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# Improvements Needed In Assigning Metropolitan Police Department Officers B-778638

District of Columbia Government

**UNITED STATES  
GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE**

DEC. 21, 1973

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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

GENERAL GOVERNMENT  
DIVISION

B-118638

The Honorable Walter E. Washington  
Commissioner of the District of Columbia

Dear Mr. Washington:

We have reviewed the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department's (MPD's) assignment of police officers (1) because of the widespread concern with crime in the Nation's Capital and (2) because 2,000 additional police officers were authorized for the MPD in fiscal years 1969 and 1970. *C. 1350*

At the MPD headquarters and district offices, we reviewed (1) officer assignments within the MPD's Patrol Division in relation to workloads and (2) officer assignments, MPD-wide, which involved administrative support, clerical, or technical duties. We also obtained information on police department operations in a city comparable in size to the District and consulted with officials of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Justice, and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP).

Improvements are needed in assigning MPD officers. Significant differences existed, for example, between the number of Patrol Division officers assigned by day of week and the workload by day of week. Reductions in these differences should increase MPD's effectiveness. Also civilians could effectively fill many positions officers hold. Replacing officers in such positions with civilians would result in cost reductions.

The Chief of Police generally agreed with our findings.

BACKGROUND

One action taken in response to a continuing increase in crime in the Nation's Capital was the congressional authorization of 2,000 additional police officer positions for

the District in fiscal years 1969 and 1970. In fiscal year 1968 MPD had 3,100 authorized police positions; 472 authorized full-time civilian positions, including 119 police cadet positions; and an operating budget of about \$45 million. Police officer and civilian position vacancies at the end of the fiscal year were 143 and 55, respectively. In fiscal year 1973, MPD had 5,100 authorized police officer positions; 935 authorized civilian positions, including 199 police cadet positions; and an operating budget of about \$108 million. Police and civilian position vacancies at the end of the fiscal year were 210 and 124, respectively.

According to District statistical reports, the number of reported major criminal offenses in the District increased from 23,089 in fiscal year 1966 to 66,745 in fiscal year 1970, decreased to 54,089 in fiscal year 1971, and decreased to 34,308 in fiscal year 1973.

Although many factors have probably contributed to the recent decline in major crimes in the District, it appears that the substantial increase in the number of police officers has been a major factor.

MPD, headed by the Chief of Police, is organized into four Bureaus; the Field Operations Bureau is the principal operating unit. At June 30, 1973, the Bureau had 3,760 officers. It is organized into five divisions; the largest is the Patrol Division, which had 2,977 officers at June 30, 1973.

Patrol Division manpower is allocated among seven districts--geographical areas of the city. Each district is divided into motorized (scout car) patrol areas, of which there are 138. Patrol Division officer assignments include such duties as foot patrol, scooter patrol, and scout car patrol. The Division's mission is to prevent crime through the physical presence of officers on the streets and to respond to calls for service--particularly those resulting from criminal activities. The Special Operations Division assists the Patrol Division; its responsibilities include supplementing the patrol force at times of unusual criminal activity and performing regular patrol functions when regular district units cannot respond.

PATROL DIVISION OFFICERS SHOULD BE  
MORE EFFECTIVELY DEPLOYED

MPD and other law enforcement authorities generally agree that patrol assignments for officers should be closely aligned with workloads by area and by time of day and day of week to most effectively use available manpower in preventing crime and to respond promptly when crimes are committed.

Our analyses showed that significant disparities existed between officer assignments and workloads. One factor contributing to such disparities is the present officer assignment system for responding to citizens' calls for service. The lack of a system for reporting on the Patrol Division's workloads and officer assignments for each district by time of day and day of week was a major reason why police management did not minimize disparities between officer assignments and workloads.

Disparities between workloads and  
officer assignments

MPD uses a formula as a guide for determining how Patrol Division manpower should be allocated among the seven districts. This formula consists of seven weighted workload factors, including reported crimes, calls for service, and population.

Each quarter, the Assistant Chief of Police for Field Operations receives a report showing workloads as computed by the MPD formula and officer assignments to each district. He advised us that officers were not transferred among districts to meet changes in workload but that disparities between workload requirements and the number of officers assigned to each district are considered when assigning new officers. Our analyses showed that officer assignments to each district were kept reasonably close to the requirements as computed by the MPD formula. However, disparities existed between workloads and officer assignments by time of day and day of week.

Each District Commander can deploy officers on the basis of his assessment of needs, except that MPD requires that each motorized patrol area be patrolled by a scout car 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

MPD has not established a system for reporting on the Patrol Division's workloads and officer assignments for each district by time of day and day of week. According to the Chief of Police, however, crime statistics can be produced by time of day and day of week and, when there is a need for specific information, it is assembled promptly and disseminated where required.

