

Reserve Officer Training...another step to professionalization

Up until 1960 police training was rather limited to larger departments who maintained their own basic training academies. Many of them, particularly the Los Angeles Sheriff's Office (Department), invited other police agencies to send their recruits to their academies for basic training; but hundreds of smaller departments throughout the state had little to no established training for their new officers.

One of the first efforts by the newly created California Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) was to legislate mandatory training for all law enforcement personnel. POST Executive Director Gene Muelheisen had suggested this as early as 1957 to the Peace Officers Research Association of California (PORAC) and introduced AB 1475 which mandated all law enforcement officers to complete a course of training established by POST. The Peace Officers Research Association of California (PORAC) threw its support behind the bill which was signed into law in 1961. POST established this training as a forty hour course in arrest, and another twenty-four hours in firearms (for those officers equipped with guns.) The course is usually referred to as 832 training.

It was not until 1972 that POST decided to determine if police agencies were also training their reserve officers in "832" training as required, and surveyed all law enforcement police and sheriff's departments in the state. Needless to

say over fifty percent of the departments responding did not provide 832 training for their reserve officers, and many departments were sending their reservist alone into the field. Some were even paying their reservists salaries.

Senior Consultant Rick Baratta was given the task of following up on the survey data in 1974 and traveled about the state interviewing large and small departments that utilized reservists. As could be expected the results were varied, but an overwhelming number of chiefs and sheriffs felt that the state should establish realistic standards of training that would apply to all of the departments.

Gene Muehleisen directed Baratta to see if PORAC was willing to initiate legislation specifically mandating minimum training standards for reservists. PORAC President, Bill Bean, agreed to support the legislation, and a draft was written that would require reservists to obtain training similar to regular officers. The bill was submitted but went nowhere because of opposition from the influential California Peace Officers Association (CPOA).



The problem was that the use of reservists varied so much between departments. Some used the reservists only for crowd control for parades and large events, while others simply employed them as a second person in a car. Of course there were departments that really used them to augment their manpower, assigning them beat patrols.

With this in mind Baratta drafted a bill that established three levels of reserve usage. A Level One reserve would have all the responsibilities of a regular officer; a Level Two reserve would be the backup officer always under close supervision of a regular officer; and a Level Three could only be used for situations where they were not likely to arrest anyone (crowd control/traffic control and such). PORAC's position was that if a reservist were to work alone as a regular officer, he or she should have the same training as a regular officer. This was not acceptable to administrators however, and The California Peace Officers Association (CPOA) which was controlled by police managers also wanted to allow the reservists to carry weapons off duty. Although unstated everyone knew that this was politically motivated as a means of skirting CCW permit requirements. PORAC attempted to obtain consensus with POST and CPOA but the issues dragged on until 1977.

Jake Jackson of Sacramento PD was then a POST commissioner since PORAC had legislated a rank and file officer to be on the POST Commission (1974), and Rick Baratta was now employed by PORAC as general manager. They organized a consortium of associations interested in the reserve standards bill which included CPOA.

The consortium finally reached an agreement that POST would set the training standards if the bill passed; and reserve officers would be authorized to carry weapons off duty. However PORAC insisted on the caveat that should the weapons provision cause a problem with the liberal legislators, which was where PORAC had the votes, then the weapon provision would be amended out of the bill. The bill stalled in the first committee because of the weapons provisions, and PORAC amended the section out of the bill as they had agreed to. However CPOA claimed that PORAC had acted unilaterally breaking the agreement.

To assuage CPOA and the rest of the committee PORAC agreed to amend the "guns" back into the bill, but and again obtaining an agreement from CPOA... but this time the meeting was recorded. When the bill again stalled PORAC removed the weapons provision, and despite CPOA's opposition passed the legislation; AB 641.

If one lacks confidence in their doctor, attorney, or minister they can always look for another. But when you call for a police officer in times of trouble, what comes to the door is

what you get. You have no options. PORAC's position had always been if it walks, talks, and looks like a cop, it is a cop and must be appropriately trained as one.

POST established training hours for the three levels of reservist much lower than PORAC

wanted, but in the fullness of time POST came around to PORAC's way of thinking; and today Level One reservists must complete the same level of training as regular officers. As for the off duty guns? Well they just have to obtain a CCW permit from the appointing agency.

Changing the Odds

Early in the year Jake Jackson discussed the problems he was facing on the POST Commission, especially from the four city and

public members on state commissions and committees that PORAC have a bill introduced that would add a public member to the commission, and delete two of the four city/county administrators; thus diluting the opposition. They approached Senator Sieroty with the proposal and he agreed to carry the bill but preferred not to eliminate the city/county administrators since it would cause POST to oppose the bill. Rick and Jake agreed, if POST would leave the bill alone knowing full well that the commission would oppose any meddling by PORAC with their makeup. POST did oppose the bill, and Sieroty then amended the bill to delete the two commissioners. In addition the police academy directors asked to be added to the bill, and Rick and Jake agreed but the additional commission would have to be an educator OR a police training officer. So the bill was run deleting two city/county administrators and adding a public member and a police educator or trainer. The bill passed to the anguish of the POST Commissioners. Well if the odds are against you just change the playing field...

