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## RIOT PREVENTION AND SURVIVAL

RAYMOND M. MOMBOISSE\*

**T**HERE ARE NO WORDS to adequately define a riot, for mere words can never convey the terror and horror of such an event. Unless you have seen a city torn, bleeding and in flames, unless you have faced a wild mob on a rampage, unless you have seen the injured and the dead, you cannot understand what a riot is. When you have lived through one, you can never forget it.

Nor is there any effective method of measuring the impact of a riot. Oh, it is true that statistics can be and are compiled. But what do they tell us? That so many buildings were looted and burned, so much property stolen, so many arrested, injured and killed. These numbers are cold and impersonal. They cannot depict the human costs—the pain and suffering. They do not reveal the fear, alienation, distrust and hatred planted and fed by the rampaging monster. They do not plumb the impact of a community disrupted, indeed, brought to a standstill. They do not gauge the loss of confidence and respect for government; for law and order. These staggering and lingering costs of chaos cannot be shown in any concrete way. But nevertheless they must be recognized, for only then can we appreciate the full cost of anarchy. Only then will we realize that if there is anarchy, there is no freedom. There is no security. Every man is for himself. The law of the jungle prevails. The strongest prevail; the weak are destroyed. There is misery and unhappiness for all.

Once we recognize the true cost—both immediate and long range—it is impossible to ignore those who deliberately incite violence or to tolerate the stupid attempts to justify, and thus encour-

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age, such savagery. Instead we are driven by one compulsion. It is to do all that we can to assure it will not happen again.

So let us consider some of the steps that the community must take. First, it is essential that the community know what the local conditions are. This demands that there be an effective intelligence gathering organization which constantly measures the pulse of the community. In this way the warning flags of impending conflict may be observed at the earliest possible moment. This requires that raw intelligence be received from as many sources in the community as possible. Once received, it is rapidly evaluated and transformed into meaningful conclusions. This must be followed up with positive action on the part of the community to relieve the pressure which is generating the discontent.

There must also be liaison established between law enforcement, government officials, religious, social and minority leaders in the community. By liaison we mean the close cooperation between these centers of leadership in the community. There must be an exchange of information between them, a greater understanding of the problems that each faces, and the extending of assistance whenever possible.

Liaison must be established between the police and those in private security. Plans must be mutually worked out in advance for the protection of the commercial and industrial centers which are potential targets of rioters. Agreement must be reached on whether or not private guards will be allowed to remain in the riot areas, and if so, how will they be identified, what will they do, what protection will be given to them. Plans must be made for safeguarding or removing of large sums of money, jewelry and irreplaceable documents in the riot area. If defense industries or key utilities are involved, utmost priority must be given to security for them.

There must be detailed advance planning on the part of the police for the handling of any potential riot. This requires the training of police personnel in riot tactics and techniques, as well as stressing preventive measures which individual officers should constantly be practicing.

### PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY

As far as the actual field control of the riot, the primary responsibility will rest with the local chief of police or sheriff. It is he and his men who will be called upon to meet and overcome the mob and to restore law and order.

At the very outset, we must recognize that in a riot of the proportions and duration such as we have had within the last few years, it will be physically impossible to expect one man to command the field operations throughout the riot. The physical, as well as the mental, strain upon an individual will be too great. More than that, if a chief insists upon being the source of all ideas and upon reviewing all decisions before they are executed, he will burden himself with such a mass of detail as will create a "bottle-neck," seriously retarding the handling of disturbances. To avoid this, he must develop leadership which will encourage initiative in the force to cope with the problem. He must determine the extent of the abilities and limitations of the "grass roots" leaders of the force. Above all, he must avoid surrounding himself with men who are too lazy-minded or timid to control fear stricken people.

To accomplish this, a chain of command must be established; general and special staffs must be organized. That plan should specifically designate the officers who will serve in various positions. In fact, the plan must establish at least two complete command structures, for a prolonged emergency cannot be commanded by one man, no matter how strong or capable. Fatigue will take its toll. The order should not only provide for two completely different commands to relieve each other at stated times, the plan must designate deputies for all staff and command positions. Each deputy will act as the assistant to his immediate superior and will act for him during temporary absences and replace him in the event he is unable to perform.

