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Resolution of Prison Riots

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National Institute of Justice

Research in Brief

Jeremy Travis, Director

October 1995

Issues and Findings

Discussed in this Research in Brief:

How eight State and Federal prisons have dealt with riots and what strategies and procedures are effective during the stages of a prison riot.

Key issues: Safety of prison employees, inmates, and residents of the area in which the facility is located, plus the financial cost of prison riots makes their prevention and containment a critical issue. Factors that must be addressed include such criminal justice issues as how prisons are administered (and how command is divided during riots), race relations in prisons, how prisons are built and renovated, how prisons are staffed, and how staff are utilized and augmented during riots.

Findings: On the basis of an indepth examination of eight disturbances, the study concluded that proactive planning and preparation along with reactive problem solving is the most effective approach to prison riot resolution. A prison's riot plan should include:

- A command structure with well-defined lines of authority.
- Clear guidelines on the use of force, including staff and weapons assignments.
- Interagency cooperation terms that specify the roles of such units

continued . . .

Resolution of Prison Riots

by Bert Useem, Camille Graham Camp, George M. Camp, and Renie Dugan

Because prison riots have occurred all too often, they can be anticipated in the future. An indepth study sponsored by the National Institute of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) examined eight disturbances to understand how prison riots have been resolved and to consider strategies to prepare for, settle, and recover from them more effectively at the lowest cost to all parties. Roadblocks to the successful resolution of prison riots often stem from the same misunderstandings and miscommunications experienced in ordinary life, multiplied by the pressures of the event. Successful resolutions require a controlled, measured response: an orderly command post, clear lines of authority, effective communication, appreciation of the consequences of alternative lines of action, and a sense among corrections staff that their skills and training are adequate to the challenge at hand.

This Research in Brief highlights what was learned from prison administrators and from reports, interviews, and historical data from the eight incidents. A brief description of each event is followed by a discussion of strategies and procedures to use during the three phases of a prison riot: before, during, and after.¹

The incidents

Kirkland Correctional Institution (Kirkland)—South Carolina. The Kirkland facility was generally well managed at the time of the disturbance of April 1, 1986, and so was the riot's resolution. The riot began in a housing unit holding the prison's most violent and disruptive inmates. Inmates seized control of this unit, scaled the fence around it, and then used construction tools left on the grounds to release 700 general-population inmates. The riot command post functioned smoothly, resolving the disturbance in 6 hours.

U.S. Penitentiary (Atlanta)—Georgia. On November 10, 1987, the U.S. State Department announced that Cuba had agreed to reinstate a 1984 accord that would permit the repatriation of up to 2,500 Cuban nationals. Included would be Cubans who had fled in the 1980 Mariel boatlift but who, once released on "immigration parole," had been convicted of a crime and were now detained in one of two Federal prisons. Three days after the announcement, the detainees seized control of the U.S. Penitentiary in Atlanta (part of the Bureau of Prisons, U.S. Department of Justice). Their principal demand was that they not be repatriated to Cuba. The uprising lasted 11 days, involved more than 100 hostages, and required protracted negotiations to resolve.

Issues and Findings

continued . . .

as the State Police and the local fire department.

- Training programs that address tactical strategies and mental readiness for emergencies.

Strategies to prevent and deal with riots must address many factors, including:

- Maintaining supervision of an experienced staff who follow sound security practices.
- Ensuring the security of the physical plant and equipment.
- Discerning the signs of a probable riot from false clues and relaying reliable information up the chain of command.
- Selecting the most appropriate means of resolving a riot: use of force, negotiations, or a combination of tactics.
- Using strategies that range from immediate use of force to waiting until inmate leaders are ready to negotiate.
- Addressing issues of staff morale and emotional support after a riot ends.
- Incorporating the lessons learned from experiences with disturbances into revised riot plans.

Target Audience: Prison administrators, State and local policymakers, law enforcement practitioners.

Mack Alford Correctional Center (Mack Alford)—Oklahoma. The riot that occurred at this medium-security institution between May 13 and 15, 1988, was preceded by a 6-hour period during which black and white inmates milled about in crowds, expressing antagonism toward each other and toward authorities. Despite attempts to defuse the situation, a corrections official was taken hostage late in the evening, marking the start of the riot. Over a 2-hour period, inmates seized seven more hostages and took over two-thirds of the prison. No substantive issues were raised during the 3-day disturbance, which was eventually resolved through a combination of negotiation, exhaustion on the part of the inmates, and defection by inmates who no longer wanted to participate.

Coxsackie Correctional Facility (Coxsackie)—New York. Coxsackie houses primarily maximum-security inmates; the institution's Special Housing Unit (SHU) is for inmates segregated from the others to serve disciplinary terms for serious violations of the rules. For approximately 14 hours, on August 1 and 2, 1988, 32 SHU inmates held several officers hostage and destroyed much of the SHU facility. The riot began when an inmate assaulted an officer in the exercise yard; the five officers working in the SHU that day were not regularly assigned to this unit, so they were not as familiar with procedures as those who worked there routinely. Staff from the facility and the central office established communications with the inmates almost immediately after the SHU was overtaken and remained in contact during the time it took negotiators to bring about resolution.

Idaho State Correctional Institution (ISCI). ISCI houses medium-custody inmates as well as close-custody inmates (those who are dangerous and difficult to

manage), inmates in administrative segregation and detention, and those awaiting execution. On September 28, 1988, inmates in a close-custody housing unit refused to return to their cells after having been observed drinking a homemade alcoholic beverage. They then used an unsecured table to break into the unit's control center. The riot was eventually brought under control by an ultimatum and riot squad deployment.

Pennsylvania State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill (Camp Hill). Since 1975 Camp Hill had been an adult correctional facility, housing minimum- and medium-security inmates. On October 25, 1989, inmates returning from an exercise yard in the late afternoon overwhelmed correctional staff and seized eight hostages. The riot ended through negotiations, and inmates were confined to cells. The next day the superintendent met with the inmates to discuss their grievances. In a development unknown to him, many of the cells to which the inmates had been confined were not secure, permitting the start of a second riot later that same day. Five more hostages were taken. Negotiations were again attempted, but the riot finally ended when State police forcibly entered the compound.

Arizona State Prison Complex (Cimarron) Cimarron Unit. This one-hour disturbance by inmates at the Cimarron Unit of the Arizona State Prison Complex at Tucson initially pitted inmates against inmates. It began as a fight over a cigarette lighter and escalated into a large, racially divided brawl. When prison administrators intervened, inmates turned on them, and force had to be used to end the disturbance.

Federal Correctional Institution (Talladega)—Alabama. Changes prompted by the 1987 Cuban detainee

riots at the U.S. Penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia, and at the Federal Detention Center in Oakdale, Louisiana, were put to the test 4 years later when Cuban detainees rioted at Talladega between August 21 and 30, 1991. After hostages had been held for 10 days, prison administrators concluded that their health and safety were at increasing risk and prospects for a negotiated settlement were dim. A carefully planned and rehearsed assault, maximizing the element of surprise, ended the incident without serious injuries to the hostages or detainees.

