Law enforcement

Introduction

Law enforcement refers to agencies and individuals responsible for public safety, enforcing a set of norms and rules in a society and maintaining public order. It also refers to activities conducted by law enforcers such as dissuasion, detection and investigation of crime as well as apprehension of law offenders(Hess, Orthmann, & Cho, 2014). The most typical and organized form of law enforcement agency is the police. A police officer is a legitimised employee of the police force. Police officers have a variety of duties and responsibilities within their jurisdiction which are aimed at enforcing law. Training is regularly conducted to equip the officers with the necessary job skills.Police officers may be trained to concentrate on a special unit since law enforcement is diverse. Police work when situations arise even while off duty which is reason enough to invest resources to their units.

*Duties of police officers*

According to Bayley(1979) the responsibilities of police officers in law enforcement include: protecting property and life, crowd control, traffic regulation, criminal investigation and public safety. Public safety is provided in areas with large numbers of people such as mega-events, road accidents and disaster scenarios. Police may also be involved in other related activities such as emergency response in their areas of jurisdiction. The police department has toll free numbers where members of the public may call in to report incidences. Using the information provided, police avail themselves at the scene and coordinate operations such as fire control and medical emergencies evacuation. During training, police officers are trained on basic first aid so as to enable them to attend to casualties with minor injuries. This basic first aid also assists the police to get statements from the casualties faster and release them to avoid and minimise havoc and congestion at the scene. The more the casualties are cleared out the closer the police officers get to the core of the underlying issue.Police officers are also empowered to reprimand minor law offenders. Such minor cases are resolved by issuing fines as stipulated by the law. This kind of power is bestowed by the magistrate in the concerned area of jurisdiction. Anexample is the issuing of parking tickets to minor traffic law offenders.

Police officers also have a duty to communicate effectivelywhile responding to emergency and non-emergency calls(Grant & Terry, 2011). This should also be the case when they are communicating with each other during work to ensure that the correct message is passed which enables the decision maker to opt for the most viable law enforcement procedure. As such, police officers are equipped with two-way-communication gadgets which are mainly used to call in on incidents between the control centre and the officer on the ground.The police officer may call in to request for backup on the ground while the control desk may call an office to alert them to respond on an issue on their jurisdiction. During large ground operations, the Gold Silver Bronze command structure system is used by the police. The Gold Commander coordinates activities from the control room with the aid of audio and visual projections of what is happening on the ground. These projections are made possible by technology through hidden speakers and cameras respectively. The Silver Commander is in charge of the incident control room which is located close to where the action is happening, unlike the main control room at the head offices. The Silver Commander’s group also offers backup for the Bronze commander’s team if need arises. The Bronze Commander coordinates the team on the ground based on the communications and updates to and from the Silver Commander and the Gold Commander respectively.

*Police units*

Police officers may be classified into units depending on their work designation. There are two main police officer categories (Bayley, 1979), the general duties officers and the detectives. General officers are otherwise known as uniformed police, preventive police, administration police or patrol. These officers undertake active crime control in their jurisdiction and also respond to emergencies. On the other hand, detectives act on cases that have already been handled partially by the general police, as such, they may be viewed as the more reactive branch of the two. Detectives are responsible for investigations on crimes that have already occurred.Since this categorization was made, the police department has grown over the years giving room for more specialized units where police officers are better placed to enforce law according to their areas of specialization during training and based on their designated area of jurisdiction. Other units are also derivatives from the two main units. Specialised units are involved with: anti-terrorism response, surveillance, protecting very important persons, law enforcement at a civil level, child-protection services as well as investigation of major crimes like drug trafficking (done by the Drug Enforcement Administration).

Auxiliary police perform administrative duties such as issuing licences for guns. This gives a basis for the enforcement of Gun Control act where such arms are misused or unlicensed. Special units’ police on the other hand enforce the law by dealing with specific crimes such as fraud, homicide and computer crimes. Military police are a special section of the military that is mandated to enforce military law in the civilian population. Another unit for police officers is the special jurisdiction police. They uphold the laws within a defined jurisdiction such as in schools, hospitals, airports, government buildings and subways. Sheriffs are also police officers mandated with the task of enforcing laws of the state at the level of the county. This authority is given to the deputy sheriffs by the state. State police are the unit of police officers also referred to as provincial police. Their work entails enforcing traffic laws and ensuring safety of motorists on interstate highways. They may also be involved in criminal investigation and the usual state-wide law enforcement(Conser , Paynich, & Gingerich, 2011).There are also other police officers who work to enforce law though they are not necessarily mandated by the state. These include religious officers, secret service and private police. Religious police enforce sharia laws in the Muslim community. Private police comprise of individuals and groups that are concerned with combatting crime though they lack official police warrants. Secret service on the other hand undertake investigations in an autocratic system to protect the sole leader’s political power.

For a police officer to enforce law effectively, a variety of qualities are taken into consideration; empathy, sound judgement, perceptiveness, physical health and physical stamina as well as leadership and communication skills. This in some way aim to minimise effects of occupational hazards such as stress, injuries, long working schedules and stress which in turn optimises their efficiency to enforce laws(Baker, 2006).

# References

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