Workload-officer assignment data should be assembled regularly for use in assessing performance and initiating necessary changes in assignments. If such data is assembled only as required, misallocated officer resources as discussed below could go unidentified for long periods and could result in lessening the deterrent to crime and the responsiveness to citizens' calls for service.

On the basis of MPD's workload formula and the total number of Patrol Division officers, more officers should have been assigned to the 4 p.m. to midnight tour of duty and fewer officers should have been assigned to the other two daily tours of duty. For example, from January through March 1972, 83 more officers, or about 14 percent, should have been assigned from 4 p.m. to midnight. According to the MPD formula, 83 fewer officers than assigned were needed on the other two daily tours of duty.

Also, on the basis of the same type of comparison discussed above, more officers should have been assigned to duty on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays and fewer should have been assigned on other days. For example, from January through March 1972, 334 more officers, or 27 percent, should have been assigned on Saturdays.

Since the Special Operations Division assists the Patrol Division, we compared the MPD formula workload requirements by time of day, day of week, and district with combined Patrol Division and Special Operations Division

assignments from January through March 1972. The results of this comparison were essentially the same as those made using only Patrol Division assignments.

The Chief of Police agreed that significant disparities existed between workloads and officer assignments by time of day and day of week. He stated, however, that there may be some way to improve the workload measures and that a study is being made to determine the best possible method.

In addition, there were significant disparities between the workloads of officers assigned to scout cars.

The present scout car patrol areas were established in 1969. According to MPD officials, data on calls for service was the primary basis for establishing area boundaries. The only changes in the boundaries since 1969 were made in August 1971 when the then-existing sixth district was divided to form the sixth and seventh districts. At that time, 15 additional areas were established in those districts and minor changes were made in the boundaries of several areas in the second and fourth districts.

Although officers assigned to scout cars are responsible for preventive patrol, as are officers assigned to foot patrol and scooter patrol, the officers assigned to scout cars are primarily responsible for fulfilling the mission of prompt response to calls for service. Almost all such calls are referred to the officers in scout cars.

An MPD official estimated that an average of about 680 officers a day manned scout cars during fiscal year 1973. Only one scout car is normally assigned to each patrol area; however, workloads differed substantially both among the areas and within areas by time of day. For example, from January through March 1972:

--On the 4 p.m. to midnight tour, 14 patrol areas each averaged between 29 and 73 calls for service. During the same tour, 14 other areas each averaged between 218 and 311 calls.

--The average number of calls for service in one patrol area on the midnight to 8 a.m. tour was 84. The average number of calls for service in the same area on the 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. tour was 222.

MPD officials said scout cars in patrol areas having high workloads were often assisted by scout cars from adjoining patrol areas. Nevertheless, the disparities in workloads among the areas resulted in disparities between the extent to which the officers assigned to the scout cars in each of the areas could achieve MPD's objectives of preventive patrol and prompt response to citizens' calls for service.

The Chief of Police said that (1) a major factor to be considered in comparing workloads is the type of call for service and the amount of time required to complete the case, (2) there is a need to have the scout car beats patrolled, although the Central Dispatcher might not relay any calls for service to them, and (3) scout car personnel handle various incidents on the spot and their activities would not necessarily be recorded on the Communications Division print-out showing calls for service. The Chief of Police said, however, disparities between workloads in the scout car areas were a major problem and a different system for scout car deployment would be tested in two districts, and, if successful, expanded to all seven districts. This test began in August 1973 and is expected to continue through about January 1974. MPD officials said under the system being tested the number of scout cars on patrol would vary, depending on the workload.

### Conclusions

MPD's most effective use of its available officers was not achieved because of significant disparities between officer assignments and workloads.

MPD's actions to test a different system for scout car deployment, if successful and if the system is implemented in all seven districts, should result in more effective use of officers assigned to scout cars. If these tests are not successful, other methods of equalizing the workloads of

officers assigned to scout cars, such as revising patrol area boundaries, should be tested.

MPD's study to refine the workload measures for patrol functions should provide better data for use in assessing patrol assignments and initiating necessary changes. To assess and revise patrol assignments on a timely basis, workload-officer assignment data by area and time of day and day of week should be prepared regularly. If not, misallocated officer resources could go unidentified for long periods and could result in lessening the deterrent to crime and the responsiveness to citizens' calls for service.

#### Recommendations

We recommend that the Commissioner provide direction and assistance, as necessary, to develop appropriate workload-officer assignment reporting systems and insure that the Patrol Division's officer assignments are revised to correspond as closely as practicable with workloads.

#### OFFICERS IN NONPOLICE POSITIONS SHOULD BE REPLACED WITH CIVILIANS

Officers are filling many positions which civilians could fill at less cost. For example, police officers earning about \$10,000 annually were full-time file clerks. According to a District position classification specialist, such positions would justify a GS-5 classification, at a salary of about \$8,000. Also, fringe benefits for officers are greater than those for civilians. For example, officers can retire with a shorter period of service.