### THE COMMAND STRUCTURE

At the top of the command structure is the chief or his designated representative who commands the resources of the police department and makes appropriate decisions concerning requests for

assistance. His basic responsibility is to manage the resources of the department in such fashion that the field forces at the theater of operations receive adequate support and the portions of the city that are not affected by the unusual occurrence continue to receive police services commensurate with known and anticipated problems. He will have overall command of all operations, but not direct tactical command of the field units which will reside in the field commander. The field commander, or police coordinator as he is at times designated, exercises control of resources committed to the unusual occurrence.

The scene commander is the officer directly in command of a unit in the field. He must have the authority to take whatever action, in his judgment, is necessary at the time. The duties of the scene commander shall be assumed by the highest ranking officer where the disturbance occurs, and he will continue to so act until replaced by a superior.

The staging area is an area set aside for the accumulation of men and material resources that will be made available for field assignment. It is under the command of the reserve force commander or staging officer. All directives to the officers under his command are relayed through him except as his personnel may be properly attached to another commander.

To assist the field commander a general staff should be established, again operating on the theory that the numerous responsibilities of command can better be performed if they are delegated to different individuals who can concentrate on one aspect of the problem. The general staff consists of the field commander, the executive, personnel, intelligence, logistics, operations and public information officers.

The executive officer is the principal coordinating agent of the advisor to the field commander. He supervises and directs the staff to achieve unity in action. He transmits the decisions of the commander to the appropriate staff officers for the preparation of the necessary orders. He should be assisted by a secretary to the general staff, whose primary responsibility will be to act as the office manager of the command post.

The personnel officer supervises the activation of personnel both from within and without the department so that adequate manpower is always ready for assignment when needed. He will also keep the records of the deployment of manpower both in the field and in the reserve units, so that immediate assignment may be made. The function of the logistics officer is to provide the necessary supplies and equipment and to keep constant tab on the anticipated need so that immediate action may be taken to fill it.

The intelligence officer has the duty of keeping the commander fully informed of the riot situation. He defines and measures the field problem and reports to the commander so that an evaluation of the field problem can be compiled. The operations officer utilizes the intelligence gained to develop the strategy for the control of the riot. It is his responsibility to advise the field commander in regard to proposed strategy and to keep constantly abreast of the progress of the mission in the field and to measure it against the strategy of tactics which has been approved. The public information officer is charged with the responsibility of keeping the press advised of all developments, and in this way removing much of the pressure that would otherwise be exerted on the field commander, while at the same time assuring that the public is fully advised of the situation.

### SPECIALIZATION

The use of such a command structure has proved the most effective command organization, for it stresses specialization and maximum utilization of special ability. But the designation of responsibility is not enough. Recent history has taught that it is essential to unify command at central locations. This is particularly true in a major disturbance when city, county, and state units are all involved in the action. If each agency establishes separate command posts, there will be a breakdown in communications and exchange of intelligence, duplication of effort, conflicting policy statements, waste of time and resulting confusion. This is aggravated if political antagonism exists between the various leaders, for the lack of communication will give rise to suspicion and petty jealousy. It cannot be overly stressed that in times of emergency

the first consideration must be the restoration of law and order. There is no place for personal aggrandizement at the expense of society.

In disaster situations two command centers will be established: 1) Emergency control headquarters; 2) Field command post. The chief or his delegated representative is in charge of the emergency control headquarters, while the field commander is in command of the field command post.

The emergency control headquarters will usually be established at police headquarters, as it is the best equipped to serve as the center of operations. The command post should be established at or near the location of the disturbance, to provide control, coordination and communications. It will be the control center for the entire operation. Through it passes all information, including the assignment of officers, equipment and any other directions necessary to coordinate the efforts of those men involved in a particular police problem. A command post may be established by a supervisory officer when in his judgment the circumstances surrounding the situation require a base for radio communication or direct command control. Headquarters must be advised of the exact location of temporary headquarters and all telephone and other communication facilities available for use at the scene.

