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Paid Duty and Private Sponsorship of Police Project

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Research Result Summary: Paid Duty and Private Sponsorship of Police Project

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Paid Duty Policing and Private Sponsorship: Research Result Summary

Paid duty policing entails a private employer or user paying public police officers by the hour to provide security services. In many arrangements the public police department typically charges a small administrative fee for brokering the deal with external employers. The police uniform that officers wear to these assignments alone is a public symbol of power and potential deadly force. Paid duty policing is private in typically involving private employers using uniformed police officers to secure their private spaces or public spaces for private events. Sometimes paid duty police are employed by business improvement districts/associations or similar business organizations to banish or otherwise exclude homeless and other marginalized people from urban retail strips or downtowns. Officers on paid duty rarely if ever use the expertise they have acquired (for instance, related to investigations) or surveillance devices purchased by police departments, or otherwise report on or make arrests for criminal acts while on assignment beyond those serving the private employer. Instead officers almost exclusively serve as a physical security presence. We found paid duty is an example of policing that crosses the public-private dichotomy and helps dispel crime fighter myths characterizing public police.

Paid duty policing is found throughout cities, day and night, at road construction projects, sporting venues, retail malls, parking lots, private and public schools, casinos, hospitals, critical infrastructure like bridges, jazz festivals, large weddings, and well beyond. It is not a marginal phenomenon. Paid duty policing may well create channels and exchanges that can create corruption and we found a lack of transparency and accountability in paid duty policing. Our research design used qualitative methods including 120 interviews with paid duty employers and police; freedom of information (FOI) requests for paid duty documents, including assignment logs and policies, from 104 United States and Canadian police departments; and collection and examination of local reports or reviews of paid duty arrangements, print and online media coverage and reader commentary about decisions or incidents pertaining to paid duty policing. Interviews were conducted with police and employers or users of paid duty services about these arrangements. Participants were identified in media accounts of paid duty policing, police service websites, and the acquired police assignment logs.

We found paid duty is about lengthening the arms of mostly private corporations and commercial actors into the workings of public police, often at taxpayer expense. Paid duty also raises issues of corruption and the rule of law in paid duty policing as well as police accountability. We found paid duty arrangements varied between Canada and the United States and across internal jurisdictions. We found drawbacks and liabilities of paid duty policing. We identified tensions between what employers expect from officers and what officers do. We found in some jurisdictions there are laws that compel or force users to buy paid duty services from police. We additionally found paid duty police are often privately hired for risk management. The study also revealed paid duty has sometimes drawn media attention. We also found paid duty policing involving private but legal 'middle-men' as a newer private model in the US. We found this type of takes monies that would otherwise have gone to public police departments to compensate for public costs of

selecting, training and outfitting officers. In some US jurisdictions these entities broker between private employers of public police departments and officers themselves. We also found that mutations in paid duty arrangements have implications for the ethics and economics of policing. We found our methodology experienced serious barriers mostly due to a reluctance of police departments to participate. Based on the study we think paid duty policing can be made more accountable and consistent with the public good.

Private Sponsorship

Private sponsorship involves private organizations and individuals providing monies to public police for various and sometimes hidden reasons directly or through a foundation to a public police department. Our research design used qualitative methods to study private sponsorship of public police. These included interviews with private sponsors and police; FOI requests for private sponsorship documents, including policies and other records, from 104 United States and Canadian police departments; and collection and examination of accounts or reviews of private sponsorship of public police arrangements, print and online media coverage of private sponsorship of public police. Interviews were conducted with police and sponsors about these arrangements. Our findings show that issues of accountability, legitimacy, influence, and the rule of law are relevant to private police sponsorship. We found that growing private sponsorship of public police in North America is a significant social and policy issue in multiple jurisdictions. We also found that private organizations will provide funds to a charitable police foundation that will broker with the local public police department. In the United States, there is much variation in how this sponsorship is managed. Sometimes there is little oversight and funds transfer from private sources to public police officials with implications for accountability, corruption, the rule of law, legitimacy, and democratic policing. Other times, the police foundation operates as a broker, masking a sponsor's identity.

Private sponsorship of public policing and the rise of private police foundations is a recent development in North America. The findings raise questions about what sponsors and donors of these funds receive in exchange for transferring funds to police, such as whether there are more tangible benefits received. Private sponsorship of public police straddles the conventional public-private dichotomy. We found in some cases the police institution seems to depart from its firm rule of law mandate and civic/public principles and scruples.

Private sponsorship is not occurring on the fringes since when police officers are patrolling in their vehicles, responding to crisis situations, and thus most publicly visible, some of their equipment has been paid for by private rather than public sources and it remains unknown what is offered in exchange. The findings raise questions like: Are public police still adhering to the rule of law? Do these arrangements damage the rule of law and police legitimacy? Do police expend more effort and resources on solving crimes that directly harm sponsors to the neglect of less powerful victims? Sponsorship may hinder the relationship between policing and the "public good." Yet some private sponsorship happens in the shadows.

Our findings suggest that privately-sponsored policing is a case study of how public police become entangled in marketization. Private sponsorship of public policing also raises issues of police officer association and union public salary demands, thus fueling departmental quests for alternative private-funding sources. The findings reveal

the mundane behind the scenes means and organization has not been the subject of scrutiny. We found that police being sponsored remains invisible to the public except perhaps the advertising of the sponsor on police vehicles or uniforms. This advertising has avoided public scorn. The results also reveal there is much variation in the two countries. There are holes left in this policy domain that seem to demand greater attention and/or regulation and enforcement going forward to ensure adherence to the rule of law where private sponsorship is concerned. The findings suggest sponsorship of public policing should be made more accountable and transparent.