

1956

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Recommended Citation

Frank D. Day, The Issue of One-Man vs. Two-Man Police Patrol Cars, 46 J. Crim. L. Criminology & Police Sci. 698 (1955-1956)

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THE ISSUE OF ONE-MAN VS. TWO-MAN POLICE PATROL CARS

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THE BACKGROUND OF THE ISSUE

Patrol methods have been the subject of heated debate among police officers over the years. Statements of half-truth, misplaced emphasis, and over-generalization without documentation have too frequently clouded the controversies.

Current problems are better understood in the light of past history. Perhaps it would be timely, before opening the door on the one-man patrol car controversy, to glance back briefly at an older patrol issue. The review may demonstrate a certain parallelism with the newer issue. One of the most venerable men in police administration, August Vollmer, early in his career came to the conclusion that the patrolman on foot was obsolete.¹ Foot patrol trends, however, illustrated in Table I, in comparison with motorized patrol, fail to support a theory that foot patrol is outmoded.

TABLE I
FOOT PATROL VERSUS MOTORIZED PATROL²

Year	Number of Cities Reporting	Number Reporting Foot Patrol Regularly Assigned to the Business District	Number of Cities Reporting Foot Patrol	Number of Cities Reporting All Motorized Patrol	Foot and Motor Patrol
1952	1,162	About 82%	50 (assigned throughout the city)	137	x
1945	886	x	x	71	815
1943	633	x	52 (only foot patrol used)	55	526

Ten of the cities reporting all motorized patrol (in 1945) were cities of less than 10,000 population. Of the remaining 61 cities reporting all motorized patrol, 82% of them were in the 10,000–25,000 population group. Only one city over 100,000 population reported all motorized patrol.³ In 1943 there was a low degree of patrol motorization per 100 employees in cities over 500,000 population. Forty of the cities reporting all motorized patrol were cities in the 10,000–25,000 population group.

¹ V. A. Leonard, *Police Organization and Management*, The Foundation Press, Brooklyn, N. Y., 1951, p. 260.

² *Municipal Year Book*, vols. 11, 13, and 20 (1944, 1946, and 1953), International City Managers' Association, Chicago, Illinois.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. 13, 1946.

The 526 cities reporting a combination of foot and motor patrol were in the 10,000-25,000 population group. All reporting cities with a population over 25,000 except one, reported the use of some form of motorized patrol.⁴ Thus today, as in the past, foot patrol is accepted generally as the most effective type of police patrol, with motorized patrol a natural adjunct. Though a patrol car (without speeding) will patrol ten times the area of a foot patrolman,⁵ foot patrol is urgent under certain circumstances.

Nonetheless, area and population growth, and limitations on money available for police services, inevitably necessitate reductions in foot patrol. The ever-increasing demand for effective patrol, under existing restrictions, might be partially answered in the United States on the basis of experiments abroad. The British, traditionally sound in policing, have employed, "team policing", effectively in recent years. The technique, involving cars, with emphasis on foot patrol as a part of a unit operation, has shown interesting results.⁶

MOTORIZED POLICE PATROL

Similar problems over-shadow the controversy embroiling the manning of one and two-man patrol cars. For some thirty years, a few municipalities have employed single-officer motor patrol, exclusively, with indications of success. However, many police administrators have vigorously opposed one-man patrol car operations (in any form) with little information for evaluation other than the experiences of their own backgrounds. There are guides now as to the relative merits of the respective systems and others will be forthcoming. They should be used in reaching decisions. Unfortunately, a tidy formula, no matter how desirable or eagerly sought, is probably beyond reach. Each community has its own problems; districts within a community have problems that are not identical.

CURRENT SURVEY

In order to secure data and appraise views of those most concerned with motorized patrol, police administrators themselves, a questionnaire was forwarded to 502 of them. The queries were limited to motorized patrol by the patrol division. Responses were received from 288, or 57.3%. Comments made by many of them, combining hundreds of years of practical police experience, throw the searchlight on almost every facet of the issue.⁷

At the outset, four propositions are submitted, as interpreted from the data and comments contained in responses.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 11, 1944.

