



Transcript: Perspectives in Law Enforcement—The National Intelligence Model and Strategies From Great Britain: An Interview With Chief Superintendent David Bilson

The Bureau of Justice Assistance Justice Podcast Series is designed to provide the latest information in justice innovations, practices, and perspectives from the field of criminal justice. In this edition, Michael Medaris, Senior Policy Advisor at the Bureau of Justice Assistance, talks with David Bilson, Chief Superintendent at the London Metropolitan Police Service, regarding London's National Intelligence Model, and how this model compares to policing methods used in the United States.

Michael Medaris: Hello friends and colleagues, I'm Michael Medaris with the Bureau of Justice Assistance and I'd like to invite you to join our conversation with Chief Superintendent David Bilson from the London Metropolitan Police Service. David has a very unique perspective of 25 years of law enforcement experience with Scotland Yard in the U.K., but he also spent 6 months with us here in America as a fellow with the Police Executive Research Forum, where he worked on some very, very important topics, to include an important publication regarding policies and procedures associated with suicide bombers.

Thank you, Superintendent Bilson, for joining us today. I think our listeners would be very, very interested as to the size and responsibilities of the Metropolitan Police Service, or as Scotland Yard, as we Americans generally call it.

Superintendent David Bilson: Well, welcome to Hounslow Barrack. The Metropolitan Police Service serves the 7 million citizens that live in the 32 boroughs that comprise greater London. And it recognizes all the places you would recognize as a visitor here. We look after Westminster, Heathrow Airport, the royal palaces of Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle. We also have national responsibilities. Whilst we're not a national service, we have responsibility for counter-terrorism prevention and investigation. We are the largest police service in the United Kingdom, by far. To date, the service comprises 31,000 officers, supported by 14,000 civilian staff, and additionally we have 4,000 police community support offices. They are unsworn, uniform street patrols, in addition to 2,500 volunteer officers, and a further 1500 volunteers that help us across the organization.

We investigate around 840,000 crimes a year. We have about 128 homicides in London a year. We investigate 62,000 residential burglaries, 29,000 personal robberies, and about 103,000 auto crimes.

In London, over the past 2 years, a crime problem of youth violence and youth gangs has developed, in addition to more organized criminal networks in gangs. But policing the city also

demands [that] each day we must police demonstrations and protest marches, and then up to more serious and substantial events like the G-20 Summit, as well as sporting events in all the stadiums across London. And of course, we're preparing for a big event in 2012 with the Olympics and the Paralympics.

With all of those policing demands, we have intelligence requirements around them, and they are supported by our approach to intelligence-led policing and our fundamental deployment of the National Intelligence Model.

Organizationally, the Metropolitan Police is headquartered at New Scotland Yard, which is a world famous headquarters. But we split policing operations into Specialist Operations, that look after counter-terrorism and security; Central Operations, that do public order, traffic division, and support serious crime, who investigate homicide and gun crimes. But the delivery of the substantial part of [the] policing service into London's boroughs, communities, and neighborhoods, is provided by Territorial Policing Command, and we provide patrol, investigation, and safer neighborhood policing teams.

Hounslow Borough, which you are visiting today, is one of the midsize boroughs of London. In the borough here, I have 500 officers—patrol, uniformed, community, and investigators. I have a further hundred police community support officers, who are uniformed, unsworn patrol. In addition, I have another 80 civilian staff and 40 volunteers.

When you arrived at Heathrow Airport over the weekend, you had to travel through our borough, and whenever visitors arrive here, that's the only way in, whether you take London underground Tube, or London taxicab or bus, you have to pass through our borough. We are 18 miles long, we extend westward from inner London, along the banks of the river Thames, past the airport, and out to the smaller towns that used to be part of the open countryside. We have a population of about 230,000, who are in 80,000 homes, and we have huge policing diversity here. Amongst our citizens, we have some of the country's most wealthy, but we also have some of the more deprived neighborhoods in the country. We have multimillion pound homes, we have suburban housing, but we have public housing projects, as well.

Thirty-eight percent of our citizens are black or ethnic minority, but when you look at our young people, under the age of 20, it increases to 66 percent of our population are from minority backgrounds. Crime is low in the borough here; we have around four homicides a year, three or four. We have 24,000 crimes

a year in total. And our crime problems are really focused on reducing serious violence, which is coming down here. But we are challenged by the volume of residential burglary and auto crime; we have about 1800 residential burglaries here a year.

As borough commander, I am responsible for delivering the policing services right across the borough—to prevent, investigate, detect crime, and to lead patrol response policing and investigation. But we have a very strong commitment to community-based policing, community problem-solving models, which we call here the Safer Neighborhood Policing Approach. And that's delivered by a dedicated team of 6 officers in every 1 of the 20 wards, which are areas within the borough. And I am supported by officers from outside of the borough around serious crime investigation and [they] support [the] traffic division, and also business support and IT structure, which is outside of my span here.