Procedures and strategies: before the riot

All prison administrators make efforts to avoid disturbances but also prepare for their occurrence. In the riots studied, various planning and avoidance measures were used with varying degrees of success.

Riot preparation includes the acquisition of resources (organization, equipment, and information) for use in a riot situation, the development of a strategy for the use of these resources, and the mental readiness to respond to an incident. The importance of advance preparation in all its manifestations cannot be overstated. Three elements are especially important: command, planning, and training.

Riot preparation: issues of command

Crucial to the resolution of any riot is command—the ability to exercise authority and direction over the forces and resources available. This encompasses the capacity to deploy the forces at hand, monitor their actions in the field on a continuous basis, deliver orders promptly and effectively, coordinate operations with other State and

Who Should Take Command in a Prison Riot?

The level of command during a prison riot depends on several factors:

- Knowledge of the facility.
- Effects on the chain of command.
- Breadth of experience, responsibility, and communication.
- Links between responsibility and authority.
- The administrative framework.

Some of these factors favor assigning command to the warden, but others indicate the central office administrator or the commissioner may be more appropriate in particular situations.

The warden

Because details vary from one facility to the next, one unit to the next, and one shift to the next, some agencies feel that overall authority should remain in the hands of the warden, who has greater overall knowledge of the facility. This knowledge may enable him or her to more quickly assess the situation and recognize the consequences of different courses of action.

To many corrections administrators, another compelling argument for keeping riot resolution in the hands of the warden concerns maintaining the chain of command in the aftermath. Taking away the warden's authority during a disturbance, it is argued, may undermine his or her subsequent authority; midlevel managers, correctional officers, and inmates alike will view the central office, not the warden, as the real authority. Allowing the warden to remain in command for the riot's duration reaffirms

the commitment of the central office to his or her leadership.

However, if the warden is new, someone else who has spent more time at the facility (a central office administrator, for example) may be more familiar with it. Each situation must be weighed individually. In some cases, a team approach may be warranted to capitalize on the knowledge and skill of each individual.

Central office administrator

Because of their experience across a range of situations, central office administrators may have a more developed understanding of resolution strategies. They are more likely, as well, to have greater insight into the effects of disturbances on the department or corrections as a whole than those whose primary identification may be with a particular facility. Additionally, their experiences in dealing with agencies and resources outside the department can be brought to bear, if necessary.

The commissioner

In other cases, it is argued that because the commissioner bears ultimate responsibility for the resolution, decisionmaking authority should reside in his or her hands. Moreover, in agencies in which the decisionmaking power tends to be concentrated in the central office, existing practice may dictate that the commissioner take direct charge of the resolution. The commissioner can follow the procedures he or she and others in the central office have established. By contrast, in decentralized departments in which wardens have greater latitude, it may be more advantageous for the warden to remain in command.

Federal agencies, and gather and interpret information on what inmates are doing and intend to do. The longer a riot lasts, the more agencies that become involved, and the larger the area and the number of hostages held by inmates, the more complex command becomes. The challenge is met, in part, through achieving unity of command and determining the necessary level and location of command.

Unity of command. Unity of command refers to the principle that members of an organization are accountable to a single superior vested with the requisite authority to coordinate personnel efforts to achieve common objectives. In its absence, coordination may still be achieved through voluntary mutual cooperation, but this may break down if disagreements arise.

Unity of command was not fully achieved at Camp Hill. Although the State Police had traditionally assumed control over the resolution of Pennsylvania prison riots, the division of authority between the State Police and the Corrections Department had not been clearly delineated before the incident. During the disturbance, tension developed between the two agencies, and issues that should have been settled before the disturbance (such as the particular type of ammunition that the State Police would carry) had to be resolved on the spot, taking up precious time. Since the riot, great strides have been taken to establish a firmer working relationship among State agencies.

Unity of command can be impaired by divisions among command personnel. Although one individual is formally in charge, command is almost always a team effort. One task in riot preparation is to forge a team and develop

trust among its members. In the riots studied this was achieved to varying degrees. At Kirkland, the command group evidenced a strong level of trust within the group. Members supported each other and allowed open expression of views and impartial exploration of options. As a result, the command team could focus on the task at hand and act decisively.

Level and location of command. Directly related to unity of command is level of command (which official in the correctional hierarchy will be in charge) and location of command (where the key command post will be established). With regard to level of command, decisionmaking authority may reside in the prison, usually with the warden, or within the agency's larger administrative framework, with either a regional or agency director. (See "Who Should Take Command in a Prison Riot?") Additionally, a prison riot is the sort of public emergency in which higher officials may feel the need to step in and exercise command themselves.

With regard to location of command, offsite decisionmakers may choose to go to the facility or may choose to remain offsite, either in their administrative offices or a preestablished emergency operations center.

Location and level of command should be determined as part of overall emergency planning. Arguing in favor of local control, both in level and location, is the need for the commander to readily size up the situation. This requires knowing the layout of the facility, the obstacles that might be encountered in an assault, the backgrounds of the inmates involved, the multitude of standing orders, and the capabilities of onsite staff.

In instances in which it is decided that authority for the resolution of the riot resides outside the prison, an additional decision must be made regarding where to situate the command post. Some of the same advantages of local command may be gained by situating the command post at the facility itself. On the other hand, it takes time to establish and staff a command post in the field, and the resources (for example, communication networks and office equipment), if mobilized rapidly, may be inadequate. If decisionmakers operate from an existing offsite facility, the amount of time and effort needed to establish the field command post may be focused on the incident itself.

At both Coxsackie and ISCI, the commissioner took direct control of the resolution of the riots. Significant decisions were deferred (to the extent feasible) until the commissioner arrived on the scene. The commissioner became, in effect, both the final authority and the field commander. At Mack Alford, the warden was given the primary responsibility for designing and executing the resolution. The commissioner saw his role as establishing a framework to assist the warden. He served as a sounding board for the warden, providing advice and direction; he met with State political leaders to assure them that all that could be done was being done, thus insulating the warden from political pressure; and he mobilized resources to put at the warden's disposal. The commissioner allowed the warden to make key decisions so long as he continued to have confidence in the warden's performance.

Kirkland, Atlanta, Talladega, and Camp Hill each represents a somewhat different approach. At Kirkland the commissioner and members of his executive staff met with the warden.

Although it was clear that the commissioner was the ultimate authority, the group functioned more like an executive committee working jointly to develop a solution. Command was somewhat fluid, allowing discussion of the options based on their merits.

At Atlanta both the Federal Regional Director and the warden were at the prison soon after the riot began. It was decided to give local authority to the Regional Director, but because of the duration of the riot, it was necessary to develop teams to rotate in and out of leadership positions. In Washington, the Attorney General and the Director of the BOP maintained direct oversight of the resolution.