⁵ *Police Patrol, Lesson Plan, 1953-1954*, Police Training School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, p. 2.

⁶ Stanley R. Schrotel, Chief of Police, Cincinnati, Ohio, Changing Patrol Methods, *Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 219, January 1954, pp. 51-53; Samuel G. Chapman, Urban Police Patrol in England and Wales, *Jour. of Crim. Law, Criminol. and Police Science*, vol. 45, no. 3, September-October 1954, p. 354.

⁷ Relevant comments have been compiled in unedited form as a separate report. The report is available to interested police administrators requesting it. Pursuant to a stipulation as to confidence, neither the identities of the respondents nor of the cities are included.

1. Two-man operation CAN provide a more effective patrolling unit than one-man operation, but practical considerations may require a modified form of motorized patrol.
2. Completely one-man patrol car operation CAN be successful, but only under certain carefully circumscribed conditions relating to area, personnel, and equipment.
3. Where a given area must be policed with a limited number of men, the question, generally, is whether more effective motorized patrol can be provided by assigning two men to radio-equipped patrol cars or by utilizing a combination of one and two-man radio-equipped patrol cars.
4. The employment of either one or two-man patrol cars, and the extent of usage, must be regarded as a local administrative problem.

MANNING OF POLICE PATROL CARS

Nine of the 288 reporting cities limit solo operations to supervisory officers. Some cities reporting two-man operation as standard, indicate a limited use of one-man patrol cars, under changing day-to-day manpower conditions resulting from such causes as sickness and vacations. A few cities report one-man operation, generally, except in case of emergency. Cities in both classes have been tabulated as employing one system or the other. Sixteen of the cities report a division of from two to four shifts or overlapping shifts. These exceptions have been reconciled, in the tables on the distribution of police patrol cars by shifts, by placing operations in the day, evening, or night shifts.

TABLE II
MANNING OF POLICE PATROL CARS IN CITIES OVER 10,000 POPULATION
PATROL DIVISIONS

Population Group	Cities in Survey		Two-Man Patrol Cars Only		One-Man Patrol Cars Only		Combination of Two-Man and One-Man Patrol Cars Used	
	Re-sponses	No re-sponses	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Cities over 1,000,000	4	1	2	50	0	0	2	50
500,000-1,000,000	12	1	6	50	0	0	6	50
250,000-500,000	17	4	6	35.3	2	11.8	9	52.9
100,000-250,000	39	27	18	46.2	3	7.6	18	46.2
50,000-100,000	75	47	10	13.3	23	30.7	42	56
35,000-50,000	52	49	8	15.4	14	26.9	30	57.7
25,000-35,000	54	45	16	29.6	10	18.5	28	51.9
20,000-25,000	12	13	2	16.6	2	16.7	8	66.7
15,000-20,000	12	13	3	25.	2	16.7	7	58.3
10,000-15,000	11	14	2	18.1	0	0	9	81.9
	288	214	73	30 (Av.)	56	13 (Av.)	159	57 (Av.)

Total in survey, 502 cities, Returns—57.3%.

Table II indicates that only five of the seventy-two reporting cities (current survey) with a population of 100,000 or more, use only one-man patrol cars. Two of the respondents qualify complete one-man car operation to the extent of assign-

TABLE III
MANNING OF ONE-MAN PATROL CARS IN CITIES OVER 10,000 POPULATION

Year	Number of Cities Reporting	Two-Man Patrol Cars Only		One-Man Patrol Cars Only		One and Two-Man Patrol Cars	
		Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1955 (Current Survey)	288	73	30	56	13	159	57
1953	1,045	265	25.4	174	16.6	606	58
1950	1,134	360	31.7	150	13.2	624	55.9
1945	886	422	47.6	162	18.3	302	34.1
1944	1,014	444	44	205	20	365	36

NOTE: The statistics on earlier years cited in Tables III, IV, and V have been derived from data published in Annual Volumes, Municipal Year Book, The International City Managers' Association, Chicago, Illinois.

ing police recruits, after the completion of recruit training, to ride with experienced officers for as long as three months. There are signs that volunteers (auxiliary police, etc.) may ride with regular police officers on a fairly fixed duty schedule in some communities.