Michael Medaris: David, I wondered if you could talk to us a little bit about the National Intelligence Model and its relationship to intelligence-led policing, which is a rather new concept in the U.S., that many agencies are exploring in terms of providing police services that are high quality, but still economical and effective.

Superintendent David Bilson: Absolutely. The National Intelligence Model was developed in the U.K. around year 2000, and the ambition was that it would provide a structure, a business model, a framework, an approach for us to prioritize crime, to handle information, and to help us make [the] best use of our resources. It helped us within the agency [to] talk between units. It helped us talk between law enforcement agencies, both in London and nationally, and even internationally. But it also made sure we made the best use of substantial deposits of police information that we hold in the records that we routinely collect anyway. It helps us also manage our performance, and manage risk to the public, risk from crime, and to manage our budgets.

I think there is a difference in the two terms, in intelligence-led policing and in the National Intelligence Model. Intelligence-led policing, for me, is all the ways in which we engage in solving crime problems, whether it is community policing, problem-orientated policing, professional investigation standards. The National Investigation—the National Intelligence Model, is around the framework and structure that we use, the processes that we lay down to enable us to do that. It's like, for me, a single fiber optic cable is very strong on its own. It's like a single piece of information or intelligence can be strong. But if you bundle more fibers together, and build an IT network with these fibers, you have a process that helps you link information, move information, have units talk to each other, agencies talk to each other, and even law enforcement and outside agencies talk to each other. NIM, as an approach—we refer to the intelligence model as NIM as an abbreviation—as an approach it aims to support crime disorder reduction. And broadly we do it by tackling four areas. We target prolific offenders or suspected offenders; we target and manage crime hotspots; we identify linked crime series across an area; and we deliver crime prevention, as an approach. And we seek to ensure that our policing is targeted; it helps us to make better use of our resources. It also helps us identify those areas where maybe less policing activity is needed so we can move our resources elsewhere.

Michael Medaris: Let me just follow up something very, very quickly on that David. In the four particular priorities that have

been established, it did clearly indicate, and it seems to me [that] in Hounslow and other portions of the Met, incorporation of a significant amount of other disciplines, and professions, and community assets in the problem-solving, so it's not merely the targeting of a specific offender for the purposes of incarceration. It's also targeting offenders who are at risk for continued criminal activity, but giving them options where they—and options to rehabilitate. Is that not true?

Superintendent David Bilson: It is, and we got to that stage only by increasing confidence amongst our own officers and colleagues with sharing information. And we work very strongly on information that is owned by the agency, and it's about making sure that that information is captured and processed by the agency and get away from, officers sometimes tend to feel that a piece of information is theirs, or it's precious or they're worried about sharing it for fear of compromising it. But the processes and the safeguards that we built around a structure, our main officers have become more confident. They will exchange information and intelligence. They see the results that come from that, and they became more used to, more comfortable to working in the structure. As we became more confident as individuals, we became more confident as an agency, and we felt comfortable to bring other law enforcement agencies into our processes and then agencies that aren't in law enforcement. So we will include now partners from local government, from city government. We will bring them in from other outside agencies because the focus is on community safety or crime reduction and working together to resolve problems. It is in amongst all our community policing models, and I think a recognition—in your nation as much as it is in ours—that police on their own cannot solve all of the problems in the city.

Michael Medaris: Tell me a little bit about the notion that intelligence-led policing is a business model that helps you deliver quality police services that are effective and economical.

Superintendent David Bilson: Okay, well, the model has full, broad components—I think is the way to describe it. It sets out the assets and the resources that you need to make it work. It sets out processes that you apply to handle information and develop intelligence and work to the analysis. It sets out full, broad types of product that comes out of that analysis, and it also sets out the meeting on tasking structure. The other quality . . . another quality its got is that it works on all levels of crime, whether you're looking at criminality in a neighborhood, across a city, nationally, or even internationally. In fact, the model clearly sets out three levels of intelligence working in the city or in the borough context like we are now. We are working at level one. If we get into more regional areas across London, level two, and if we start taking national and international crime, we talk about level three intelligence.

See, in the model, there are three broad meetings that are recommended. The first is a strategic meeting, and we hold that here once a month, where we look at the latest crime information, trends, patterns, and we set the priorities for policing for the next month.

So, in this borough right now, we are focusing on the reduction of serious violence, particularly the reduction of youth violence, the reduction of residential burglary at the home, and the reduction of auto crime.

