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## Law Enforcement Bulletin



United States Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Washington, DC 20535

Published by the Office of Congressional  
and Public Affairs,  
Milt Ahlerich, Assistant Director

### The Cover:

*A police cadet gains field experience  
assisting a lost child (see article p. 1).*

William S. Sessions, Director

The Attorney General has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business required by law of the Department of Justice. Use of funds for printing this periodical has been approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget through June 6, 1988.

Editor—Thomas J. Deakin  
Assistant Editor—Kathryn E. Sulewski  
Art Director—John E. Ott  
Production Manager/Reprints—Mark A. Zettler

The FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin (ISSN-0014-5688) is published monthly by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, 10th and Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20535. Second-Class postage paid at Washington, DC. Postmaster: Send address changes to Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, Washington, DC 20535.

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## Recruiting Police From College

***"The Police Cadet Corps is based on the notion that if the city assists young people in paying for their education and gives them a closeup look at police operations, many of them will choose a police career after graduation."***

By

ORDWAY P. BURDEN

*President*

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*Washington, DC*

Late this spring, approximately 130 young men and women who have spent 2 years as police cadets in the New York City Police Department (NYCPD) will graduate from college. It will be the first moment of truth for an ambitious attempt by the NYCPD to recruit college graduates into police service. Will the graduating cadets choose to join the regular force?

The city is betting \$1 million a year that many of them will. If so, it will raise the educational level of the department by only a fraction, because more than 2,000 of its 32,000 members already have college degrees. Yet, it will be a strong indication that the police cadet idea is viable.

The Police Cadet Corps is based on the notion that if the city assists young people in paying for their edu-

cation and gives them a closeup look at police operations, many of them will choose a police career after graduation. The cadets are given loans totaling \$3,000 toward the expenses of their last 2 years of college. If they serve at least 2 years after graduation, the loans are forgiven; if not, they must repay the loans with 3 percent interest.

As cadets, they are paid \$7 an hour for two summers of full-time work and 3 days a month during their college years. Most of their service is done as observers with the Community Patrol Officer Program (CPOP) in 45 of the city's 75 precincts. Precinct CPOP units are comprised of 7 to 10 officers, under the command of a sergeant, who patrol neighborhoods and try to improve the quality of life, as well as arrest wrongdoers. The cadets wear uniforms that

are quite similar to a patrolman's, but carry no weapons and have no law enforcement powers. Like the regular officers, they are issued bulletproof vests.

A typical cadet, a senior at City College of New York who was assigned to the 79th precinct in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, is enthusiastic about the work. "CPOP is a fabulous program. We attended community board meetings, tenant association meetings, block parties. Sometimes we talk to crime victims and tell them about compensation that's available to them. And people would come up to us and tell us about the problems they have with drug dealers or parking problems. We also escorted senior citizens to the bank because if they went by themselves, it's very likely they would be robbed."



Mr. Burden

This cadet recalls only one incident in two summers of patrol that was outside the service routine. That occurred when the patrol officer he was with arrested a purse snatcher. "But," he said, "helping people is exciting in itself to me." He admitted thinking about becoming a police officer before joining the Cadet Corps. "Now," he added, "there's no question that I will."

This attitude reflects the police department's belief that college graduates may bring greater sensitivity to the officer's job. The Cadet Corps commander commented, "The feeling is that people who have been exposed to a broad education will be more able to deal with the complex job of policing that's facing us. I think the people with the education will be able to handle more things, more confidently, and to understand the things that might be unfolding before his eyes, like the poverty we see, the homelessness."

"A person who has not been exposed to the reasons for some of these conditions might be prone to say that it's because people don't want to work that they're homeless," he added. "If you have a narrow point of view and think they're homeless because they're lazy, then you might receive a homeless person who is coming to you for help as a police officer in a different manner than if you have a broader view and know that there are a multitude of reasons why people are homeless."

Some research indicates that in addition to having such intangibles as greater sensitivity, college graduates also perform better than their less-educated colleagues in measures that can be quantified. For example, in a study that compared the first 10 years of service by officers who joined the Los An-

geles Police Department in 1965, B. E. Sanderson found that the college graduates did significantly better in the police academy, had fewer sick days and injured-on-duty days off, were less likely to be disciplined, and were much more likely to be promoted.

