

VINCENT P. SARUBBI
Camden County Prosecutor



Camden County
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

JAMES P. LYNCH
First Assistant Prosecutor
HAROLD KASSELMAN
Deputy First Assistant Prosecutor
ANTHONY R. SAPONARE
Chief of Investigations

25 North Fifth Street
Camden, New Jersey 08102-1231
Tel: (856) 225-8400 Fax: (856) 963-0080

September 9, 2003

Re: Supercession of the Camden City Police Department - 2003

Dear City Council Member:

On March 21, 2003, I submitted a preliminary plan to effectuate Attorney General Harvey's Order that I supercede the management, administration and operation of the Camden City Police Department. I am pleased to report that we have substantially completed implementing the recommendations of the management study prepared by the division. I enclose an action point matrix which summarizes our progress. The matrix identifies each recommendation as well as provides a specific status disposition. Of the 82 action points recommended in the criminal justice report, 50 have been completed, 16 are pending city administration approval of the Virtua Hospital lease, 3 are pending FY '04 budget funding, 6 are not applicable and 7 will be completed by the end of the year.¹ We have also completed additional management reforms which I will outline below. Finally, we have completed a reorganization plan which includes the Strategic Anti-Firearm Enforcement Initiative (S.A.F.E.). We are prepared to present the reorganization plan and the S.A.F.E. initiative to you and the other members of council at your convenience. I have attached a summary of S.A.F.E. initiative activity from May 28th through August 10th for your review.

With respect to the inventory and audit of all evidence, I have formed a task force consisting of representatives from the department, and the Camden County Prosecutor's Office to undertake the audit. Captain Michael Kantner of the prosecutor's office has had supervisory responsibility over the task force. In conjunction with the inventory a large quantity of old evidence, including guns, has been destroyed. The evidence inventory is complete and management reforms are under discussion.

Vincent Litrenta of the Camden County Prosecutor's Office will work with Captain Olsen of the Camden City Police Department to prepare a fixed asset inventory of such items as weapons, portable radios, vehicles, computer equipment, software and other items.

¹ If the Virtua Hospital lease is approved by city council, the patrol bureau can move in and we can close the district houses and go to central roll call at Virtua.

The inventory and audit of the internal affairs unit was completed on May 6, 2003.

The team from the division of criminal justice reviewed and evaluated a total of 430 open internal affairs cases as of the end of December 2002. Based upon their review, they have prepared a list which contains the case number, type of allegation, as well as the division's recommendation for disposition, a comment about their recommendation, and the date the file was reviewed. Of the 430 backlogged cases reviewed, the division recommended 224 be closed. Of the 224, 26 cases were the subject of the consent decree before Judge Kugler involving allegations of excessive force. The attorney representing the department has recommended that these officers, at a minimum, be sent to training with regard to use of force. The most common reason justifying closure according to the division was a failure to investigate or an inadequate investigation conducted by the department. Thirteen (13) of the cases were recommended for closure for violation of the 45 Day Rule. In addition to the 224 recommended for closure, the internal affairs unit has closed 90 other backlogged cases. From January 2003 to August 15, 2003 196 new cases have been opened and 56 have been closed leaving 140 cases open and pending for 2003.

Clearly, communications required the most attention. The department generated a response to the report of the Camden County Communications Center. Most significantly, two city officers have been certified by OETS as trainers. Captain Smith has completed training for the eight (8) hour in-service training for years 2002 and 2003. In compliance with the Office of the Emergency Telecommunications Services (OETS), a training list was approved for the Camden Communications Bureau and training scheduled.

A new training program is in place. Each communications bureau squad has received training in an effort to meet the respective objectives of the new training program and the deficiencies as noted by the criminal justice report and the Lindenwold Communications Bureau. Telecommunicators have also received three (3) hours of training with devices for the deaf. The purpose of this training is to orient personnel to issues related to communications with persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired. This deficiency was noted by the Lindenwold Telecommunications facility evaluators. Also, three (3) hours of audio/visual programs were approved to orient personnel to films, audio or video tapes, other media broadcast which illustrate or review proper public safety telecommunications procedures.