At Camp Hill, the commissioner took the position that responsibility for the riot's resolution rested with the superintendent. In practice, however, he involved himself in a number of important decisions that resulted in some fracturing of command.

Riot preparation: planning

A riot plan should be a comprehensive guide that describes the special responsibilities to be met, the resources to be used, and the contribution of each individual or group involved. It should embody the correctional agency's principles and strategies for resolution.

Riot plans are too often a weakly integrated compendium of policy statements, advice, memos, and agreements among agencies. Cumbersome plans are likely to receive lip service but be ignored during a disturbance. Plans should be well-organized, clearly written, and concise. They should include procedures for how the riot plan book is to be used during an incident; the book itself is often left behind in the

heat of the moment. Guidelines for developing a riot plan, produced as part of this study, are highlighted on the following pages.

Use-of-force guidelines. A critical element of emergency planning is a use-of-force policy. Which staff members are authorized to order the use of force? What responses are appropriate in various situations? What weapons and less-than-lethal munitions (e.g., tear gas) are appropriate for use in specific situations? These policies should be based on both sound correctional practices and evolving law on the use of force to quell prison riots.

Interagency cooperation. In the event that the assistance of other agencies is required (for medical care, additional security forces, or investigative teams, for example), the riot plan should include contact names and telephone numbers and an outline of existing agreements between agencies. These would have been useful at Camp Hill to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the State Police and at Idaho, where a municipal fire company hesitated in responding to a call for help.

Riot preparation: training

Although planning can be conducted in an agency's central office for the agency as a whole or in the warden's office for a particular facility, mental readiness can be achieved only through field practice and instruction. The South Carolina Department of Corrections has developed a rigorous training program for its wardens, deputy wardens, and other senior prison managers. An annual 3-day training seminar combines classroom instruction with field practice to ensure readiness to handle emergencies. In addition, demanding, unannounced onsite riot scenarios are conducted in

South Carolina facilities. Participants later write up their experiences and offer recommendations for improving the department's emergency procedures. These training efforts had observable payoffs in the incidents examined in this study.

In training it is important to ensure that different components of the response team will work to assist one another. Exercises should integrate the activities of command, hostage negotiation teams, and tactical teams; otherwise these components will be unfamiliar with the operation of the others. If a riot plan calls for the assistance of State Police or other agencies, much can be gained from joint training with those agencies.

Riot avoidance

Some riots come as a complete surprise; others flow rather directly from a snowballing set of events in which the forces of disorder gain momentum. Still others take place in situations known to be unusually dangerous and with a significant degree of warning. These three configurations present different opportunities for riot avoidance.

Riots with no warning. The riots at Talladega, Kirkland, Coxsackie, and ISCI occurred without significant warning. All but the ISCI riot occurred in high-security units. The ISCI riot began in a unit that had been constructed as medium-security housing, but the inmates housed there were classified as close-custody (more dangerous and difficult to manage than the medium-security inmates).

In units where violent and rebellious inmates are concentrated, prison administrators rely in large part on the physical elements of security to prevent violence. When riots do occur,

they are primarily a function of opportunity; that is, they take place when one or several inmates are able to initiate a disturbance by taking advantage of a weakness in or a momentary lapse of the security system *and* are subsequently able to spread the disturbance by defeating other security systems. While no system is absolutely foolproof, riot avoidance can be achieved through a combination of constant vigilance and physical control.

- *Experienced staff and supervision.* In a high-security unit, the continuous presence of experienced staff, both line officers and supervisors, is a sound security practice. This was not fully achieved at Coxsackie, where the officers regularly assigned to the high-security Special Housing Unit were absent on the day of the disturbance. The replacement officers were not as familiar with the unit's procedures. Moreover, responsibility for supervising the unit, normally vested in a sergeant assigned full time to the unit, had been temporarily transferred to a sergeant whose regular assignment was elsewhere in the facility. One of the postriot procedural changes was to require that a sergeant be present in the unit at all times. Relief officers were also given more thorough orientation to SHU procedures.

- *Post orders.* All post orders, especially for posts in restricted units, should anticipate the possibility of an incident. At ISCI, correctional administrators removed an inmate from a unit while other inmates in the same unit were not confined to their cells. Had the post orders required that all inmates be in their cells before an inmate was removed, the rebellion could not have developed. At Kirkland's Unit D, the post orders did not specify the keys the evening duty

officer should and should not carry when entering the unit. The keys to the cell doors were not needed when entering the unit, but the officer first taken hostage was carrying them, and this permitted the incident to expand.

- *Physical plant and equipment.* Physical plant weaknesses allowed disturbances at some of the institutions to spread. At Coxsackie, the wire-reinforced glass surrounding the control center was easily broken by inmates. Funds that had been requested for replacing the glass had not yet been approved. At Talladega the line of vision to the small recreation yard where inmates first gained control was obscured by an electrical transformer. ISCI's dayroom contained heavy furniture that inmates used to break into the control room.

Escalation of existing conflict. The disturbances at Mack Alford Correctional Center and the Cimarron Unit of the Arizona State Prison at Tucson both resulted from escalating events. The events leading to the two riots followed a common pattern. First, on the day of the disturbances a dispute among inmates inflamed preexisting intergroup tensions. Second, the conflicts gained momentum because of a series of retaliatory moves. Third, opposing groups of inmates mobilized, leading to the confrontation.

The two riots actually began when staff intervened and inmates redirected their hostility against them. At Mack Alford this occurred when an officer without backup pursued an inmate who resisted his transfer to another prison. The inmate took the officer hostage; shortly thereafter, other inmates joined the disturbance, seizing additional hostages and territory. At Cimarron the riot began when a fight

between two inmates broke out along racial lines in the chow line and then turned into a brawl in the cafeteria before spilling into the yard.

Riot avoidance in these situations lies in managing the stages of escalation. At Mack Alford the administration had, over a 6-hour period, skillfully managed a potentially explosive situation (made more difficult by a shortage of detention cells). Only late in the process was an officer taken hostage. At Cimarron, once the conflict had reached the intensity of a brawl in the cafeteria, there was little opportunity to reverse the process because the officers on the scene were quickly overwhelmed.

Riots with warning. It is common for facility administrators to hear rumors and predictions of riots. Of course, from time to time the warnings are genuine. Often, however, such rumors are exaggeration or hearsay. They may even be deliberate attempts to create a crisis, either for its own sake or to force change.

How may prison administrators recognize a facility that is truly on the brink of a disturbance? The American Correctional Association identifies 27 "indicators of prison tension that often precede riots and disturbances."² They include an increase in disciplinary hearings, warnings by inmates to officers that they should take vacation or sick leave, and an increase in employee turnover.

Yet no such list is infallible. The presence of "traditional indicators" might well signal danger, but their absence does not necessarily ensure safety—not in the face of other "nontraditional" evidence, nor in a situation in

which tensions are known to be high. Moreover, evidence obtained from within the prison needs to be combined with an understanding of what kinds of situations or grievances are likely to produce riots.