Forty-seven, or 16.4% of the 288 reporting cities using one-man patrol cars around the clock, are in the 25,000-100,000 population group. However, one hundred cities, or 34.7% in the group, combine one- and two-man car operations.

The thirty-five returns in the 10,000-25,000 population group show that twenty-four cities utilize a combination one- and two-man operation; seven employ two-man patrol cars exclusively, and only four cities use completely one-man operations. Chief reason for the high ratio of two-man cars apparently is because of the few cars (1-4) in service. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to provide support for a solo car when required.

In years for which statistics are available, comparisons are made in Tables III and IV, as to the extent of usage of police patrol cars. A rather uniform pattern is evidenced from year to year. A notable exception is the percentage decrease in the number of cities in the lower population group using one-man patrol cars exclusively. A possible reason is suggested in the concluding part of the last paragraph.

DISTRIBUTION OF POLICE PATROL CARS BY SHIFTS

Table V is a comparative annual study as to the number of cities reporting on how one-man patrol cars are assigned to the various shifts. Under the caption,

TABLE IV
MANNING OF ONE-MAN PATROL CARS IN CITIES WITHIN 10,000-25,000 POPULATION GROUP

Year	Number of Cities Reporting	Only One-Man Patrol Cars Used	Percentage
1955 (Current Survey)	56	4	7.1
1953	174	108	62
1950	150	109	72.6
1945	162	131	81
1944	205	160	78

TABLE V
EXTENT OF USAGE OF ONE-MAN PATROL CARS BY SHIFTS IN CITIES OVER 10,000 POPULATION

Year	Number of Cities Reporting	Used on DEN Shifts	Used on D & E Shifts	Used on Day Shift Only	Variations
1955 (Current Survey)	215	110	46	53	6
1953	780	365	137	252	26
1950	774	353	127	254	40
1944	196	98	50	37	11

Variations, six of the 215 cities reporting some form of one-man operation, deploy patrol cars in a manner somewhat different from the common pattern. Four of the six cities use them only on the evening and night shifts; one only on the day and night shifts; one only on the night shift.

An analysis of the returns in the current survey reveals that two of the four reporting cities in the 1,000,000 and over population group do not use a one-man operation on any shift; one uses one-man cars only on the day shift; one uses them on all shifts.

None of the twelve reporting cities with a population in excess of 500,000, but less than 1,000,000 use one-man cars exclusively on all shifts. Five of the twelve cities in this group employ one-man patrol cars on the day and evening shifts; one city, a sixth in the group, uses them on all shifts. Two-man patrol cars are used on all shifts by cities in this group, except one, which uses them on the evening and night shifts but not on the day shift.

The number of patrol cars reported in use in the Patrol Divisions of the 288 reporting cities, and the numerical distribution of the vehicles among the shifts, are tabulated in Table VI. Of the 3,338 patrol cars on the night shift, 2,502 patrol cars,

TABLE VI
NUMERICAL DISTRIBUTION OF POLICE CARS BY SHIFTS, PATROL DIVISION ONLY, CITIES OVER 10,000 POPULATION

Population Group	Number of Responses	No Responses	Number of Two-Man Patrol Cars Reported			Number of One-Man Patrol Cars Reported		
			Day	Evening	Night	Day	Evening	Night
Over 1,000,000	4	1	797	903	862	184	83	83
500,000-1,000,000	12	1	439	469	492	161	145	114
250,000-500,000	17	4	166	245	271	221	176	163
100,000-250,000	39	27	200	260	301	195	186	134
50,000-100,000	75	47	161	268	306	260	217	139
35,000-50,000	52	49	65	96	119	157	135	107
25,000-35,000	54	45	86	90	107	111	83	67
20,000-25,000	12	13	5	18	17	25	10	11
15,000-20,000	12	13	7	10	13	16	15	10
10,000-15,000	11	14	0	11	14	21	14	8
Totals.	288	214	1,926	2,370	2,502	1,351	1,064	836