In a large operation, in addition to the command post established by the commander, each subordinate scene commander may establish a field post. The activities of each particular branch will be controlled from this field post. However, no independent action should be instituted without notification to the command post. The subordinate commanders shall assign a superior officer to the command post to maintain liaison. A list of potential field posts based on a survey of possible trouble areas should be compiled in advance of any emergency. Plans should be developed for the establishment of a command post and for the staffing and equipping of the command post, in time of need, with a minimum of delay.

#### MOBILE COMMAND POST

At times, a mobile command post may be used. Its great advantage is its mobility, which allows flexibility in response to a fluid

mob situation. Likewise, because such a command post is fully equipped, no time is lost in setting up and establishing the necessary communication outlets. It can be any type vehicle. Surplus military trailers, large trucks, converted buses, and similar units have been developed around their local availability and low original acquisition costs.

If the department is starting from scratch to set up a mobile command center, it is recommended that a truck-trailer unit be acquired. This enables all of the permanent installations to be installed in the trailer unit. The truck unit can then be "exercised" at regular intervals, since vehicles and motors deteriorate when standing inactive. Over a period of years this will prove to be the most economical and efficient system.

The internal arrangement of the command posts should be such as to afford the staff maximum working facilities consistent with requirements for security and mobility. To save time and effort and to facilitate coordination, staff sections having closely related activities should be grouped in the same locality. Sections which have numerous visitors or which process a large volume of messages should be located near an entrance to the building or area. Sections handling considerable classified material need the protection of a location away from main entrances.

The center of the command post is the war room. It is primarily an orientation, briefing and conference room. In a tactical headquarters, it may also serve as the combined operations room. The purpose of a war room is to provide a single location within the headquarters in which the commander and chief of staff may familiarize themselves with the entire situation as it pertains to the command. It also provides a location where the commander or executive can assemble staff officers or commanders to provide them with all available information concerning the current situation. Another important use is to provide a centralized location where certain designated liaison officers may secure the latest information on the situation without disturbing the staff sections.

#### COMMUNICATION CENTER

A communication center where all of the communication equipment is established should be close to the war room. It should



be equipped with radio transmitters capable of contacting all the various units that may be committed, teletype, and telephones. All information concerning the operation must be expeditiously transmitted to the command post, so that the commander may be cognizant of the current situation. This is essential so that an evaluation of the conditions present may be made, and necessary orders issued.

The public relations officer should establish an area in which the representatives of news media can be regularly briefed on the latest developments. Situation maps should be maintained for their convenience. A comprehensive, consolidated summary of information must be maintained and supplied to other interested agency heads so as to give them an accurate, current digest of the situation that will permit them to take further appropriate action as required.

The command post should be placed under guard and have available to it several areas of approach and exit. Road blocks should be used to seal it off and these should be manned by officers in sufficient numbers and armed with the necessary weapons to secure it completely from mob or public interference. This is necessary to prevent raids and also to prevent blockades of streets and avenues of exit and approach. Police headquarters and units located in the center of the city, where narrow streets are common, are especially vulnerable to a planned roadblock. Many times a single stalled vehicle or a staged collision at one or more critical intersections near the police headquarters will be sufficient to block movement of police vehicles to trouble areas. This is a tactic that can be expected in conjunction with any professionally organized riot action and must be foreseen and protected against. Fires, explosives, bomb scares, organized demonstrations, and similar obstruction tactics may also be employed.

A perimeter guard should be set up so that the commander and his staff will be isolated and not interfered with in any way. A pass system should be initiated so that only authorized personnel will be allowed into the post. It is no place for curious sightseers who have no function and whose presence will merely complicate

and confuse the situation. A log should be kept of all those who enter and leave the post.

### MANPOWER

The next major problem is manpower. One thing that has been learned in recent riots is the need for tremendous amounts of manpower, and by this we do not mean merely a mass of men. We mean trained efficient police officers who are capable of coping with the very difficult problem that will confront them in the field. In fact, it should be emphasized that untrained personnel should not be used in field operations. Such units, if they are utilized, can be assigned to policing other sections of the community, thus relieving experienced personnel for riot duty.

