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Boston Police Commissioner Announces Field Interrogation and Observation (FIO) Study Results

October 08, 2014

In 2010, the Boston Police Department commissioned a study to determine how Boston Police Officers are utilizing the Field Interrogation and Observation program in the City. The study, done by Dr. Anthony Braga and Dr. Jeff Fagan, looked at all Field Interrogation and Observation (FIO) reports done by BPD officers from 2007 – 2010 (approximately 205,000 FIO's). While the final report is not completed, the Department is committed to transparency, and therefore is releasing the researchers' preliminary findings.

The FIO program in Boston is not a traditional stop and frisk program. FIO's are used to document not only when an individual is stopped and frisked, but also to document when an officer engages in a consensual encounter with an individual,

and when an officer observes an individual, and needs to document that observation for intelligence purposes.

The study not only looked at where the FIO's were occurring, but also who was being FIO'ed, specifically whether individuals who were being FIO'ed had prior arrest records and /or were verified members of a gang.

Preliminary findings show the Department is targeting gang members in high crime areas.

The study showed that the amount of crime in a neighborhood is the most powerful predictor of the number of FIO's done in a neighborhood.

The study showed that officers are repeatedly stopping or observing individuals with criminal records and/or gang membership (5% of the individuals FIO'ed account for more than 40% of the total FIO's).

Gang Membership and prior arrest history are very strong predictors of repeated FIO's.

The study did show some racial disparities that must be addressed.

Specifically, the study showed that during the given time period, minority neighborhoods do experience higher levels of FIO activity, approximately 1% of FIO's completed per month, when controlling for crime.

It also showed that Black subjects are 8% more likely to be stopped repeatedly and 12% more likely to be frisked and searched when controlling for other factors like Criminal History and Gang Membership in Violent Crime areas.

While there is still some work to be done to ensure we are closing the gap on these racial disparities, the numbers of overall FIO activity are encouraging, and indicates the Department is headed in the right direction.

BPD has decreased the number of FIOs it completes by almost 42% since 2008 and has decreased arrests by 33%, with steady reductions in overall crime. These numbers demonstrate that officers are utilizing targeted enforcement to reduce crime.

Steps the Department has taken since 2010 to ensure a fair and effective FIO program

- **Significant Changes to Department FIO Rule in 2011:**

- **Mandates Better Documentation:** The new FIO Rule adds an encounter to the list of documentable interactions, to ensure that those interactions that do not rise to a Terry Stop are properly documented.
- **Mandates Better Supervision:** Officers will submit the FIO to a detective supervisor for approval prior to the end of his/her tour of duty. Once the FIO is approved, the officer has 48 hours to enter the report into the database and forward the original to the BRIC.
- **Limits the Retention of an FIO:** An FIO will be retained in the electronic database for a period not to exceed five (5) years. If an individual does not appear in the database for five (5) years, all FIO Reports naming that individual as the subject will be deleted from the electronic database and any related paper copies will be destroyed.

- **Improved Technology:**
 - BPD has had a new CAD / RMS system in the works for 3 years to better improve our systems and provide accurate reporting to share with the community
 - In November 2014, the system will be up and running and Boston Police Department will begin utilizing a electronic Records Management System that:
 - Allows for more specific documentation on the reasons for the stop
 - Allows for more immediate data entry into a database that will provide accurate statistics faster
 - Provides area for narrative to include factual basis

- **Increased Training on FIO's, Racial Profiling and Unconscious Bias:**
 - Currently utilize a step by step recruit training presentation to describe the requirements of updated FIO Rule. Instructors provide examples of situations that warrant FIOs for a legitimate intelligence purpose.
 - Created a Carousel Video featuring Superintendent Paul Fitzgerald of the BRIC re: changes and expectations re: FIO's
 - Procedural Justice training for Sergeant In-Service Training and the past 4-5 Recruit Classes. These trainings:
 - Provided key terms of Procedural Justice and their meanings including police legitimacy, unconscious bias, and community perceptions.
 - Provided examples of interactions common to officer responsibilities and identifying and overcoming possible biases
 - In September 2013, 73 middle managers and command staff personnel attended a training on Procedural Justice given instructed by Dr. Tracey Meares, an expert in procedural justice.

- **Diverse Upcoming Promotions:** BPD is in the process of making 6 supervisors in short term, 50% of which will be minorities.

Next Steps to Continue Improving the FIO program

- **Training:** The academy is going to further distribute the existing trainings and continue providing the training Department-wide:
- Ensuring the Procedural Justice Training is given Department-wide
- In-person speaker series with individuals from different community organizations
- Full-day Community Interaction dates
- Re-circulate FIO carousel learning on proper use of FIOs
- Ensuring those officers who do the most FIO's are more frequently receiving training on the constitutional standards for stops, and proper documentation.
- **Report out statistics on stops once data is electronically reported**
- Devote an analyst in our Bureau of Intelligence and Analysis to report out periodically statistics in context related to FIOs.
- **Continue to train Supervisors on monitoring officers' FIO activity**
- Detective Supervisors to sign off on all FIOs
- Monitoring for details of stop and determining any unjust stops
- Holding officers accountable for their actions relative to stops and disciplining for unjust actions, if appropriate
- **Officers handing out business cards after an interaction**
- Commissioner Evans has been promoting and instituting the use of name tags among Command Staff and officers. The Department continues to be in favor of personalizing interactions between police and citizens, as demonstrated during the Occupy Boston movement.
- The Department currently has police officers who hand out cards after encounters as a matter of course, and will look to expand on enhancing the person-to person interaction.
- **Body Cameras**

- The use of body cameras provides a lot of issues in their use, from a technology perspective. The Department needs to see if they would work for Boston.
- The Department is not dismissing the idea, but recognizes the need to flesh out the details more to determine if the expense associated with cameras will help the Department in achieving our goals.
- **Have an outside consultant review the final report, and give recommendations**
- The Department will bring in an individual to advise on whether there are further steps the Department can take to ensure officers are appropriately stopping and searching people.
- The Department plans to contact the Police Executive Research Forum to discuss the findings and recommended next steps.
- **Increase Community Involvement in the solutions**
- The Department will convene a community group to review the final report to directly provide ideas how to move the Department forward.
- Over the past month, the Department has held three separate meetings with the ACLU to receive feedback and engage the organization in the solutions. As a result of the meetings, the Department agrees that publishing FIO statistics going forward is necessary, and the Department is working toward personalizing interactions between officers and citizens. The Department will continue to engage the ACLU in these discussions moving forward, as well as other community leaders and partners.

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PHOTO OF THE DAY: COMMISSIONER ...

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