Distribution of one-man and two-man patrol cars by shifts: Day, 3,277; Evening, 3,434; Night, 3,338.

or 75%, are two-man operations. The reluctance to use one-man cars on the night shift was pronounced in the comments of many police administrators. Only one city, of the four reporting cities in the 1,000,000 and over population group, uses one-man patrol cars on the night shift. The 83 patrol cars listed for that shift are accounted for by that city.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF ONE-MAN PATROL CARS

It is problematical whether statistics can be of value, other than locally, in weighing the relative merits of the two procedures. The limited data reported on the present survey tends toward that conclusion. There was such variance, nationally, as to preclude any worthwhile deductions which could be reported.

The advantages and the disadvantages of the one method of motorized patrol over the other fall within the realm of generalization. They are an integral part of the issue and inclusion of them seems desirable though they prove little of consequence. The comments of respondents, in this respect, are outlined in summary form.

PROS

Expense

Economically sound.

Patrol

Increased in proportion to extra cars put in service; faster response on calls; better distribution of men with responsibility centered in more areas; officer primarily a foot patrolman; people feel they are getting better police protection.

Enforcement

More efficient individual and over-all performance; no distracting conversations with second man; eliminates personality clashes; less loafing and sleeping; credit given where credit is due.

Personnel

Personal safety is enhanced with proper training and procedures as one officer

CONS

Observation

Impossible to observe properly and operate a vehicle as latter task requires major attention; cannot observe while preparing reports, during interrogations, and while answering questions.

Patrol

Practically all calls must be "screened" or more than one car dispatched; areas left uncovered due to dispatching multiple cars; cannot back up one-man car in smaller communities; two-man car, with second man as observer, can cover almost as much territory as two single cars; cars out of service for personal necessities and while performing minor police tasks with resultant loss in communication contact; theft of unattended vehicle.

Enforcement

Inefficient as compared with a two-man operation; suspicious persons and conditions overlooked by one man; two men often needed to perform police work; second man corroborating witness in court; second man protection from unjustifiable charges; one man may be as prone to loaf and sleep as two men; slow moving vehicle engenders poor public relations.

Personnel

Specialized training and adequate supervision can offset many of the criticisms

realizes his vulnerability and is more cautious.

directed at two-man cars and provide a safer and more effective patrolling unit; the unexpected situation presents the hazards, and training and equipment cannot eliminate it; cannot drive and use weapon; practically impossible to use radio while driving at high speed; other interferences may prevent dispatching of messages when failure might be a factor in personal safety.

THE TRANSITION TO THE ONE-MAN PATROL CAR

The one-man patrol operation is not a simple process. Certain needs are prerequisite to personal safety of police officers and for satisfactory performance. Patrol beat areas should be reduced. Extra patrol cars should be placed in service. Short-sightedness in recognizing these fundamentals has accounted for failures and weaknesses in many change-overs to a one-man car operation. Important decisions must be made, antecedent to the foregoing, bearing on the practicality of single-officer motorized patrol.

Two particular problems stand out in bold relief as to area—congestion and unusual police conditions. Neither a heavily congested area nor an area containing unusual police conditions lend themselves readily to one-man patrol cars. The importance of these factors warrants some analysis.

A heavily congested area might be considered as a population density which comprises 20,000 or more persons per square mile.⁸ Eminent authority has gone further in setting a standard by stating that a one-man patrol car beat should not embrace more than one square mile.⁹ It may well be that the larger cities would be confronted with limitations as to the number of cars that could logically be put in service. The ratio of patrol cars to each 100 police employees, as well as per thousand population, decreases as population increases.

Well-known to police administrators are situations in a given area which can and do generate unusual police problems. The more common ones can be identified rather concisely as: Type and rate of crime, population composition, and the area usage. Circumstances of an aggravated nature, in one or more of the categories, leave little choice as to the provision of effective motorized patrol.