In terms of staffing, the department reached the critically low level of thirty-three (33) telecommunicators where fifty (50) were recommended. We received authorization to hire additional telecommunicators from Mr. Primas. In the past, we have had great difficulty recruiting new telecommunicators because the starting salary was \$19,000.00. In fact, we were unable to attract qualified telecommunicators. In a recent round of hires involving the lower salary, we could only attract approximately ten (10) prospective hires that were interviewed and went through background checks. They were quickly eliminated because of problems in their background. As you know, City Council recently passed an ordinance increasing the entry level salary scale for telecommunicators to \$27,000.00. As a result, more than 100 applications for the position were received by the city personnel department. There are currently 42 telecommunications operators. The remaining 8 vacancies will be filled by October 1, 2003. They are currently scheduling physical and psychological exams and completing background checks. Once staffing levels are increased in communications, it is imperative that we analyze and develop a plan of action to substantially reduce with the goal of eliminating the need for overtime within the communications bureau.

With respect to the supervision of telecommunicators, Chief Figueroa has designated specific supervisory sergeants to staff communications so they can develop a degree of expertise in this area. All supervisory and command staff currently hold APCO certifications and at least two (2) officers are certified to teach the telecommunicator training course. We have discussed, in conjunction with supervising sergeants, creating the position of civilian telecommunication supervisor but because of reduced staffing levels it is impossible to promote from within. A possible solution which we will explore is hiring experienced supervisory telecommunicators rather than waiting on the staffing and learning curve which could take sometime.

The department has a plan and evaluation process to train the new hires. The probationary period for all telecommunication trainees has been extended to one (1) year from the ninety (90) day period under previous commands. Telecommunicator trainees are evaluated daily, and are provided with an opportunity to correct performance deficiencies via remedial training and one-on-one assistance. All evaluations are maintained in the respective employee personnel file.

A Standard Operating Procedures Manual has been developed for the communications unit. The manual was developed and approved by the Acting Chief and the Camden County Prosecutor's Office. It was distributed on May 12, 2003.

Recently, six (6) hours of call review activities were approved. The purpose is to improve the quality of service to the public and to improve the telecommunicators overall ability to dispatch and respond to emergency calls.

Reorganization of Camden City Police Department

A reorganization plan has been completed by Acting Chief Figueroa and his staff. The plan calls for ninety (90) additional officers on the street by April of 2004, the exit date for the State Police. Of course, we desperately need an increased police presence in the city, however, in the event they depart, we have prepared an exit strategy that will supplement their loss. The increase in police officers on the street will be achieved as follows:

- Thirty (30) new hires of which 24 graduated from the academy on June 26, 2003;
- Twenty (20) from closure of the district houses;
- Fifteen (15) as a result of civilization
- Twenty-five (25) additional new hires

Central to the reorganization plan is the creation of the bureau of special operations, a unique coordination of directed patrol units, narcotics investigation and community policing officers. The bureau commanded by a police captain, is cast as the leader of the violent crime and open-air drug market suppression effort. Focusing on peak times and hot spots determined through crime analysis, this management initiative efficiently allocates personnel where they are needed most. It is important to note that the bureau is separate and distinct from the patrol unit which primarily responds to calls for service. The bureau functions to give the department a proactive crime fighting tool in analytically determined "hot spots" throughout the city. The newly established Strategic Anti-Firearm Enforcement Initiative (S.A.F.E.) is the first proactive initiative of the bureau.

The total cost of the reorganization is \$2,261,719.16 (consisting of \$1,591,828 salary and wages and \$669,891 in operating expenses.) We are awaiting approval of the reorganization plan from the State, Mayor Faison and Mr. Primas and City Council.

In an effort to compare our involvement with the department, I reviewed the state/county intervention under other administrations. We could change the names and dates in the reports but ironically, the problems remain essentially the same. In my discussions with Chief Saponare and Acting Chief Figueroa, I have tasked them to consider and identify what aspects of our involvement will be different. As Chief Saponare has so often and aptly stated, considering his 28 years with the department, "This is probably the most studied department in the State of New Jersey." Will the state/prosecutor be required to intervene in another three (3) years? What can we do to permanently improve the leadership, organizational structure and accountability of the department?

The hallmark of prior reorganizations has been simply to deploy additional officers during periods when calls for service are highest. This reorganization goes much further. It calls for the department to go to a central roll call by closing the dilapidated district trailers; **operationalizing** crime mapping; utilization of crime mapping in conjunction with Comstat to improve the focus and accountability of the rank-and-file; reorganization of the department to create the bureau of special operations and the new Strategic Anti-Firearm Enforcement Initiative (S.A.F.E.), a proactive directed patrol effort initiated on May 28, 2003 designed to reduce violent crime in targeted areas. S.A.F.E. is currently operating in three (3) sectors of the city. We would like to expand the initiative to other sectors as part of the reorganization.