Plans should be formulated for mobilization of both the regular and auxiliary or reserve forces. They should include:

1. A listing of personnel designated for riot control assignments. Such listing should include information concerning their duty assignment (location and shift), their residence address and telephone number.

2. A system of notification for personnel.

3. A plan for transporting personnel to the trouble area.

4. A program for periodic briefing of personnel concerning the specific assignments.

5. Information concerning the identity of personnel trained with the type of riot control training specifically set forth. It is important that individuals with technical training (communications, photography, etc.) should be listed.

6. Dispersal of reserve personnel and equipment to assembly areas outside the potential critical areas.

7. Sources of reinforcement. Special categories of personnel such as doctors, nurses, ambulance attendants, dog and horse trainers, aircraft pilots, armored vehicle drivers, and boat operators.

The first step in any manpower plan is to determine the personnel requirements. The number of police personnel required

should be based on an analysis of intelligence reports, reconnaissance, previous similar events, number or magnitude of potential problem areas, and information by sponsors of the event. Such flexibility is gained by establishing various degrees of mobilization.

### ORGANIZATION

It is desirable in advance of any trouble to organize on each shift, and to designate leaders. By having the group leader and his group selected from the same shift, they are more easily and quickly called in for action. There is a definite advantage to having these men in groups. It allows the commander to hold units in different degrees of readiness. One may be in reserve, one on standby, and still another on alert. The commander also can call out any one of the groups without having all of them report. One entire shift can also be held over after duty hours without complete groups contained within the shift being broken.

Keep the group reporting as a unit during emergency operation so that a minimum loss of time in special assignments will be experienced. The commanding officer can do his work much faster if he can issue orders for a unit to the group leader. He is thus relieved of the task of assigning specific tasks to everybody. He and his men can get much more work done in a shorter time.

There must also be a plan to recall off-duty officers for assignment to the area of tension or to man those districts or beats left unattended by those sent to the mob or riot area. There are several ways to do this. To cancel vacations and days off will add considerably to the force. To activate two 12-hour duty shifts and divide the men between just these two shifts will further increase the force, but that just about ends the potential of the police department. To simplify the division of the department personnel for 12-hour duty shifts, it is better to concentrate only on the division and reassignment of one of the three shifts into the remaining two shifts.

A police department would do well to establish as a part of its routine procedures an emergency call list whereby off-duty policemen could be returned to duty as rapidly as possible. To preserve the energy of the police, it is well to establish degrees of call up.

The first is the "alert." The police are notified of the emergency and told to hold themselves in readiness. "Standby" requires the police to be dressed, equipped and ready to move if called. "Reserve" demands that the officer report to the designated reserve center to await commitment to action.

Periodically and at unannounced times, test alerts should be conducted on order of the police chief. When this type alert is involved, nothing further than completion of notification by telephone and execution of the form is necessary; physical response to a location is not required.

When a riot occurs, the police must respond immediately. To do so, they must have a specific plan of action. They must rapidly execute that plan. They must be firm in the execution of the plan.

#### TACTICAL PRINCIPLES

The basic tactical principles are to arrest the leaders and destroy the command structure of the rioters, break up the mob and prevent it from regrouping. The first step taken by the police in such a situation is to isolate the area of the disturbance. This is done by establishing a cordon around the critical zone, the area of the actual disturbance. In turn the critical zone is surrounded by an isolation zone, which is a buffer, and at the same time the area in which police forces are organized and in which the various police command posts are established.

The purpose of such isolation is twofold: one, to diminish the size of the mob by allowing those members of it who wish to escape to do so, while at the same time preventing reinforcements from swelling the size of the mob; second, by restricting the activities of the mob to the critical area, you protect other portions of the metropolitan area.

But the police must do more than merely isolate the area and allow the riot to burn itself out. They must take measures to protect the citizens in the riot zone. They must protect the thousands of helpless law abiding citizens who live, work, or are in the riot area. This is a lesson that has been learned at a very dear price. The police cannot withdraw from any area in our community. There

are those who claimed that the police uniform antagonized the citizens of Watts. They promised that peace would be restored if only the hated police uniform were withdrawn from the danger area. This was not true. This is never true. The withdrawal of the uniform was in effect a visual withdrawal of authority and a signal for anarchy to prevail, for the mob to take over and do as it would. This has been the case whenever the police have for any reason failed to perform the functions with which they are charged, have failed to give the people of the community the protection and security to which they are entitled.