The events leading up to the start of the riot at the U.S. Penitentiary at Atlanta on November 23, 1987, illustrate the difficulties of distinguishing valid warnings from false ones. During the 2-day period immediately preceding the Atlanta riot, there was evidence that a riot might be impending. Detainees in one unit had remained dressed overnight, the volume of outgoing mail was reported to be several times heavier than normal, and much of it contained photographs.³ In retrospect it appears that inmates were mailing these photographs to avoid their being lost or destroyed in the riot.⁴ At the time, the increased volume was explained as the result of a new program allowing detainees to have pictures taken of themselves. However, the staff had observed detainees removing their family photographs from their lockers.

The Atlanta officials were mindful of the possibility of a riot. The warden met several times with his executive staff and department heads to determine whether a lockdown was warranted. Still, the evidence they had obtained was never quite sufficient.⁵

Thus, in some contexts, warnings really do predict riots; in others, they may be discounted. Warning signs should be the *starting* point of an investigation, not the basis on which conclusions are drawn and policy is formulated. Questions such as these should be asked and answered in detail: Is the source of information reliable? Are such warnings out of the

ordinary? Are predictions of trouble widely shared or are they held by only a few? Do the signs indicate serious unrest among inmates or merely routine grumbling? Administrators are much better prepared to interpret the answers to these questions if they know their institutions and inmate populations thoroughly.

During the riot

Prison administrators have three main options to attempt to bring about resolution. They may forcibly retake the prison (the tactical solution), they may end the riot through talking (the negotiation solution), or they may let the

riot die of its own accord (the waiting solution).

In actual riots, such as those studied, the boundaries between these strategies may become indistinct. Negotiations can be used to collect information for a tactical assault or to tire and demoralize the inmates so they will surrender. A waiting policy can be used to strengthen the administration's tactical capabilities or, if used in conjunction with deprivation of food, water, or electricity, to force inmates to bargain seriously. A visible tactical mobilization may permit inmates to see more clearly the consequences of failed negotiations or it may wear them

Responses to Riot Warnings

If there appears to be a high probability that a riot is imminent, administrators may take administrative or diplomatic actions to prevent it.

Administrative actions include a lockdown of a unit or the entire facility; transfer of suspected instigators to a segregated unit or another facility; cancellation of activities that give inmates the opportunity to congregate, such as recreation or work; an increased presence of correctional officers who, by posture and words, convey that they will not permit a disturbance; and a search for contraband.

Diplomatic actions include efforts to convince inmates that a riot would be costly to them personally, counterproductive to reform, or unnecessary because their grievances will be addressed in the future.

Administrative and diplomatic actions can be used in combination. Potential instigators may be removed from prisons and the issues around which they are mobilizing resolved. Sometimes, however, strategies

conflict. At Atlanta, administrators felt themselves forced to choose between a primarily administrative strategy and a primarily diplomatic strategy. They reasoned that a lockdown could not be counted on to be effective. Some detainees were housed in dormitory units that could not be locked down, and the cell doors in the administrative segregation section were old and possibly defective. At the same time, a lockdown might further inflame already angry detainees and precipitate "the very riot a lockdown [was] intended to prevent."²⁵ Had the BOP had the names of the inmates who were slated for deportation, it could have locked down those inmates in secure cells and used its skills in persuasion to convince others not to start trouble. This information, however, was not available. Forced to choose between the two strategies, the administration selected a primarily diplomatic approach.

down. Still, at any given time prison administrators must commit themselves to one course or another based on the costs and benefits of each option.

Tactical solutions: the use of force

In general, a riot can be terminated at any time by using overwhelming force. Nevertheless, such a deployment of force can be costly. (This is one of the lessons of the 1971 Attica riot that retains its force today. In the assault at Attica, 39 people died.) As a consequence, commanders must develop strategies to minimize the risks to hostages, assault forces, and inmates, as well as to ensure that the assault force is invulnerable. Such strategies depend upon the type of force used. Three types of force were observed in the riots under study.

Immediate force. Force may be used as a first response to a disturbance. Armed personnel may be rushed in to defend or retake specific areas without waiting for the riot to expand to its potential territorial limit. The key element in achieving the desired result is the speed with which sufficient numbers of staff can be mobilized, equipped, and organized.

There are advantages to the early use of force. As noted above, riots may begin without plan or organization. The immediate use of force may prevent inmates from becoming organized, from fashioning weapons, from fortifying their position, and from recruiting additional participants and expanding the territorial limits of the riot. It will also limit the pain and suffering of the hostages already taken.

Moreover, force used immediately may deny inmates the opportunity to promise to themselves and to the authorities

that they will harm the hostages unless their demands are met. Once such threats are made, inmates may find it psychologically difficult to back down from them. The Atlanta detainees, for example, consistently promised to kill hostages if an assault were made. Even though they may have realized the dire consequences of such acts, their public commitment to this course of action might have psychologically obligated them to make good on it. One of the disadvantages of negotiations, compared to the early use of force, is that inmates are given an opportunity to make threats to which they then may become committed.

The greatest challenge in the early use of force is assembling the necessary personnel and equipment with sufficient speed. A riot control squad deployed too quickly runs the risk of being overrun and taken hostage. The tension between the opportunities presented by and dangers posed by early use of force grew to extraordinary proportions at Kirkland. In the riot's opening stages, correctional officers in a housing unit reported to the control center that armed inmates were breaking into the unit, which was filling with smoke. Officers were arriving at the facility, but their numbers were insufficient to deploy a squad to rescue the trapped officers. When the number reached 35 (command had wanted at least 100), an assault force was dispatched to rescue the trapped officers. Once this was achieved, momentum was behind the riot squad and they began to clear the yard of inmates.

By contrast, at Coxsackie, prison administrators had a compelling reason to use force immediately because inmates were observed assaulting correctional officers. However, the SHU's

high-security design impeded quick access. Therefore, no immediate action was taken because the inmates threatened to kill the hostages if authorities tried to use force to resolve the situation, and officials could not have prevented this.

Planned tactical strike. The essence of the tactical strike is to maximize the element of surprise. Administrators deploy staff in an attempt to release hostages or retake the facility before inmates can react. The assault at Talladega was this type. Its key elements were:

- *Intelligence.* There was a continuous effort to gather intelligence. Released hostages were debriefed, and the information obtained from them was used to assess the inmates' leadership and the location of hostages.
- *Drills and rehearsals.* Rehearsals were conducted that accurately simulated the planned mission. This was accomplished by conducting drills in a nearby housing unit that was similar in construction to the one being held by inmates.
- *Timing.* The assault was timed to occur when there was a maximum opportunity of success—in the predawn hours when inmates were asleep or generally more subdued. The team's entry was made under cover of night.
- *Unity of command.* The assault force's command unity was at its maximum level. One assault force (the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team) assumed sole responsibility for regaining the building. Other tactical teams from the FBI and BOP were used in support roles.
- *Weaponry.* Arsenal weapons were used to further diminish the capacity

of inmates to react. Stun grenades confused and disoriented the detainees.

