Agency training for civil disturbances should be implemented agency-wide for all certified law enforcement and should include some variation of the Miami field force concept which utilizes mobile tactics. This field force concept has proved to be a very successful tactic in past disturbances. The training should also include the traditional walking line formations and, for the specialized teams such as SWAT, the training should include counter sniper flanking maneuvers. Everyone in the agency, however, should receive training on the actual response plan and its implementation especially supervisors. This should be worked into a tabletop exercise that can test the practicality of the plan and the mutual aid resources with neighboring jurisdictions.

### Conclusion

This research paper states that a violent civil disturbance can happen anywhere in any community. If expert forecasts materialize, we may be faced with violent disturbances which are of unprecedented magnitude and intensity.

As law enforcement administrators, we have to interact with and develop bridges within our communities in order to reduce the possible occurrence of violent civil disturbances. Since the early eighties, the majority of Florida's violent civil disturbances were precipitated by some police action which was interpreted as unjust or brutal by the community.

Although significant benefits have been accomplished through community-based programs they are not failsafe in the prevention of civil disturbances. Law enforcement has both an obligation and a responsibility to the communities they serve to be prepared to manage violent civil disturbances effectively. This research paper identifies important facets which must be addressed in order to either defuse and/or manage a violent civil disturbance.

The critical elements identified are planning, preparation, coordination, and training. These events must occur prior to a violent civil disturbance in order to manage it effectively. It is far better to have a plan and not use it than to have no plan when you need it.

#### Recommendations

1. *Statewide mandated emergency response training for all law enforcement agencies.* This training should be directed through the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission, and should be taught from a statewide lesson plan so that any certified law enforcement officer can be integrated into any agency's civil disturbance response.
2. *Statewide regional chemical munitions and impact weapons munitions storage centers.* These storage centers could be funded by a cooperative effort of all law enforcement agencies within a particular region. By using a cooperative effort to stock and fund these storage centers, the cost can be distributed among many agencies, thereby reducing the burden to any one agency.
3. *Regional civil disturbance workshops, conducted on an annual basis, to discuss new technologies, equipment, and techniques.* In addition, these workshops would provide an excellent forum to update training lesson plans and conduct tabletop exercises.

**Lieutenant Dan Simovich** has been a member of the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office since 1979. During his tenure at the Sheriff's Office, he has served in a variety of operational and investigative components. His current assignment is commander of the Special Operations Division. In addition Dan has been placed on special assignment twice and served as Interim Chief Deputy at the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office and Interim Chief of Police at the Belleair Bluffs Police Department.

Dan has a Bachelors degree in Criminology from Saint Leo College. He serves on the Florida Sheriff's Association Command Advisory Team for Civil Disturbances and Tactical Operations and serves on the Criminology Senior Seminar Board at Saint Leo College. Dan's professional interests include crisis management and tactical operations.

#### References

Allgeyer, G. A. (1996). Social Protests in the 1990's: Planning a Response. [Online], Available: [www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov).

Hubbs, K. (1997). Riot response an innovative approach. FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, 8-11.

Lindberg, A. (1996, November 15). Hard lessons confront pupils. The St. Petersburg Times, p. B3.

Madhubuti, H. R. (Ed.). (1993). Why L.A. happened: Implications of the '92 Los Angeles Rebellion. Chicago: Third World Press.

Russell, H. E., & Beigel, A. (1990). Understanding human behavior for effective

police work (3rd ed.). New York: Basic Books.

Salak, J. (1993). The Los Angeles Riots: America's cities in crisis. Brookfield, Ca: Millbrook Press

Sapp, A. D. (1996). Looking over the horizon: The likelihood of civil disturbances ( Futurist Rep. No. 7-96 ). Warrensburg, Mo.

Sapp, A. D. (1996). Looking over the horizon: Policing in America in the 21st Century ( Futurist Rep. No. 8-96 ). Warrensburg, Mo.

Toffer, A. (1985). The Adaptive Corporation. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Tafoya, W. L. (1993, Winter ). Rioting in the streets: Deja' vu?. C.J. the Americas, 2, 19-23.

Tuscon, P. A. (1993, October). Civil disorder. Law Enforcement Technology, 20, 36-42.

Vernon, B. (1992). L.A. justice. Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family Pub.

Webster, W. H., Williams, H., (1992, October). A Report by the Special Advisor to the Board of Police Commissioners on the Civil Disorder in Los Angeles. The City In Crisis. Los Angeles, Ca.

Williams, R. G. (Ed.). (1993). Reading Rodney King/reading urban uprising. New York: Routledge.

Wright, S. (1978). Crowds and riots : A study in social organization. Beverly Hills Ca.: Sage Publications.