MPD's use of officers to fill positions which civilians could fill has resulted, to a great extent, from funding limitations and related personnel ceilings. This practice could be largely eliminated and result in cost savings, through shifts in the MPD personnel ceilings--downward for officers and upward for civilians.

Officers assigned to  
nonpolice positions

We discussed the use of officers to fill positions involving primarily administrative support, clerical, or technical duties with MPD officials, an IACP official, and officials of the police department of a city comparable in size to the District. On the basis of these discussions, we identified 427 officers in positions during fiscal year 1972 which it appears that civilians could fill.

Of the 427 officers, 244 were clerks, such as property clerks, time and attendance clerks, station clerks, captain's clerks, and warrant clerks. An IACP official said clerical positions should not require an officer's skills and in all probability civilians could fill them. MPD officials generally agreed. For example, a time and attendance clerk (1) receives time and attendance lists, (2) checks for conformance with pay and leave regulations, and (3) answers inquiries from civilian and police personnel regarding leave and overtime. A station clerk (1) records arrests and prepares nontechnical reports and requisitions, (2) receives and records citizens' complaints, and (3) receives and sends telephone and teletype messages.

The remaining 183 officers performed primarily administrative support or technical functions. It appears that civilians could perform these functions, such as vehicle and communications maintenance, computer programing, and fingerprint examining.

For example, about 90 officers were assigned to handle the MPD communications system. The IACP official said civilians could replace almost all communications officers under MPD's present system. According to the Director of MPD's Communications Division, civilians could immediately fill the jobs of about 30 officers handling incoming calls and civilians could replace the remaining Communications Division officers, if effected gradually, to allow for training.

Budget limitations and related personnel ceilings are largely responsible for the assignment of police officers to

nonpolice duties. For example, of the 243 additional civilian positions requested, only 70 additional positions were authorized for MPD in the District's fiscal year 1971 budget request to Congress. The House Committee on Appropriations, in its report on the District's appropriation bill for fiscal year 1971, noted that action on the additional 173 civilian positions requested had been deferred until additional funds became available.

We suggested to the Chief of Police that changes be requested in the MPD's police and civilian personnel ceilings--downward for police and upward for civilians--so that officers performing administrative support, clerical, and technical duties could be replaced. We suggested also that the reduction in officers be made by not replacing officers who retire or resign. Such action should not lessen MPD's effectiveness because the number of officers on the streets would not be reduced.

The Chief of Police agreed that qualified civilians could perform some administrative support, clerical, and technical duties officers are presently performing. He said MPD had identified about 200 such positions. Also he believed the 427 positions we identified were too large for practical consideration.

In July 1973 MPD officials said they had determined that civilians could fill 60 more positions officers held and that their study was continuing. At that time, the MPD officials said MPD was considering making a request in connection with the fiscal year 1975 budget for additional civilian positions with funding to be provided through a reduction in police officer positions.

Estimated savings by replacing  
officers with civilians

Although it appears that civilians could replace 427 officers, replacing each of these officers would not in all instances lower costs. We estimate that the District could save as much as \$455,000 in annual salary costs by replacing 385 of the 427 officers with civilians. Most of the estimated savings involve the clerical positions. For 236 officers

filling these positions, we estimate that the salary costs for civilians would be about \$365,000 less than those for officers. For the 42 remaining officers, conversion would probably cost about \$75,000 more a year.

In computing the above amounts, we used the starting salaries for both the officer assigned to the position and the probable GS grade of the civilian replacement. We obtained the probable GS grades for the replacements either from MPD job descriptions or from MPD's classification specialist.

Police salaries were based on the salary scale effective August 29, 1972. Civilian salaries were based on the salary scale established pursuant to Executive Order No. 11739, October 3, 1973.

### Conclusions

MPD's use of police officers to fill positions which civilians could fill is uneconomical. Since this practice has resulted, to a great extent, from funding limitations and related personnel ceilings on police and civilian personnel, the District should request congressional authorization of the needed additional civilian positions and should propose funding the salary costs by savings from reducing the total number of authorized officers. If authorized, the reduction in officers should be made by not replacing officers who retire or resign. If civilians replaced officers in administrative support, clerical, and technical positions, MPD's effectiveness should not be lessened because the number of officers on the streets would not be reduced.

### Recommendations

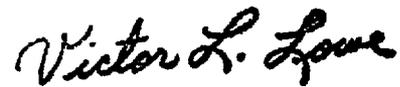
We recommend that the Commissioner (1) request congressional authorization for civilians to replace, where economically desirable and technically feasible, police officers in administrative support, clerical, and technical positions, (2) propose funding the additional civilian positions through reductions in police positions, and (3) provide the City Council and the Congress with the justifications concerning

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any determinations that police officers should be retained in administrative support, clerical, and technical positions.

We are sending copies of this report today to the Director, Office of Management and Budget; the Chairman of the City Council; and interested congressional committees.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Victor L. Lowe".

Victor L. Lowe  
Director

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