- *Speed.* The attack was executed with great speed. Explosives were used to breach the entry doors quickly with minimal injury to those inside. Using the intelligence that had been gathered, the hostages were quickly located and freed.

- *Surprise.* No warnings or ultimatums were issued to the inmates. A meal was served to the inmates to foster their feelings of success in negotiations and to lower their vigilance.

The disadvantages of using a tactical strike to resolve a hostage situation are twofold. First, it might be unnecessary because negotiations may resolve the incident. Even if they do not, inmates given a choice between surrender and having force used against them may choose the former. The problem is that they cannot make that choice unless it is offered to them, either implicitly or explicitly. The purpose of an ultimatum is make the warning explicit.

Second, material conditions and the vigilance of inmates may make a tactical strike too risky. If inmates hold a large number of hostages, disperse them, and threaten to harm them in the event of an assault, as the Atlanta detainees did with more than 100 hostages, it may not be possible to overcome their tactical advantage. An assault under those conditions, however well-executed, would be perilous at best.

Riot squad formations. A third type of force is akin to that used by police to quell an ongoing urban riot. Riot squads move in unified groups to force clusters of inmates to move in one direction or to disperse. The essence of this type of force is reliance on the

size, discipline, and firepower of the assembled force to overwhelm inmates and make them back down. Unlike a tactical strike, in which an assault force's presence is concealed as long as possible, a riot squad's presence is deliberately established. Batons and shotguns may be carried not only as weapons, but also to convince inmates that resistance is futile.⁶

The general strategy is to establish a cordon around the riot area, using existing geographic breaks (e.g., buildings, exterior or interior fences) where possible. The purpose of the cordon is to prevent the riot from expanding in area and to prevent other inmates from joining the riot. Once sufficient forces are in place, the cordoned area is partitioned into smaller zones, which are then retaken one after another. The riot ends when the last zone is secured. The force used to end the second riot at Camp Hill was primarily a riot squad movement. The Cimarron riot ended through the use of a riot squad, and at Kirkland a riot squad was deployed to ensure that the surrender of inmates was orderly.

Negotiations

In a prison riot the term "negotiation" refers to a dialog between inmates and authorities that focuses on achieving an end to the incident. Four of the riots under study ended through negotiations: Camp Hill (the first riot), Atlanta, Mack Alford, and Cocksackie. Negotiations were also conducted at Talladega and (very briefly) at Kirkland but later abandoned in favor of other approaches. The negotiations observed can be divided into three types.

Negotiation as bargaining. The dialog between inmates and prison authorities may be primarily an exercise in bargaining. Inmates believe they have

put themselves in a position to bargain with the State. They may see their hostages and the portion of the facility they occupy as "chips"; they want to trade those chips for publicity, amnesty, improved conditions, or other benefits. The government may respond to inmates' demands with counter-demands. The resolution comes when the right bargain is struck. At Atlanta, this was the release of the hostages in return for a new review process and a promise not to prosecute. At Camp Hill (the first riot), inmates released the hostages after the superintendent promised to meet with them the next day to discuss their grievances and to issue a press release announcing that meeting.

Negotiation as problem solving.

Inmates may take territory or hostages simply because they can. In those situations, negotiations become a dialog aimed less at bargaining and more at solving actual and perceived problems posed by the situation and the individuals involved.

Inmate leaders in the Cocksackie riot issued personal demands that seemed disproportionate to the disturbances they created. The main instigator's principal demand was to speak over the phone to his stepfather. Apparently, none of the other inmate participants challenged his pursuit of the issue. Inmates also sought assurances that staff would not retaliate for the beatings they inflicted on their hostages or for the riot itself.

Over the years, law enforcement hostage negotiators have learned that it is usually best to respond as if the hostage holder's demands are authentic, however odd or seemingly disconnected from the situation, and never to dismiss them as trivial.⁷ At Cocksackie

these strictures were followed with success. Administrators arranged for the inmate leader to talk on the phone with his stepfather. An agency negotiator spent much of his time trying to calm the inmates and reassure them that they would not be injured when they gave up. A videocamera was put in place to record the surrender. These concessions were sufficient to solve the problems and end the disturbance.

Negotiations as situation management. State authorities may use negotiations primarily as a means to manage the situation. The measure of success is not whether an agreement is reached (either through bargaining or by meeting inmates' personal needs), but whether other goals are achieved: stabilizing the situation, obtaining information about conditions in the unit, and/or lowering inmates' vigilance against an assault.

At Talladega, negotiations aimed at bargaining reached a dead end after several days. After this, they became primarily an instrument to manage the situation. BOP and FBI negotiators tried to calm the detainees and thereby reduce the threat to the hostages. In the riot's final stages, negotiations were used primarily to support a tactical operation. They were used to obtain information and try to render the inmates less vigilant.

The distinction among negotiation as bargaining, as problem-solving, and as situation management should not be overdrawn. The first definition sees resolution as being achieved by bringing together the interests of the agency and the inmates. The second views resolution as being achieved by meeting the immediate needs (especially the emotional needs) of the inmates as

they articulate them. The third sees negotiation as a means to stabilize the situation and, if necessary, to prepare for a tactical assault. Negotiations always involve all three components. The distinctions among them are a matter of emphasis.⁸

Parties to negotiations

In approaching negotiations, administrators may assume that they are pitted against a single, unified group of inmates when, in fact, there may be schisms among the inmates or no organization whatsoever. Over time, inmates may fuse into a coherent group; fractionate into competing groups; or dissolve into small, antagonistic "pockets."⁹

In many types of negotiations, such as labor-management bargaining, the distinctions between individuals at the negotiating table are relatively clear-cut, with managers on one side and elected representatives of the workforce on the other. Prison riots are more complicated, and identifying who should sit at the bargaining table is more difficult.

Inmate negotiators. For progress in negotiations to occur, there must be an inmate or group of inmates with whom officials can talk with a measure of continuity. These negotiating inmates must be able to sway other inmates; otherwise an agreement to end a riot is of little value. At Mack Alford the inmates who initiated the disturbance continued to exercise control over the disturbance and negotiated with prison administrators. At Camp Hill (the first riot), a group of inmates also emerged as leaders with whom prison authorities could negotiate. At Coxsackie one inmate took responsibility for negotiations, but toward the end of the distur-

bance he seemed to be losing control over the others.

In the early stages of the Atlanta incident, no individual inmate or group emerged with whom officials could negotiate, although on the first day four inmates presented government negotiators with a list of demands, claiming that they represented the rest. Soon, however, other inmates contacted government negotiators asserting their authority. At that stage none of the groups seemed genuinely interested in reaching a settlement.¹⁰ This absence of leadership took government negotiators by surprise. Eventually, a loose coalition of inmates formed and bargained with government officials in good faith. By the 11th day of rioting, the coalition had gained sufficient leverage among the rioters to effect the release of the hostages after signing the agreement.