The second meeting that we hold every 2 weeks is the Tactical Tasking and Coordination [TTCM or TTCG] meeting. Now in that session we bring together some of the more operational officers, and we take the priorities that are set, the latest crime analysis and tasking, and we get into the detailed deployments of which areas, which times, which resources are we going to deploy policing. And we'll set a very detailed planner for the next 2 weeks.

And the third meeting that is crucially important is the Daily Management meeting where we review overnight crimes, trends in the last 24 hours, did we make all those taskings and deployments, and what impact have we had.

Those three meetings are important for us to make the model work.

But the bit for me in advising colleagues in the United States is, you must make this model fit your own agency, you must make it fit what works well for you already, what methods are working for you that are successful; we certainly don't take the approach of sweeping aside all the arrangements you have in place.

Comstat's working well in your agency, you incorporate that into the model, the model will support that kind of approach in policing. If you are committed to community policing, or a particular model within your city, the intelligence model will just prop that up and support it and empower it, rather than be a threat to it.

Another issue is also to talk about the difference between information and intelligence. In some of the U.S. agencies I visited and worked with when I had the privilege to be out there, intelligence was quite a narrow descriptor. In some agencies, intelligence just meant criminal record sheets, previous arrests, and notification. When we talk about information and intelligence in this agency, information is the widest range of sources that we can gather data from. Whether they've come from police, other law enforcement agencies, or even from partners or community agencies. And intelligence is the output of the analysis of that information that's turned into something taskable and, hopefully, for action.

So how does it work well for us? The benefits for the Metropolitan Police Service, for policing in the U.K., and particularly for us in Hounslow, here are some of them: it helps us to fully understand the crime problems that we're facing right now in the best detail and understanding that we can get from all the available information. It helps us focus our resources; resources that are appropriate to the problem and tactics that are appropriate to the problem. It makes sure that our taskings are more effective; we're more efficient; and we're more economic with the use of our resources. That's especially important in our department as it probably is for our colleagues in the states where we're facing some reductions in our staffing or our fundings, or there is an increase in policing demands from the cities that we serve. And it works on every policing issue, whether it's crime or disorder in the locality of a neighborhood, through to the volume of violent crime, through to counter-terrorism issues. The framework works for all those types of crime, and it especially works together by bringing agencies together and existing policing arrangements together, or a subset, whether community policing, problem-orientated policing, professional investigation models, or Comstat approaches—whatever they are—don't replace those, don't close those, because this approach will support them and deliver permanent outcomes.

It empowers our staff. It makes sure that our officers, when they go to the streets, have a clear understanding of the issues that they face and have more information to empower them in their roles. It helps units and teams work together to focus on a task around crime reduction or targeting criminality. And it also helps an agency deliver their organizational priorities. And especially in our communities, it helps us deliver safer neighborhoods and safer cities.

Provided you've got good information-sharing protocols in place, and protection of personal data structures are in place, that doesn't become an issue. In fact, what it does encourage is the highest levels of information-sharing between officers, between units, between law enforcement agencies, and between law enforcement and other public agencies.

So, putting all that to work in Hounslow, I have my monthly strategic meeting, I have the four nightly TTCG, and I have the daily meeting, then my structure's in place. We're focused on problems and deployments right across the range of policing business here; so my patrol officers get tasked, we get to an extent now where we can start to get predictive around where crime might occur, and target our resources in to resolve that.

A couple of examples that happened here in the past few weeks, we have an area just west of here, Hounslow West. It's a small part of our town; it has an underground station. If you come from Heathrow Airport, you have to pass through it on your way to central London; it has shops and a bus terminal is there. We noticed that late on in the evenings and the weekends we were getting outbreaks of disorder, and we were getting street robbery. [We] tasked the analysts to get into the crime patterns and information that we had already, and come up with a profile so we understood what was going on. That analysis told us a very clear block of Friday and Saturday evening, midnight to 1 in the morning, was our hottest time for crime. We were able to deploy resources into the area. We stopped any of the crime by just being a visible presence on the streets and being proactive and stopping and searching people there.

A call came in later, from a witness who had seen a suspect in another part of the town; [a] patrol officer was able to get there and arrest him, and once she had got the suspect back to the station, the investigators were then able to reach into the intelligence model, and the analysts provided them with analysis of the linked series, and it's resulted in that suspect being charged with a series of offenses for street robbery, and no repeat of robbery in Hounslow West.

On a more expanded scale, attacking the problem of residential burglary, we've used all the products that I've described, so we have a detailed problem profile, we understand the problem, we understand where the offenses are occurring, and so I'm able to deploy a range of resources in a targeted way, whether that be community policing, patrol, investigators, plain clothes work, or even using number-plate recognition—road checks. We can target our resources, and we've helped to bring burglary down. But it helps us; intelligence modeling helps us get ahead of an operation. It helps us during the operation, it helps us in the arrest phase, and it helps us also with the post-operation analysis of how effective were we.

