Police in America

Chapter Three
The Contemporary Law Enforcement Industry

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Basic Features of American Law Enforcement

- Local Political Control
  - Tradition inherited from England
  - Primary responsibility for police protection rests with local governments
  - Result is a highly fragmented, decentralized system for regulating the different agencies

- Police services provided on 4 different levels
  - City, County, State, Federal
An “Industry” vs. International Perspective

“Industry” Perspective
- This approach provides a consumer perspective on policing
- Average citizen receives police services from several different agencies in one day

International Perspective
- Other countries have less fragmented systems
- England only has 43 law enforcement agencies and Japan has 47
  - Their national governments provides a significant part of their local agency’s budgets
Components of the American Law Enforcement Industry

- Government Agencies
  - Local
    - Municipal police
    - County sheriffs
  - State
    - State police
    - Bureaus of criminal investigation
  - Federal
    - Federal law enforcement agencies
    - Military law enforcement (MP)
  - Special district police
    - Public schools, transit police, college and university police
  - Native American tribal police

- Private security
  - Private security firms
  - Security personnel
Size and Scope of Law Enforcement

- 17,876 law enforcement agencies in U.S.
  - Myth: 1967 PCC incorrectly reported there were 40,000
- 12,766 local police departments
- 3,067 Sheriff’s departments
- 49 State Police Agencies
- 1,481 special police agencies
- 65 Federal agencies
- 731,903 full-time sworn officers employed by local and state agencies in 2004
- Civilianization: Today, about 33 percent of all local police department employees are civilians
Employment by state and local law enforcement
Basic Sources on Law Enforcement Agencies

The most comprehensive source of data on American law enforcement agencies is the report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), *Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics*. The most recent report is for 1999; BJS intends to conduct new surveys every 2-3 years. Additional data can be found in the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), published annually. Many law enforcement agencies now maintain their own websites, which provide information about organizational structure and current programs.
Contemporary Law Enforcement

Authorized strength
- Number of officers authorized for a department
- Most departments are below their AS

How much police protection does a community receive?
- Sworn officers vs. total number of employees
- Civilianization (33%)

Police-population ratio
- # of sworn officers per 1,000 residents

Largest costs of a department
- Labor/personnel
The Fragmentation Issue

- Lack of coordination between agencies
- Crime displacement
- Duplication of services
- Inconsistent standards

Alternative
- Consolidation of departments
- Contracting of services from larger depts

However, the problem may not be as serious as some have argued
- The PSS concluded that small police departments were not necessarily less efficient than large departments
- Small departments put more officers on the street performing direct police services
- Patrol of areas is not duplicated
Types of Agencies

- **Municipal police** — represent 71 percent of all law enforcement agencies, handle serious crime and provide emergency services.

- **County police** - Municipal police that operate on a county wide basis, constitute 1 percent.

- **Sheriffs** - Responsibilities defined in state constitution, sheriff is an elected position, serve all three components of criminal justice system: law enforcement, courts, and corrections.
Other Local Agencies

- **The Coroner/Medical Examiner**
  - Have responsibility to investigate deaths
  - Coroners are not trained physicians and are elected to their position
  - Medical Examiners are MDs with training in pathology
  - Investigate 20 percent of deaths in U.S.

- **Special District Police**
  - Serve particular government agencies, such as colleges and universities

- **Tribal Police**
  - 200 agencies to protect Native American tribes
State Law Enforcement Agencies

- **State Police**
  - Share responsibility with local police
  - Varying degrees of criminal investigation responsibility depending on the state

- **Highway Patrol**
  - Enforces traffic laws on the main highways
  - in CA, CSP merged with CHP in 1995

- **State Investigative Agencies**
Federal Law Enforcement Agencies

- 17 agencies, each employing 500 or more sworn officers
- Role of each federal agency specified by federal statute
- Federal Law Enforcement Post 9/11/01
  - Homeland Security Act
  - Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice restructured
Department of Homeland Security

- Customs and Border Protection
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Transportation Security Administration
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Secret Service
Department of Justice

- Drug Enforcement Administration
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
- U.S. Marshals Service
Qualifications for FBI

- U.S. Citizen
- 23-37 years of age
- Four-year College degree
- Vision not worse that 20/200
- Pass polygraph examination
- Pass drug test
- Pass interview
The Private Security Industry

- Estimated 90,000 private security organizations employing over 2 million people
- 3:1 ratio of private to public police officers in U.S.
- Different from public organizations because:
  - 1. Focus more on crime
  - 2. More alternatives to addressing problems
  - 3. More emphasis on crime prevention
  - 4. Primarily concerned with matters occurring on private property
Minimum Standards

- No national police system or national standards
- So where do our standards come from?
  - U.S. Supreme Court
  - U.S. Constitution
  - State Government
  - Licensing or certification
  - Accreditation