The problem of inmate leadership was more grave at Talladega. The detainees argued among themselves from the beginning. Administrators attempted to create a leadership group among the detainees. In one instance they acceded to a demand made by a relatively moderate detainee in the hope that he would gain stature in the eyes of the other detainees. However, a moderate leadership group never coalesced; the detainees and the administration remained far apart on the issues.

Agency negotiators. The theory behind hostage negotiation teams is now well established. A small group of administrators receives special training in hostage negotiations. They are chosen carefully, on the basis of intelligence, levelheadedness, verbal skills, ability to think on their feet, and over-

all appearance. Their job during a disturbance is to negotiate a settlement through bargaining and problem solving. Those with command (decisionmaking) authority refrain from talking directly to inmates.

The separation between commander and negotiators is said to have several advantages. The commander can make decisions under less stressful conditions. Negotiators can stall for time by referring requests and demands to a higher authority. If negotiators become overinvolved in the process, begin to lose objectivity, or experience high levels of stress, command personnel can take corrective action. There may be information the negotiators should not have because they might inadvertently reveal it (for example, that an assault is imminent) but which the person in command knows. Additionally, the division between command and negotiation may allow negotiators to develop greater rapport with hostage holders. The government negotiator can appear to the inmates to be taking their side in gaining concessions from command and so develop the inmates' goodwill.¹¹

This model was followed at both Atlanta and Talladega. At Atlanta, several hours after the riot began, a BOP lieutenant made the first contact with a detainee and arranged for a face-to-face negotiation session. He was soon joined by FBI negotiators, who then assumed control over the negotiations for the duration of the event. At Talladega a counselor assigned to the unit made the initial contact with the detainees and started negotiations. Later that evening, he withdrew from the negotiations; and trained negotiators from the prison, the FBI, and the BOP took over.

Coxsackie and Mack Alford followed different sequences. At Coxsackie, the first conversations occurred between the inmates and the department's negotiators as well as the deputy superintendent of the institution. About 5 hours into the disturbance, the Assistant Commissioner for the department began to talk to the inmates in response to their demand that they speak to an official "from Albany"; that is, someone with authority from the central office. From that point on, the Assistant Commissioner became the lead negotiator, although he worked closely with the department negotiator and the deputy superintendent.

At Mack Alford, two trained department negotiators were brought to the prison. After about an hour, however, the inmates broke off the dialog, claiming that the negotiators had lied to them. They then insisted that they would speak only with a particular captain, whom they trusted. The captain remained the chief negotiator throughout the disturbance.

The Coxsackie and Mack Alford negotiations, while successful, did not follow the model. In both cases, however, important principles were preserved. Neither the assistant commissioner at Coxsackie nor the captain at Mack Alford exercised authority in the situa-

Third-Party Negotiators

In some instances, bringing in an individual from outside the correctional agency may prove useful in negotiations. Third parties were used in negotiations at Atlanta, Mack Alford, and Talladega. They played several roles:

- **As initiators of conversations.** At Mack Alford, two popular inmate leaders who were not participating in the riot were recruited during its opening stages to initiate conversation with the rioting inmates who (at that point) refused to talk to the administration.
- **As guarantors to a promise.** At Mack Alford, three State legislators were present at the surrender to reassure inmates that they would not be mistreated by corrections staff.
- **As guarantors that an agreement is authentic and in the inmates' interest.** At Atlanta, Bishop Agustin Roman (auxiliary bishop of Miami) made an audiotape stating that he supported the

agreement. To overcome a last-minute snag in the negotiations, Bishop Roman assured the detainees that BOP personnel who signed the agreement had the authority to make a binding commitment.

- **As mediators searching for middle ground.** At Atlanta, a legal services attorney worked to develop a solution that was acceptable to both sides. He raised substantive issues with BOP administrators, and they responded in a written memo clarifying the Bureau's position. At the same time, the attorney helped persuade the Cuban detainees to accept the agreement without a clause declaring that deportations would cease.
- **As government bargaining chips.** At Talladega, the BOP allowed a reporter to talk to the detainees and report their story in return for the release of a hostage. At Coxsackie, commanders allowed the inmates' leader to have a 2-minute telephone conversation with his stepfather.

tion. Thus, the advantages that come with splitting the command and negotiation functions were not forfeited. An additional advantage was the increased credibility of the negotiators in the inmates' eyes.

Third-party involvement. In some situations, the assistance of parties from outside the agency may advance the negotiation process. The purpose of third-party involvement must be kept clearly in mind by administrators, who must be certain they make the decision to implement it on the basis of merit alone. Other criteria (such as the political prominence of the individual volunteers) must not be factors in the decision. Third-party negotiators must be carefully screened and agree not to raise new issues or to act as advocates for inmates.¹²

Cycles of negotiation

Studies of negotiations in other domains, especially labor-management bargaining, have found that they tend to follow a common cycle. Initially, both parties make exaggerated demands. This is followed by a period of withdrawal and a return to negotiations with more moderate demands. When parties try to circumvent this ritual, negotiations tend to break down.¹³ Even concessions made too early in the negotiation process can be counterproductive because parties "need the opportunity to experience exhaustion of their demands before they can be satisfied that they had drained what was there to be had. Premature movement robs them of this experience."¹⁴

This pattern seems to have been followed at Atlanta. During the first several days, government negotiators perceived the detainees were not interested in making progress in the negotiations. The detainees used

negotiation sessions as an "opportunity to express their longstanding frustrations"¹⁵ rather than achieve a settlement. However, this changed during the course of the disturbance. Government negotiators noted that the detainees became increasingly punctual at negotiation sessions, sometimes even arriving early, which was taken as an indication that they had become increasingly serious about them.¹⁶

On the other hand, a similar cycle did not develop at Talladega. The Talladega detainees and the government were as far, if not farther, apart at the end of the disturbance than at the start. Likewise, at Coxsackie inmates seemed more anxious and hostile as the incident progressed. In cases like these, issuing an ultimatum may be in order when negotiations appear unproductive.

Ultimatums

When negotiations deadlock or are not taken seriously, commanders may decide to issue ultimatums. In prison riots they can be categorized as use-of-force ultimatums and issues ultimatums.

The use-of-force ultimatum. A use-of-force ultimatum can be given in the expectation that inmates, given a clear choice between surrender and an armed assault, will choose surrender. In the riots studied, such ultimatums were issued at Camp Hill (the second riot) and at Kirkland and led to successful resolutions.

At Camp Hill, the State Police declared over a public address system that inmates were to release their hostages, surrender by exiting the cellblocks, and lie face down on the yard. At Kirkland, the warden

announced over the public address system that the riot squad had been deployed, that it was instructed to use force if necessary, and that the inmates should lie face down on the ground. The warden used language that was simple, direct, and forceful. In both instances there were no retaliations against hostages, and the riots ended shortly thereafter.

