

# THE COMMAND POST

Institute for Law Enforcement Administration Alumni Association

OCTOBER 2017



## Greetings from the President

Welcome to our latest edition of The Command Post, our newsletter designed to keep you informed on the current happenings at the Institute for Law Enforcement Administration (the ILEA). It has been a busy year filled with new courses, new graduates, and new challenges. The obstacles facing law enforcement today continue to grow, yet our resolve remains stronger. I reflect and write this update in the aftermath of the nation's worst mass shooting, where guardians from the Las Vegas Metro Police Department responded as warriors to the tragic events of the Route 91 Music Festival. Monday after the shooting, I sat down with our three newest police officers, who had just graduated the basic police academy the previous Friday. I asked what was going through their minds. Their answer was all the same, "We are ready to go to the 32<sup>nd</sup> floor." Those few words speak volumes about the future of our profession. We have a responsibility as police leaders to keep them safe, equip them properly, provide the best training, and promote their safety and wellness.

However, we should also remind officers that our role in public service stems from the essential Peelian principle – "the police are the public, and the public are the police" – as the past few years have been challenging for police-community relations across the United States. Since 1957, the ILEA has served law enforcement leaders by teaching the value of education, scholarship, vision, justice, integrity and diversity. Every graduate of this institution shares a common bond, and I hope you reflect fondly on that experience as a member of our Alumni Association. I encourage you to reconnect with your colleagues at this year's Contemporary Issues and Ethics Conference (December 18-19), which will focus on building community trust, officer safety, and ethical leadership. These two days will sharpen your skills as a police leader and allow you the opportunity to personally connect with influential members in our community. As always, the conference is our free gift to any Alumni Association member in good standing.

*continued on page 4*



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## Could a Decision-making Model be Right for your Agency?

By Jeff Garner, MS

Most agencies approach policy in one of two methods: a strict set of procedural guidelines that closely define officer response under specific circumstances, or a set of general expectations alongside a heaping dose of terms like 'objective' and 'reasonable'. As a policy writer, I believe there are appropriate times for both. The former, in situations where a very specific response is required, or more commonly, for instruction in unit specific activities that are most appropriately catalogued within a set of standard operating procedures. When it comes to general policy, however, I much prefer the latter approach—communicating a set of expectations alongside an established and consistent vision of what constitutes a successful outcome.

After all, within police work, we consistently encounter situations that are incredibly dynamic and frequently unpredictable. Furthermore, those incidents which are most risk-intensive are generally the situations that require the greatest degree of flexibility in response. This is one reason why the courts continue to recognize discretion as a necessary commodity in police work. Consider the mechanics of launching a nuclear missile. We've all seen the movies where this process is portrayed; there is a manual involved and responsible personnel are guided through each and every step. Now consider an officer confronted with a threatening subject who has resisted the officer's commands of arrest. The response required in this situation simply cannot be prescribed through line-item procedures. Similarly, consider a vehicle that fails to yield to an officer's signal to stop. Certainly it is possible to institute strict regulations in this situation, but doing so disregards the officer's experience, decision-making skills and direct insight into the situation at hand.

A flexible, discretion-based approach to policy is an attempt to bridge that gap—to allow an officer the ability to make an

educated and reasonable decision in the face of circumstances only he or she is experiencing at that given moment. In theory, this approach is great, and often it is successful. How is it then when situations become dynamic, we sometimes manage to get it so wrong?

The simple answer, as well as a component that should never be ignored, is that such analysis, tendered in the safe confines of one's office, is always far easier than when presented in the dynamic and dangerous environment where officers confront these decisions. That must never be forgotten. However, to stop there is to eliminate the opportunity to improve and we should always strive to improve in the services we provide our communities.

Looking deeper into the issue, it is important to consider the competing values that are at play within our front-line personnel. While contemporary policing has turned to talk of procedural justice and community oriented policing, the traditional policing model still casts a long shadow over many of our agencies. If you have been at this job for a decade, particularly two decades or more, you are familiar with traditional policing. Chances are, this is the model you came up under, and quite possibly, still the yardstick by which you supervise your personnel.