In this respect it is my personal recommendation that when a riot breaks out in a commercial area, police units should be immediately rushed into the heart of that area to seal it off and secure the entire commercial area. Rather than merely encircling it and slowly marching units into it, a convoy of cars and trucks can sweep from one end of the business section to the other, dropping off protective bodies of police squads along the route of travel to establish control. This will save the commercial centers.

This latter tactic of rapid dispersal is particularly applicable in those instances where the mob resorts to the use of guerrilla tactics. Recent riots have shown that the rioters no longer follow the classic pattern of massing together in a mob and moving toward an objective. Rather, they have adopted the technique of a guerrilla attack. They attack, disperse, re-group and re-attack. They hit those areas where there is insufficient manpower to restrain them. They avoid any direct attack with the police if at all possible.

Unfortunately, within the last few years, this country has been flooded with propaganda advocating violence, instructing citizens on how to construct Molotov cocktails and acid bombs, how and where to most effectively attack the police. This propaganda has not gone unnoticed, which means that the problem of combating the rioters will be magnified in the future, for there is every reason to believe that they will have leadership, direction and technical knowledge, if not actual battle training.

#### TYPES OF RIOTS

In dealing with the guerrilla type of riot, the police must saturate the affected area with manpower, break up any communi-

cations which may exist between the rioters and the command center for the rioters, and establish protective forces around all critical centers in the riot areas. The police must match force with greater force, but most of all, with dedication, the same dedication that motivates their everyday performance of their duty.

In dealing with the large classic type of mob, personal appeals to the members of the group by those in whom they have respect and to whom they look for leadership should be made. In these appeals the members of the mob should be requested to disband and to desist from any further mob activity.

The next step is the "show force." This is nothing more nor less than the display of law enforcement units equipped and ready to engage the mob. The purpose is to convince the mob of the ability of the police to maintain law and order and to disperse the mob with physical force if necessary. If the mob is so persuaded, it will disperse. If it does not, the next step is for the commander of the police force to give the order to disperse, but such an order should not be given until the commander has sufficient force to back up his order.

Needless to say, it is essential that an area into which the rioters are to be dispersed has been selected and that the roads to that area are cleared of all obstructions so that the mob will have an area of escape. The mob should be informed of these routes.

If the mob still refuses to disperse, it will be necessary for the police to use force to disperse the mob. The police units will be moved against the mob in various standard formations. The selection of the appropriate one will depend upon the object to be accomplished. But, before you move, apprehend and remove the mob's leaders, for without leadership the mob will more readily disintegrate.

The amount of force that should be used should be no greater than necessary, for it is not the object of the police to inflict injury upon rioters but to maintain peace and order and to protect the members of society. Firearms should only be employed in self-protection, and when they are employed, they should be used with the intent of disabling the target. Therefore, if the police are sub-

ject to sniper fire, they should protect themselves by employing counter snipers, who concentrate their fire upon the snipers.

Let us assume that the mob has been put on the run. Once this occurs, keep it on the run and make sure it doesn't have an opportunity to reassemble. Patrol the affected area and maintain guards at crucial points which may be targets for the mob. Maintain the patrols as long as necessary to insure that there will be no recurrence of the mob. In instances this may require control for periods of several days.

I have very briefly touched some of the highlights. The control of riots is a very complex matter, one that taxes all of the resources and resourcefulness of law enforcement.

You must also do your part to restore stability in your community and to aid those injured by the disorder. You must address yourself and your community to the greater task of making this a better society. Lincoln gave us the answer over a century ago when he declared:

Let us discard all this quibbling about this man and the other man, this race and that race and the other race being inferior, and therefore they must be placed in an inferior position.

Let us discard all these things, and unite as one people throughout this land, until we shall once more stand up declaring that all men are created equal.

It is not an easy task. But it can be done. It must be done!