Issues related to the use-of-force ultimatum concern how to handle the transition from negotiation to force. Should government negotiators be alerted that an assault will occur? Many say no, because the negotiators might inadvertently reveal the plan. Others point to possible advantages: The negotiators might be able to distract the subject at the start of the assault, provide reassurances that would lower his or her defenses, or position him or her for a sniper shot.¹⁷ None of these advantages was foreseen by commanders at Talladega, and the Regional Director elected not to inform the government negotiators of the planned tactical strike.

What are the consequences if inmates refuse to surrender? At Kirkland and Camp Hill, use-of-force ultimatums were successful; in both instances riot squads were visible to inmates as they were deployed, a situation that may have contributed to the inmates' willingness to choose surrender. But a use-of-force ultimatum should be issued with every intention of following through. Otherwise, future ultimatums will have less credibility.

The "issue" ultimatum. The principle behind issue ultimatums is that once inmates are told that some or all their demands will not be met, they will stop making these demands and focus on matters that can be negotiated. Police

negotiators generally discourage the use of this type of ultimatum and advise: "Never tell the subject 'no.'"¹⁸ Instead, negotiators should try to recast demands so that they can be met or so they pose no immediate threat.

This advice seems reasonable for prison riots. An exception was the situation observed at Atlanta. Over the course of 6 days, the detainees, Cuban nationals, demanded assurances that they could remain in the United States. Administrators were reluctant to tell the detainees that this issue was not negotiable because they feared

they might retaliate against the hostages. The detainees refused to drop the issue, however, and the negotiations reached an impasse. Finally, a government negotiator told the inmates that their demand would not be met under any conditions. In this instance, a straightforward "no" broke the impasse without provoking retaliation against the hostages and allowed the negotiations to go forward.

Waiting

A third strategy for handling a prison disturbance is to wait it out, usually while maintaining a dialog. In law en-

forcement, hostage negotiators often stall for time.¹⁹ The theory behind this strategy holds that hostage-takers tend to develop sympathy for their hostages, develop a rapport with police negotiators, or just get tired of doing what they are doing. In light of this theory, police hostage teams are encouraged to avoid the temptation to "get it over with" but rather to patiently wait out the situation unless material threats to a hostage's safety or other considerations force a reassessment of tactics.

At Talladega continued waiting may have endangered the hostages because

Exhibit 1: Key Factors of Eight Prison Riots Studied

Institution	Duration	Number of Hostages	Method of Resolution
Kirkland Correctional Institution	6 hours	22	Ultimatum and riot squad
U.S. Penitentiary, Atlanta, Georgia	11 days	More than 100	Negotiations
Mack Alford Correctional Center	3 days	8	Negotiations and "waiting" strategy
Coxsackie Correctional Facility	14 hours	5	Negotiations
Idaho State Correctional Institution	1 day	None	Ultimatum and riot squad
Pennsylvania State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill	3 days (two riots)	First riot: 8 Second riot: 18	First riot: negotiations Second riot: State Police Force
Arizona State Prison Complex (Cimarron Unit)	About 1 hour	None	Immediate force by riot squad
Federal Correctional Institution, Talladega	10 days	11	Negotiations used and abandoned in favor of planned tactical strike

hostility among the detainees was beginning to increase. Negotiations formally ended the disturbance at Mack Alford, but in large measure the disturbance succumbed to massive defecation and inmate exhaustion. After 3 days of rioting, only a fraction of the original participants remained on the yard.

Although a waiting strategy may imply passivity on the part of the administration, usually the opposite is the case. Research on police hostage negotiations,²⁰ as well as negotiations in other contexts,²¹ emphasizes the importance of active listening: paying careful attention to what is said, asking the speaker to clarify what she or he meant, and communicating to the speaker that she or he was understood. Active listening can be extraordinarily demanding. The regional director in charge of Talladega's resolution reported that officials at the scene were continuously trying to discern what the detainees wanted and what they were trying to do, and to gather clues about their tactical situation.

A waiting strategy can employ tactics that will, by increasing inmates' discomfort, directly motivate them to end the incident more quickly or create needs that prison administrators can then use to effect a bargain. At Atlanta helicopter overflights put pressure on inmates, and water and heat to the compound were cut off. At Talladega, food, which was in short supply to begin with, was denied. At Coxsackie and Mack Alford, the electricity was turned off. Each of these deprivations became negotiating points for the government.

Hostages, however, have to endure the same deprivations as inmates. At

Talladega detainees and hostages went 10 days with very little food. Administrators were also concerned about a breakdown of order among hungry detainees. In this situation, rather than follow the theory of "increasing situational stress if the subject is too comfortable," it seemed more prudent to follow the corollary of "decreasing stress if the subject is very anxious."²² Since the detainees at Talladega were showing signs of increasing tension and hostility toward the hostages, food was provided to ameliorate that situation, to lower the detainees' defenses, and, hopefully, get food to the hostages.

After the riot

A riot's aftermath consists of short-term problems such as securing the prison, medium-term problems related to repairing the damage and returning staff to work, and long-term problems related to restoration and change. The specific short-term tasks should be included in the riot plan.

The short term

After the inmates surrender, commanders must coordinate a search for contraband, move inmates to secure units, conduct damage assessments, and ensure that all inmates are accounted for. Medical care must be provided to injured hostages and inmates. Evidence must be collected for future prosecutions. If outside staff or law enforcement personnel were requested, they must be released from duty as order is restored.

The importance of performing these tasks cannot be overstated. Having resolved the riot, the temptation to lower vigilance and assume that the worst is over may be premature. Therefore, riot plans should contain checklists and

guidelines for the immediate postriot period.

After the first disturbance at Camp Hill, some of the essential post-riot tasks were not completed. The count was not cleared,²³ and weapons and other debris were left in the hallways of blocks to which inmates were returned. Although the locking mechanisms of cell doors had been compromised, inmates were returned to them, and inmates were observed wandering outside their cells throughout much of the night after the first riot. The institution's administrators were largely unaware of these problems because the information never reached them. In hindsight it seems that they should have gone to the blocks to assess the damage themselves instead of relying on the reports of others. Unaware of these problems, the superintendent at Camp Hill dismissed all but 25 of the 260 State Police officers who had been called to help quell the first disturbance. The 25-officer contingent fell far short of the number needed to prevent the far more destructive riot that began the next day.

In the other disturbances studied, these tasks were handled without major problems. At Cimarron, a pressing issue in the immediate aftermath was the provision of medical care to the inmates who had been injured. One was evacuated by helicopter for emergency surgery, and 10 others were transported to hospitals by ambulance. The remainder of the inmates were searched and locked in their cells, and a count was taken. The inmates identified as being most active in the riot were placed in the facility's detention unit. The entire prison was searched

or weapons, but no buildup of weapons was found.