In contrast, our intervention not only puts substantially more officers on the street during times when calls for service are highest, but more significantly gives them a proactive crime suppression mission (S.A.F.E. Initiative) that doesn't leave the patrol bureau to simply go from one call for service to another. Finally, through crime mapping and Comstat, the department can focus proactive patrols on analytically identified "hot spots" throughout the city and hold command supervisors accountable for reducing crime in those areas.

The implementation of central roll call faces several remaining hurdles.

As you may be aware, we have run into opposition from the rank-and-file, as well as the police unions over the fact that all of the district houses cannot be housed at the police administration building for central roll call. My evaluation reveals that their position is accurate. Previously, Acting Chief Figueroa investigated obtaining space at L3 Communications for the 1st and 3rd Districts. Unfortunately, this investigation was not fruitful. Acting Chief Figueroa came up with the idea to centralize all patrol units at Virtua Hospital on Mount Ephraim Avenue in Sector 203. Of course, there will be a cost involved. The facility at Virtua provides parking, is a state-of-the-art facility which includes adequate security, as well as facilities layout for central patrol operations. As an additional benefit, it will create a police presence in one of the worst neighborhoods in the city. Certainly, this is a better option to holding roll call for all districts at the police administration building, particularly in light of the additional ninety (90) officers that could join the department by April 2004. If City Council approves the lease we could be in Virtua within thirty (30) to sixty (60) days.

The second most critical aspect of implementing central roll call is operationalizing crime mapping. The data must be in real time, analyzed and disseminated to supervisors for use by patrol

units. The current crime mapping system was installed in 1998. **Although a substantial amount of money has been spent for crime mapping, currently the data is not in real time; it is not analyzed nor disseminated to command supervisors for the benefit of patrol and other units.** At this point, we have retained the services of an outside consultant to assist us in operationalizing crime mapping. We have received a proposal that will operationalize the existing crime mapping system making information available to commanders as well as officers on the street.

Overall, police presence on the street will increase substantially because of several initiatives. The initiatives are listed as follows:

1. Increase of 90 new officers on the street.
2. Improved accountability through review and evaluation of all internal affairs cases.
3. Introduction of staff inspections.
4. Improvement of central processing/arrest procedure.
5. Adoption and enforcement of a new secondary employment policy.

Over the past three (3) months, I have finalized negotiations with the unions over a new secondary employment policy prepared by Acting Chief Figueroa. The only aspect which remains outstanding is for the city administration to complete the financial aspects of the policy and obtain approval from City Council for the ordinance.

One of the initiatives that will increase police presence on the street involves central processing. The city, state police and prosecutor's office have jointly agreed to use forfeiture funds confiscated during a CAP drug operation to purchase computer technology that will significantly improve processing of arrestees. A new dynamic imaging system has been installed in central complaint. The system has modernized and drastically shortened the entire booking/arrest process. We are also adding two (2) computers in central complaint so that three (3) work stations are available to speed up the booking process.

The Camden County Department of Corrections in cooperation between Warden David Owens and Acting Chief Edwin Figueroa has established a jail annex at the police administration building. This effort will compliment the new booking system and dramatically improve the booking process. The department of corrections has provided additional staff in central processing to assist department representatives in more efficiently processing arrestees. The result of this unique cooperative effort is that officers including those of the state police, will have an average turn-around time of 15 minutes instead of the usual 45 minutes to 1 ½ hours. This initiative will put officers back on the street after an arrest in a very short time.

I believe the overall effect of these initiatives will substantially increase the number and overall presence of police officers patrolling the streets of the city.

The re-organization plan and all other decisions with financial implications must be completed immediately. Now that state funding will move forward, a 2004 budget will likely be approved. The department's 2004 budget must reflect the financial impact of the re-organization plan and all other initiatives with a price tag, so that the department has the funding to accomplish its identified goals.

Recently, twenty-five (25) new police cruisers were fully equipped and are now in service. An inventory of existing vehicles is being compiled by Captain Hargis. The department will likely need new vehicles because of the additional patrol hires, as well as the annual purchase of replacement vehicles. The poor condition of city roads contributes to the need for frequent replacement.

I am available to discuss our progress with you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Vincent P. Sarubbi
Camden County Prosecutor

VPS/jb
Enc.