

Phase Two Report: Portland's Implementation of Public Order Policing Recommendations

November 21, 2024

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Background

- Introductions
- Phase One: an evaluation of the effectiveness of PPB's public order training and response to the protests of 2020
- Released the Phase One Report in August 2023, and it included 12 actionable recommendations
- The Phase Two Report assesses progress. Overall impressions were very positive. The City has taken meaningful, but in some cases preliminary, steps to implement the Recommendations.

Phase Two Methodology

- Analyzed PPB directives and procedures for public order events
- Reviewed emails, meeting minutes, memoranda, job announcements, selection criteria, and training records associated with the creation and staffing of the new Rapid Response Team (“RRT”)
- Assessed records related to efforts to reestablish mutual aid relationships and grow PPB’s crowd management incident commander program
- Reviewed training schedules, lesson plans, presentations slides, and a video recording of training provided to the new RRT in June 2024
- Visited Portland and interviewed executive leadership, RRT members, and other, non-sworn City personnel, and members of the community

The City Must Rebuild Its Mutual Aid Network

- The City's response to the protests and riots in 2020 was seriously compromised by the nearly complete fracture of its mutual aid network
- It has taken noteworthy steps to rebuild the network, including commitments of support for SERT and non-public order operations with several jurisdictions
- However, the City has not yet successfully re-established its mutual aid relationships for public order deployments
- Building a track record of responding to public order events with a whole-of-government approach may encourage other jurisdictions to again consider partnering with the City for public order deployments

PPB Must Dramatically Reduce Its Reliance on Crowd Dispersals With Riot Control Agents

- PPB's public order philosophy and investment in event liaison officers are important contributions
- A lack of available video and embedded plainclothes officers, among other things, led PPB to rely on crowd dispersals instead of targeted crowd interventions
- Body-worn cameras will address some of the video-related issues, but real-time video in the command post may still be limited
- PPB created a specialized team of plainclothes officers that can be embedded in public order events to provide intelligence to the command post, but its procedures can be tightened for that team

PPB Must Strengthen and Clarify Its Public Order and Use of Force Directives

- Following 2020, PPB updated its directives to address several issues, but there remained opportunities for improvement
- Rubber-ball grenades – PPB directives do not prohibit them, but the remaining supply was decommissioned, and they are included in a list of controlled items
- Public order announcements – Officers are not required to audio record announcements and command staff is not required to review recordings to ensure that they are consistent with policy
- Dynamic tactic, baton pushes, and slow walkers – Recent training addresses these issues, but PPB directives have not been updated with additional guidance

PPB Directives Related to Internal Controls During Events Must be Followed

- PPB did not employ certain internal controls on officer use of force in 2020
- Munition inventory and tracking – New procedures identify requirements, but it is unclear how these procedures will be implemented in practice
- Force reporting – PPB has provided officers with additional resources for reporting requirements, including body-worn cameras, but these may be insufficient if the RRT is deployed for multiple, consecutive days
- Force investigation and review – PPB has made improvements here too, such as assigning sergeants, but even dedicated sergeants may struggle with the workload

The City Must Create a New Specialized Public Order Team Consistent With Emerging Standards

- When the Phase One Report was written, the RRT had been disbanded, and PPB lacked a specialized public order policing team
- The City and PPB created a steering committee to launch the new RRT and obtained buy-in from public officials, including assignment-based pay increases for team members
- RRT is now staffed with 42 officers, 8 sergeants, and 1 lieutenant; has an established set of standard operating procedures; and is set to receive at least 96 hours of training a year
- Keeping the “RRT” name may have been a missed opportunity to emphasize its new approach to public order policing

The New Team Must Be Transparently Introduced and Receive Rigorous Scrutiny and Oversight

- In 2020, Portland community members were surprised by RRT's policies, tactics, practices, and munitions, and there was insufficient internal oversight of RRT by PPB command staff
- In June 2024, the City held a press conference to introduce the new RRT, and we recommended more outreach to the community, possibly through the existing police/community committees
- PPB described increased command staff scrutiny in its self-assessment, but there is opportunity to document this in procedures
- It is not yet clear how the new oversight entity will be empowered to exercise external oversight of PPB's public order policing

The City Must Continue to Improve Its Public Order Training Consistent With Recent Standards

- In the lead up to 2020, the City and PPB did not provide sufficient oversight of PPB's public order training, and the training itself was often inadequate
- PPB has subjected its recent public order training to robust oversight, and that process should be documented in policy
- PPB held two-day public order in-service training for all sworn staff in 2023 and is committed to providing RRT members 96 hours of training a year
- Most of the RRT training is yet to be held so it is hard to evaluate, but the training we have observed and reviewed is promising

PPB Policy Should Require Chiefs to Be Engaged With and Visible to Officers During Deployments

- PPB executives did not visit the field or debrief with officers often enough in 2020
- In its self-assessment, PPB indicated that the Chief's Office will play an active role in reviewing public order plans and be present at briefings and debriefings
- This occurred during included recent deployments, such as those at Portland State University
- The increased role has not yet been documented in PPB directives or procedures yet, but it should be formalized going forward

PPB Should Prepare a Deep Bench to Serve as Incident Commanders and Operations Chiefs

- PPB did not have enough trained leaders to serve as incident commanders and operations section chiefs in 2020
- PPB identified a group of approximately 30 leaders to serve as incident commanders and operations section chiefs and committed to recurring meetings of that group
- These meetings covered topics ranging from incident command system principles, the importance of dialogue policing, and after-action reviews from other cities in 2020
- Attendance at these meetings fluctuated significantly, and PPB may benefit from making the meetings mandatory

PPB Should Develop a Checklist and Hold Supervisors Accountable for Briefings

- PPB leaders did not consistently prime officers with the rules of engagement before deployments in 2020
- PPB has created briefing form that includes a checklist that requires supervisors to certify that they have addressed items such as objectives, priorities, and the use of force
- There is an opportunity to expand that use of force section to include reminders about de-escalation and force that is authorized, restricted, and prohibited

PPB Should Formalize the Debriefing Process for Public Order Deployments

- The incident management team was not consistently effective as a learning organization in 2020, in part, because it lacked a formalized debriefing process
- Debriefing checklist – PPB created a data-collection tool that could be expanded to include substantive content that will aid in squad-level learning from a day's events
- Standard operation procedures – New procedures require incident management team meetings and after-action reports to identify lessons learned

The City Should Produce a Self-Assessment About Implementation of These Recommendations

- In March 2024, the City provided a self-assessment that included a discussion of each recommendation, identification of progress made, and in some cases, discussion of obstacles to full implementation
- The document was an accurate reflection of the City's implementation efforts at the time it was produced and served as a useful primer
- It reflected our general experience on this project, that the City and PPB were transparent, helpful, and dedicated to learning from their experiences in 2020