Successful single-officer motorized patrol imposes specific requirements as to personnel, equipment, and the establishment of special procedures. These demands must be recognized and met realistically.

A recent study on one-man car operation by a committee of ranking officers of the Department of Safety, Division of Police, Louisville, Kentucky, contains excellent recommendations. That detailed study is the primary source for the following material relating to requirements as to personnel, equipment, and procedures.

⁸ *The Rescue Service*, Federal Civil Defense Administration, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., Publication AG-14-1, 1951, p. 12, sec. 3.21.

⁹ Jeremiah O'Connell, Chief of Police, St. Louis, Mo., and Carl Hansson, Chief of Police, Dallas, Texas, Assignment of Personnel to Police Cars. *F. B. I. Law Enforcement Bull.* November 1950, p. 6.

Personnel

1. An effort should be made to secure police acceptance before action is taken to initiate one-man patrol car operation.
2. A monetary incentive, for those assigned to the one-man patrol car, is very desirable in achieving good performance.
3. The more arduous demands of the one-man car requires younger men, with interest, qualified educationally and in police experience.
4. The officers selected, as well as the personnel of the communications and records unit, must be given specialized training.

Equipment

A. The Patrol Car:

1. Extra cars should be placed on patrol supported by reserve units. They are safeguards to personal safety and promote satisfactory performance. The reserve cars assure covering all beats at all times and, possibly, implement regular patrol during "peak loads" of police activity.
2. The patrol car selected must be capable of high-level performance. This can be achieved providing the vehicle:
 - a. Has power and speed.
 - b. Is equipped with an automatic gear shift.
 - c. Is equipped with three-way radio with a secondary frequency, so low-powered, that only cars in the immediate area can receive messages dispatched from a car. Officers can summon assistance even though the main station may be broadcasting. Constant contact between cars of adjoining areas is assured and gives officers a sense of security.
 - d. Is equipped with a 12-gauge (pump) shot-gun, mounted to the floor and dashboard, in a lock-type holder. It is a potent deterrent and an excellent defensive and offensive weapon.

B. Radio and Communications:

1. The success of one-man car patrol is dependent on fool-proof, flawless, efficiently operated radio communications.

Procedures

1. Extra patrol vehicles, preferably panel type trucks, should be superimposed over regular patrol beats for the transportation of prisoners and to handle other special tasks.
2. Radio dispatching at headquarters must be done with the utmost efficiency and in accordance with preconceived plans. Effective complaint recording and message dispatching procedures must be established.
3. Disciplinary standards must be positive in maintaining a specific "plan of action and procedure" necessary to personal safety and operations.
4. Daily activity reports should be prepared by the patrol officers and through expeditious review by higher authority, deficiencies immediately corrected.

CONCLUSION

Spirited competition for limited public funds in modern society demands the utmost in resourcefulness on the part of those charged with the preservation of *Order*—police administrators sworn to enforce the law upon which that order is dependent. A serious challenge to that resourcefulness is *one line* in the annual police budget, *Personal Services*, comprising about 91% of total police expenditures for all cities over 10,000, with this ratio increasing in the larger population group.¹⁰

Those who hold the purse strings have a grave responsibility when a single officer undertakes a task properly chargeable to two men. They must give him the tools vital to his personal safety, which too, effectuate quality performance to the ultimate benefit of the public he protects. That public, of which he is (though oft forgot) a part, can make the most substantial contribution—the active support and cooperation which it owes its paid helpers.

The one-man patrol car is but a single issue. It is not in itself the “open sesame”, to the many problems nor is it intended to imply that its adoption is feasible under all or any circumstances. The extent of its use must be, of necessity, a local decision. Police administrators, charting courses of action, might well ponder on the words of Locke: “The best way to come to truth being to examine things as really they are, and not to conclude they are, as we fancy ourselves, or have been taught by others to imagine.”¹¹

¹⁰ *Municipal Year Book*, The International City Managers' Association, Chicago, Illinois, vol. 21, 1954, p. 430.

¹¹ John Locke, *Human Understanding*, Bk. II, Ch. XII.