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Police Bureau still needs to evaluate the effectiveness of traffic stops

News Article



This is a one-year follow-up to our 2018 report, "Gang Enforcement Patrol: The Police Bureau must show that traffic stops are effective."

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In the year since our audit of the Gang Enforcement Team, the Police Bureau has made some progress in implementing our five recommendations for patrol.

Substantial work remains in documenting the investigative reasons for traffic stops and setting goals for the effectiveness of stops.

We will follow up again in one year to check if the remaining recommendations are implemented. In early 2019, the Police Bureau restructured the Gang Enforcement Team as the Gun Violence Reduction Team.

We audited how well the Gang Enforcement Team was meeting its goals and what the results of its work were. We issued two audit reports in 2018 about gang enforcement patrols and gang crime investigations.

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Our audit of gang enforcement patrols found the team was carrying out traffic stops that disproportionately affected African Americans, while community members were concerned that the stops were too broad and not limited to criminal gang suspects. The Bureau could not demonstrate that these stops were effective. We recommended the Bureau analyze stops data, set goals for effectiveness, and publicly report results.

Recommendation Status: Resolved

2018 Recommendations

The Police Bureau should regularly analyze and publish demographic data regarding Gang Enforcement Team traffic stops.

2019 Auditor's Status Update

The Police Bureau analyzed the demographics of people stopped by Gang Enforcement officers in 2016 and 2017.

The Bureau reported that 61 percent of people in 2016 and 56 percent in 2017 were Black.

The Bureau compared the demographics of people stopped to the demographics of gang crime victims. This benchmark showed that the percentage of Black people stopped was below the percentage of Black people that the Bureau considered as victims of gang crime (71 percent in 2016 and 63 percent in 2017).

This comparison differs from those in our audit, which compared the demographics of those stopped to the demographics of people injured in traffic crashes and crime victims. A good benchmark reflects who is at risk of being stopped, assuming no bias. We encourage the Bureau to include these comparisons in its analyses.

The Bureau committed to including stops data for the Gun Violence Reduction Team in future reports.

Recommendation Status: In Process

2018 Recommendations

The Gang Enforcement Team should regularly monitor stops data and the percentage of encounters recorded as "mere conversations" and provide training to officers on when this classification should be used.

2019 Auditor's Status Update

The team has not monitored data on mere conversations, which are interactions in which a person has not been detained.

Gang Enforcement officers received training on how to enter stops data.

The Bureau still has no comprehensive data on mere conversations, because some interactions are captured as such and some are not. Mere conversations coded as such decreased: The Bureau reported 637 in 2016 and 191 in 2017.

The Bureau said it was reviewing the feasibility of capturing more data on mere conversations in the future.

Recommendation Status: In Process

2018 Recommendations

The Bureau should evaluate the effectiveness of suppression operations by the Gang Enforcement Team by continuing review of crime trends and by reviewing arrest outcomes.

2019 Auditor's Status Update

Since March 2017, the team has carried out five suppression operations. The Bureau has a draft analysis of three of them. It does not, however, review whether those targeted by the operations were arrested. The Bureau said it was committed to reviewing the effect of future operations on crime.

Recommendation Status: Little Progress

2018 Recommendations

The Gang Enforcement Team should require its officers to document the investigative reason for their traffic stops. The Police Bureau should regularly analyze the data and publish the results.

2019 Auditor's Status Update

The team still does not document investigative reasons for most stops. The Bureau said it plans to write a new directive to address this recommendation.

Recommendation Status: Little Progress

2018 Recommendations

The Gang Enforcement Team should set goals to measure the effectiveness of patrol stops, and record whether a stop resulted in contacting a criminal gang suspect. The Bureau should regularly analyze the data and publish the results.

2019 Auditor's Status Update

The Bureau has not set effectiveness goals for the Gun Violence Reduction Team's traffic stops. The Bureau wants to hire a consultant to analyze Fiscal Year 2018-19 data. The Bureau said it cannot track if stops resulted in contact with criminal gang suspects because gang designations no longer exist.

View the [original 2018 audit report](#).

Visit our online dashboard to track the status of recommendations from other reports