

C3 POLICING:

*An Unconventional Approach to an Unconventional Problem:
Improving Lives in Cities Plagued by Gang Violence*



Trooper Cutone with subject arrested on narcotics trafficking during raid in North End Springfield, Ma

Counter-Insurgency (COIN). What is it? What does the term mean to the general public? In order to understand C3 Policing, you must understand its roots; the roots of the methodology are firmly planted in the tried and true principles practiced by the U.S. Army Special Forces (SF), commonly referred to as Green Berets. From personal experience, the average citizen believes Army Special Forces is solely in the business of conducting midnight tactical attacks, engaging in protracted firefights and detonating copious quantities of explosives. Although Special Forces surely conduct these types of activities, they are first and foremost complex problem solvers involved in the business of dealing with people.

When SF deploys to an area, they are organized in 12- man teams known as an Operational Detachment- Alpha (ODA). Each member of the team has a specialty that is critical to their mission. During COIN operations, Special Forces ODA's work *by, with and through* host nation security forces and the indigenous population to accomplish their mission. Special Forces mobilize the local population, train them, and assist them in solving the insurgency problem. The people they win over become their greatest asset in rooting out insurgent and terrorist networks. All of this information is very interesting, but how does that concern the police, especially the Massachusetts State Police? Three years ago, Trooper Mike Cutone began speaking to personnel at SP Springfield about an anti-gang project that could enlist the population and use them as "force multipliers." Trooper Cutone had approached several troopers and the consensus was that he was never, ever going to get his idea implemented. Mike had confidence that his initiative could work



in Springfield. Some might say he had faith; but faith is belief without proof. Trooper Cutone had all the proof he needed from his experiences while deployed in the Middle East. In 2005, he was serving with ODA 944 in Avghani, a large town in northern Iraq near the Syrian border. Avghani's police force was non-existent and the town was paralyzed due to insurgent activity. Trooper Cutone was a Master Sergeant and a 20-year veteran in Army Special Forces. His Team Commander was Captain Tom Sarrouf, a fellow Mass State Trooper. During their deployment Cutone, Sarrouf and the rest of ODA 944 utilized the principles of Counter-Insurgency to slowly win over the people in the area.

ODA 944 has been credited with recruiting, training and reintegrating a new police force in Avghani and stabilizing the town and surrounding area. Their methods are now viewed as a model for COIN operations. It is referred to in the SF community as "The Avghani Model."

When Trooper Cutone returned home, he viewed the City of Springfield and its problems differently. Trooper Cutone was drawn to one of the most dangerous areas of the city, the North End or "Brightwood" section. The North End was ruled by the local street gangs; the residents were distrustful of police and apathetic. Gang members were free to operate with impunity; oftentimes shots would be fired but the police weren't notified.

Reports from the Springfield Police indicated that gang members were driving down the streets on miniscooters with SKS rifles strapped to their backs. It was viewed as an area that was unsafe and difficult to effectively police. To Trooper Cutone, the gangs in the North End were no different than the insurgents he fought in Iraq. Both gangs and insurgents utilized criminal activity, such as narcotics sales to financially support their organizations. Both groups rely on passive support from the community. Gangs need residents to be apathetic, allowing them the freedom to operate unhindered, just as insurgents in Iraq relied on passive support of their communities.



In October of 2009, Trooper Cutone quietly began parking his cruiser and conducting "dismounted patrols." He wanted to speak with residents and assess the area. His supervisor, Sgt. Alan Joubert became an immediate ally, and guided Trooper Cutone in transitioning his skills from the "green suit to blue suit" After being advised of an "elders meeting" at 101 Lowell Street, Trooper Cutone encountered his greatest ally: Deputy Chief John Barbieri of the Springfield Police, who was attending a weekly community meeting. During the following week, Trooper Cutone came prepared, bringing with him years of SF experience in the form of a mission statement and goals for the community, but most importantly, he brought a strategy to take the community back from the criminal elements. A new partnership was formed, allowing the State Police to assist in what would traditionally be solely a



Springfield Police issue. Trooper David Podworski also began working with Trooper Cutone to get his project started. Troopers Cutone and Podworski were able to engage Jose Claudio, an influential community organizer and State Representative Cheryl Coakley-Rivera, who grew up in the area, relying on them to garner support from the residents. Trooper Cutone gained the trust of these two influential figures and sold them on the counterinsurgency principles he knew could effectively target the gang, drug and crime problem in the North End.

The eight principles Trooper Cutone chose were:

1. Legitimacy is Crucial to Achieving Our Goals
2. You Must Understand the Environment
3. Unity of Effort is Essential
4. Intelligence Drives Operations
5. Prepare for a Long-Term Commitment
6. Local Factors are Primary
7. Security Under the Rule of Law is Essential
8. Gangs Must be Separated from their *cause and support!*

As Trooper Cutone became more embedded in the area and the project progressed, Sergeant Joubert began reporting the initiative's success to SP Springfield Station Commander, Lieutenant Dale Kiley (RET), B Troop Commander Major Barry O'Brien and the Division of Field Services Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Tim Alben. Through the efforts of Mike, Deputy Chief Barbieri, and key leaders in the community, the weekly meeting grew from three people in attendance to over sixty, incorporating city, state and private service providers, residents, politicians and law enforcement. From the beginning, Deputy Chief Barbieri and Trooper Cutone worked hand in hand to provide the leadership to unify the efforts of all the participants.

To date, this collective COIN initiative has become known as "C3 Policing" or "Counter Criminal Continuum Policing." C3 Policing has been in the North End for roughly three years. Residents report a higher quality of life, the area is cleaner and most of those surveyed feel safer. Trooper Cutone's initiative has grown from two Troopers to a Lieutenant and six Troopers. The newly formed Special Projects Team (SPT) and Springfield Police have worked hard to build trust within the community, but overall successes are not without building relationships with other law enforcement agencies, nongovernmental organizations, academia, and the media. Salinas (CA) Police have traveled to Springfield to witness C3 Policing in action. The Naval Postgraduate School(NPS) has provided support to C3 policing by lending use of social network analysis software, known as "Lighthouse".

Harvard University has also been a tremendous asset; a ten week project by Harvard students helped the SPT and Springfield Police by analyzing data to determine crime and quality of life trends in the Brightwood neighborhood. Harvard University's involvement led to media attention and news articles written by the New York Times and Nature Magazine, a leading scientific journal. But what is it that makes C3 different? Isn't that "just Community Policing" as some have said? The simple answer is no. Community Policing never addresses attacking the root causes of gangs and drug dealing. Community Policing was implemented in an atmosphere of economic growth.

As Chief Barbieri tells it, under Community Policing, he would be able to identify a hot spot and in a short period of time “nuke the problem” by flooding police officers into the area. Springfield PD, like most departments, is shorthanded and underfunded. They simply can’t respond with the same number of officers as they could. C3 Policing is different and promotes a whole of government approach that maximizes the use of existing local, state, and federal resources. The effect is reshapes the community environment making it inhospitable for gang, drug and criminal activity to develop and flourish. Trust between law enforcement and the community increases the flow of criminal information, allowing law enforcement and local governance to respond accordingly.

(Photos courtesy of Lt. Domnarski)