To be clear, traditional policing emphasizes the control of crime; it prioritizes tactics such as rapid response to calls and heavily favors enforcement tactics and the idea that the police are the professionals who know more about what the public needs than the public themselves. "Don't worry about what we're doing; we're doing what's necessary to keep the community safe," is the unspoken—or perhaps spoken—philosophy.

Within this model, police officers are the thin blue line that stands between the community and all that is wrong with the world, and criminals are dirt bags or thugs and they are to be caught and placed into jail at all costs. Despite our progression towards more empirically validated approaches, the traditional policing mindset has been revitalized through events that originated with Ferguson and continue today in the form of civil unrest and attacks on police officers.

To illustrate this concept of competing values, consider again the example of an officer confronted with a vehicle pursuit in an agency with a policy that dictates vehicles will only be pursued when the need and risk of immediately apprehending the suspect clearly outweigh the opposing risk to the public should the person escape. If the offense at hand is a stolen vehicle, we would expect the pursuit to be quickly terminated once the suspect exhibits dangerous driving behavior. After all, what risk to the *safety* of the public does a theft suspect pose compared to the continuation of an unpredictable high-speed pursuit?

That calculation denies the existence of the competing values frequently at play within our front line personnel. Chances are, your officers are evaluating a theft suspect's risk to the public from the traditional policing perspective, which communicates that any person who would steal a car is a dirtbag and a danger to society who must be caught at all costs. What about that carefully worded policy and its required evaluation of risk? Let's be real—police officers willingly run towards the sound of gunfire. Driving 120 in a construction zone is just another day at the office. The risk to themselves is accepted, the risk to the public is expected, and the risk to the suspect is not considered outside of a strategy for resolution.

Here is a challenge: if you want to gauge the status of your officers' self-concept, just count the number of Punisher emblems you see on your officers' personal vehicles, t-shirts in the department gym, or personalized Yeti cups. After several decades of our country being at war, two decades of the actual and communicated threat of terrorism, and now, several years of intensive coverage of threats and attacks on law enforcement personnel, many of our officers have fully embraced the warrior mentality.

This is a thin line to navigate. After all, there is an undercurrent of nobility within this concept. However, there must be a balance. Crime rates are actually at an all-time low and despite the pervasiveness of well-publicized events, the vast majority of our communities embrace and support law enforcement personnel. What surely has changed, however, is the public's expectations. In years past, the public largely accepted that cops are the professionals and the less they know regarding how we go about "solving" the problem of crime, the better. That's no longer the case. The public expects transparency and proportionality. This is where critical decision-making models (CDM) come in.

In its essence, a CDM is nothing more than an OODA Loop. You know these; developed by Colonel John Boyd in his efforts to increase the speed and efficiency of decision making in fighter jet mid-air engagements—dogfighting, OODA stands for Observe, Orient, Decide and Act. The OODA Loop communicates the continual and looping process by which information must be collected, analyzed and acted upon. The singular difference between a CDM and an OODA Loop is the CDM's inclusion of an ethical core. This ethical core communicates the values by

which each step in the decision-making process must be grounded. These values are freely determined; our department selected SHIELD—Service, Honor, Integrity, Life and De-escalation. SHIELD provides an easily remembered model for consistently communicating the true values we desire our officers to base their decisions upon.

The first three values require little explanation. The third, Life, represents the sanctity of all human life, and stands as a reminder that all human life is sacred. In our pursuit example, the officer's life is sacred, the family in the station wagon being passed—their lives are sacred—and yes, even the suspect, despite the series of bad decisions that have culminated in this encounter, his or her life is sacred as well. If we're honest, the traditional policing approach does not place a great deal of emphasis on the suspect's life. Regardless of where you fall on this topic, our communities have progressed beyond this view. Furthermore, our oath obligates us to the ideal that all life is sacred and we should endeavor to preserve it in every situation reasonably possible.