Michael Medaris: So is it a fair thing to say, David, that intelligence-led policing and working with the structure of the NIM, it helped you put the right amount of people, at the

right place, at the right time, in terms of making these sorts of decisions and delivering police services?

Chief Superintendent David Bilson: That's absolutely right; right person, right place, right time. But the reverse of that is, it also helps to identify those areas that need less resource; so areas that I can then focus resource where it's better needed.

Michael Medaris: Now if I could ask you one more question, and thank you so much for taking the time with us today, but if you could just project over the future, over the next 5 or 6 years, what do you think the major challenges [will be] that will confront not only law enforcement here in the United Kingdom, but in America?

Chief Superintendent David Bilson: I'm always amazed by the similarities of demands between our two countries, and certainly that is what I witnessed when I spent some time there. I think both countries immediately are facing substantial pressure on their resources; officer numbers are being cut, supporting staff are being cut, or the overall funds to run the business and the organization. I think both of our nations have a continued focus to reduce serious violence, and the continued problem of gang crime, and the emerging problem of gang crime in this country. I think we also have an ongoing threat from violent extremists from our own citizens, especially those who don't feel that they are fully part of our community. I think we're both being held increasingly to account by our citizens, who demand that we deliver safer communities and safer neighborhoods. And we probably are also going to face a challenge of sustaining partner agencies and community engagement, especially if other agencies get their resources cut or there is no immediate obvious crime problem. I'm convinced that intelligence-led policing and the intelligence model help us to address all of those issues. It makes sure we provide the best use of our most valuable resource, it focuses our attention and targets the most serious crime challenges, and provides structures to help us meet our citizens' demands. And it builds a structure that draws in all agencies and our citizens to work with us in delivering a permanent, good outcomes, and safer cities.

Michael Medaris: One more question, and then we'll let you get back to your duties. But, if you're a police chief in a mid-sized American city, and let's say that's a population of about 250,000, with a force of maybe 5500 sworn officers, what would be . . . what steps would you take to implement intelligence-led policing in that agency?

Chief Superintendent David Bilson: I'd encourage you to do this: I would encourage you to pick up intelligence-led policing and the Intelligence Model and make it fit your agency. And how are you going to do that? Quite easily. Dedicate some staff to this. And I don't mean a whole new unit needs to be stood up, but one, maybe two officers, who are just going to give their full time to getting this going. Work with them to

develop a framework that fits your agency, and fits the policing models that are working well for you. As chief, actively go out and sell this now to your senior managers, to your line managers, your lieutenants or inspectors, your supervisors—then to all your staff. Try and develop some of those intelligence products that we've got, whether it's a strategic overview of what's going on in your city, or a more tactical assessment of the problems you're facing right now. And try them out. But most of all, don't wait until you develop the full model. Don't wait for the scientific research; get on and start doing something now, because each action and each deployment that you take brings learning in itself and improves what you're building. But as a leader, some of the issues that you've got to face personally are [that] you need to be proactive in developing the approach, provide a vision for your officers and your staff to build upon. Set out for them the strategy you're trying to deliver and the tasks you need to deliver them. They'll probably need help; they'll probably need help in terms, to develop teams, to develop key individual staff who are going to deliver this for you. You're also going to have to work very hard about breaking down barriers between staff, between units, between agencies, who maybe are reluctant to exchange information or intelligence, or want to guard it more closely. You will probably have to challenge individuals; those who think the information is their own property. Intelligence and information is the property of the agencies, the property of our citizens, and we have a duty to action that for the greater good. But most of all, keep asking questions. Every time your analysts bring you some of the products or some of the information they've worked, it will instantly bring up a series [of] more questions to think about that will suggest more deployments and ideas that you can deploy in the city to bring crime down and to make them safer for all the citizens. If you are concerned around getting the support of your city government or citizen oversight or whatever it may be. This framework is not secret. The structure of it is a public document; the way of working is out in the open and in public. Share it with your oversight body, share it with your city government representatives. Show them what it is you plan to do and how you plan to do it; show them some of the products you make and some of the outcomes. You can still protect the confidential operations, the live operations, the current plans, but let them see some of the outcomes. I think we have found being more open with those that we account to makes them more confident in their policing service.

Michael Medaris: Again, David thank you very much. Thank you for listening, and join us for the next time for information about more innovations and best practices. Thank you.

Thank you for taking the time to join us for this conversation. If you found the discussion interesting, we encourage you to visit the BJA web site for more innovative ideas and best practices at www.ojp.gov/BJA. From all of us here at BJA, thank you for tuning in to today's podcast. We hope you will join us again for another edition of BJA's Justice Podcast Series.

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