At Coxsackie the immediate aftermath of the incident was handled with an especially high level of control and, therefore, a greater certainty of results. Inmates not requiring immediate medical attention were moved to the gymnasium, separated from one another by 20 feet of space, instructed not to talk, and supervised by one, and later two, correctional officers per inmate. Each inmate was examined by medical staff and then interviewed by the State Police, staff members from the department's Inspector General's Office, and staff members from the Commission of Correction. Five hours after the riot's resolution, they were transferred in small numbers to other facilities.

Immediate postriot tasks at Atlanta mainly involved transferring the detainees to other facilities. Over a 24-hour period, they were escorted out of the compound one at a time. BOP staff searched detainees with the aid of a fluoroscope, placed them in restraints, and put them on a bus for transfer to another facility.

One of the immediate responsibilities of the governing agency is to help employees overcome the short- and long-term traumas of the disturbance. Mental health professionals may play a crucial role in debriefing staff after disturbances.²⁴ In general, prison administrators and officers interviewed for this study stated that such debriefing sessions were useful. In some departments, such as South Carolina's, they are mandatory. At Coxsackie each of the released hostages was accompanied by a mental health professional and a close friend during initial medical treatment and debriefing.

The medium term

In the medium term, prison administrators must provide continued support to employees in coping with their experience, repair the damage done to the facility, work toward normalization of institutional operations, and undertake the administrative followup associated with a disturbance.

Public recognition of the sacrifices made by hostages, as well as an expression of appreciation for the exemplary action of staff during the riot, may be important in reintegrating the corrections community. Following Talladega, for example, the Acting Attorney General commented that he felt "grateful beyond words and proud beyond measure." This recognition can also be made at public ceremonies such as one held by the Oklahoma State Legislature. Ongoing counseling and support for former hostages may be necessary as well.

Damage to the structural integrity of the facility must be addressed. At Coxsackie the inmates destroyed the control center of the SHU so they could not immediately be returned to their cells. The inmates at Idaho knocked holes between cells, rendering many of them unusable. In the largest, most destructive riots, such as those at Atlanta and Camp Hill, major reconstruction was needed.

During the medium term, a report may be commissioned to find out why the incident occurred. The report may help corrections officials, policymakers, and the public understand what the riot was about, thereby helping to establish a long-term reform agenda. It may help answer the question of whether systemwide changes are needed or only minor policy adjust-

ments. Official inquiries into the eight riots under study varied in several ways, discussed in the following sections.

Issuing agency. At Camp Hill the Governor commissioned a blue-ribbon panel to investigate the disturbance, and two legislative committees each wrote independent reports. Following the Cimarron incident, the Director of Corrections requested that another State agency, the Department of Public Safety, conduct the investigation to ensure objectivity, in light of the fact that there had been racial tensions at the unit. The investigations of the ISCI and Mack Alford riots were conducted by members of the respective States' central offices. At Coxsackie, the New York State Commission of Corrections (the body responsible for monitoring all correctional facilities in New York) conducted the investigation (its staff had been on the scene soon after the riot started). In response to both the Atlanta and the Talladega riots, the BOP established teams consisting primarily of senior staff and representatives from the other Federal agencies involved in the riot's resolution.

Scope of the investigation. The reports on the Camp Hill disturbance were the most far reaching, raising issues about the riot's management and related concerns such as prison crowding and alternatives to incarceration. The reports at Coxsackie, Mack Alford, and ISCI focused primarily on the riots themselves rather than any far-reaching implications. The authors of the reports on Atlanta, and to a lesser extent Talladega, used the opportunity to rethink the BOP's entire emergency preparedness effort. At Cimarron the focus was primarily on whether the use of force was justified and complied with department policy.

Audience. The results of the investigations at Cimarron, ISCI, and Mack Alford were intended primarily for use by those in the central offices of the State agencies. The reports on Cox-sackie, the two Federal prison disturbances, Atlanta and Talladega, and Camp Hill were written for those within the agency, policymakers concerned with corrections, and to some degree, the general corrections community.

Long-term solutions

A prison riot, by definition, means loss of control by prison administrators. Once they are resolved, prison riots can provide an opportunity for correctional leaders to develop policy that reflects what they have learned, provided they listen carefully and think clearly about the events. A corrections department can become stronger, less likely to lose control, and more effective in resolving disturbances when a prison riot is followed by one or more of the following outcomes.

Gains are made in the ability to forecast a disturbance, and the flow of information is improved. Corrections officials, having experienced a disturbance, may be more aware of and better able to interpret future warning signs.

Previously unrecognized problems are remedied. Riots may reveal weaknesses in facilities, operating procedures, or organization. It is better to ask how the problems can be resolved than argue about whether certain actions contributed to the riot.

The outcome of innovations made during the disturbance are reviewed and incorporated into riot plans. During the Atlanta disturbance, for ex-

ample, the BOP developed the idea of setting up a center for the hostages' families—a place where they could obtain information and support. Its success led the Bureau to make this a standard feature of its response.

Relationships with other agencies are improved. During a riot new relationships among agencies may emerge or the need for them may be demonstrated, as at Camp Hill. After a disturbance, gains should be consolidated and relationships strengthened.

Innovations are made in the reconstruction process. The postriot period can be used to restore what existed before the disturbance or to depart from tradition. For example, after the Mack Alford disturbance, the employees, including correction officers, case managers, and maintenance workers, became involved in developing plans to reconstruct the prison. A delegation was sent to several prisons in another State to develop ideas about architectural design. This break with tradition (previous architectural planning had been conducted only in the central office) helped create a sense of ownership among Mack Alford staff.

Morale is addressed. A riot is unlikely to leave employees' morale untouched. Much depends on what happened during the riot and the outcome. If the resolution went well, if employees perceived that corrections management faced the crisis squarely and with adequate resources and preparation, and if the responses of the political community and media were positive, then the disturbance may actually enhance the prison staff's sense of mission, loyalty, and confidence in their agency. Where these factors are absent, morale may plummet.

Camp Hill provides an example of some serious problems facing corrections administrators in a prison riot's wake, but also shows how such challenges can be met. A new commissioner of corrections and a new superintendent were hired. The commissioner reorganized the central office, secured a grant from the National Institute of Corrections to revamp the department's system for emergency preparedness, and improved relationships with other State agencies involved in emergency planning. The new superintendent helped direct the rebuilding of the facility.

Conclusion

The eight riots in this study are obviously not representative of every prison disturbance. The unique characteristics of each institution, its staff, administration, and inmate populations, as well as the State or Federal agency to which it belongs, shape the precipitating conditions, resolution, and aftermath of a riot. Comprehensive planning based on awareness of other incidents and lessons learned from the past cannot prevent all prison riots. It can, however, help correctional administrators avoid some disturbances, take action to prevent the small incident from expanding into a full-scale riot, limit the extent of damage of riots in progress, and terminate riot situations in the least costly way.

Notes

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