The fifth value, de-escalation, is a concept that deserves more consideration than its current popularity has ascribed it. Law enforcement has embraced de-escalation as tactics which are intended to stabilize a situation and reduce the immediacy of a threat so that additional time, options and resources may be brought to bear to achieve a universally successful resolution. However, the traditional definition of de-escalation should also be considered: behavior used to deter the escalation of commitment bias; commitment bias being the response to a particular manner based purely on custom, or persisting in a chosen response when all feedback points towards altering one's

course. Sound familiar? The siege at the Branch Davidian complex is one familiar example of commitment bias at work in law enforcement operations.

Critical decision-making models represent a method by which law enforcement can increase the level of objectivity in discretionary decision-making as well as emphasize the importance of decision-making being a continually evaluative process. Within the CDM, information is collected; the situation, threats, and risks are assessed; legal authority and departmental policy is considered; options are identified and a course of action determined; at which point action is taken, reviewed and assessed. If the desired outcome is not achieved, the process starts over in a method UK police refer to as spinning the model<sup>ii</sup>.

While such a process might seem to unnecessarily complicate the process of selecting an appropriate response, I have a one-word retort: dogfight. If a decision-making model serves as a universally accepted method of making effective and efficient decisions in what would seem to be one of the most dynamic encounters known to man, I believe there is a place for one within our mission as well. In my experience, a CDM provides a mechanism by which police agencies may continue to utilize discretionary centered policies while increasing the assurance that our officers will select objectively reasonable responses that are consistent with department and community values.

<sup>i</sup>Cordner, G. W., & Scarborough, K. E. (2010). *Police Administration*. New Providence, NJ: Matthew Bender & Company, Inc.

<sup>ii</sup>Police Executive Research Forum. (2016). *Guiding Principles on Use of Force*. Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum.



The **54<sup>th</sup> School of Executive Leadership** graduated 29 officers from 22 agencies on April 28, 2017. Congratulations!

## Greetings from the President

*continued from page 1*

Additionally at the conference, we will take the time to elect next year’s Board of Directors and review our Association’s accomplishments of the past year. Some highlights include a social evening at the Frisco RoughRiders ballpark, a streamlined scholarship process for Institute programs, a host of new partnerships, members and friends. If you are attending the 124<sup>th</sup> Annual IACP Conference in Philadelphia, please visit us at Booth #1806 for your chance to win a special prize. If you can’t make it to the east coast, join us on online using Facebook ([www.facebook.com/groups/ILEAAA](http://www.facebook.com/groups/ILEAAA)), the exclusive place where ILEA graduates can socialize and network virtually.

Stay tuned for more opportunities to engage with your Alumni Association! Staying connected together!



Above: The **120<sup>th</sup> School of Police Supervision** graduated 42 officers on October 28, 2016.  
Below: The **121<sup>st</sup> School of Police Supervision** graduated 42 officers on February 24, 2017. Congratulations to the 120<sup>th</sup> and 121<sup>st</sup> Schools!



## ILEA PRESENTS AWARD FOR PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT IN LAW ENFORCEMENT TO DAVID N. JAMES

The Gary W. Sykes Professional Achievement in Law Enforcement Award is presented to a person who has been instrumental in bringing about significant organizational change for the good of the profession.

No one fits that criteria better than this year’s recipient, David N. James.

David retired in 2010 as Chief of the Carrollton Police Department after serving over 36 years in the law enforcement community.

David continues to work tirelessly teaching and consulting on organizational development and leadership principals. David is perhaps best known for his lectures and teachings on Servant Leadership. He has been an instructor with ILEA since 1986 and also serves on its Advisory Board. His ideas, concepts, beliefs and philosophies are a testament to his tenure and relevance as an effective instructor, advisor, and professional law enforcement practitioner.

David is a mentor to many and has built a legacy of service to others. Indeed, service, justice, and fundamental fairness are the foundational principles which form David James’ character and professional ethics.