Other research has suggested that college makes little difference in police performance and may even be a detriment if less-educated officers resent the college men. In any case, the question may be of the chicken-or-the-egg variety.

The director of the Vera Institute of Justice, who is chairman of the Police Cadet Advisory Council which helped to set up the Police Cadet Corps, noted, "It's an open question, in part because, as you might expect, whatever correlations are found between college education and performance measures like promotions, absences, or disciplinary actions, you're stuck with not being able to determine whether it's the college education that makes the difference or whether it's the mix of personality, ambition and talent that leads people to get a college education."

Cadets must be citizens and New York City residents and must attend college in the city or in adjoining Westchester and Nassau Counties. They must pass the examination for regular police officers; 98 percent of the cadet applicants do, as compared with 63 percent overall.

Their initial week of training is at the city's police academy, but it is less police-oriented than that for regular rookies. They take driver training and some physical education and close-order drill. In addition, they are given instruction in the use of walkie-talkies and

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***“ ‘We want to show them that there’s something in the department for every college major. . . .’ ”***

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*Police cadets receive in-class training.*

computers, but most cadet training focuses on leadership and management skills. “We try to be as non-police-specific as possible,” added the corps commander. “We try to enhance and broaden their personal abilities.”

In their second week of training, the cadets are given 4 days of physical and mental exercises aimed at melding them into a corps. “We recognize that they come from various communities throughout the city and they don’t have the cohesiveness that we need,” the commander explained. “So they go through these exercises that are designed to build team spirit, cohesiveness, and respect for leadership.”

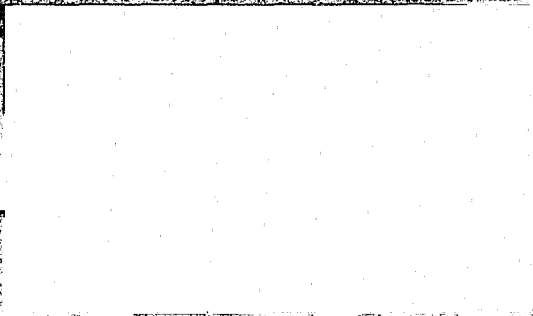
While original expectations were for the Police Cadet Corps to have around 400 members to start, only 332 have been hired thus far. Two-thirds of the cadets are men. The first class,

hired in June 1986, is 71.5 percent white. But the latest hiring, in August 1987, reflects the city’s composition more accurately. In this class, there are 38 whites, 33 blacks, 28 Hispanics, 1 Asian-American, and 1 Native American. Because the physical and mental requirements for cadets are as stringent as for regular officers, only 1 in 10 applicants make the grade.

Not surprisingly, many of the cadets were considering a law enforcement career before they joined the corps; about two-thirds were either committed to a police career or leaning that way. The department is hoping that the other one-third will be favorably impressed by their experience as cadets. As the corps commander noted, “Once they come in and are exposed to us, we think we can convince a lot of them

to take a serious look at a career in policing. It’s a career that can be very rewarding, very satisfying, in terms of serving people. We certainly hope that we will attract some of those who would, in ordinary circumstances, go to one of the Fortune 500 companies to come and be leaders in the department and provide a needed service to the people of the city.”

Some cadets join primarily to get the college loans. Some drop out when they face the reality of police work. A few have left the cadets to join the regular force immediately. But even those who drop out to pursue other careers aren’t a complete loss to the city. In the commander’s opinion, “They have seen the operation and will understand us better. The goodwill that is engendered from that relationship should go on for a long time.”



*Police cadets are given various tasks to develop teamwork and leadership skills.*



One cadet who is undecided about a police career agrees with this opinion. "I'm really not sure whether I'll become a police officer," she said. "Right now I'm looking toward law. I think I probably will become an officer just to get the experience, but I'll continue my education, too. I think the training is great and really relevant whether you plan to go on and become a police officer or anything else. The things I've learned I'll never forget, and I can take them anywhere I go."

One of the things she has acquired is admiration for her tutors in the CPOP unit in the 114th Precinct in Astoria, Queens. She watched four officers subdue 15 battlers in a minor riot in a housing project and witnessed a drug arrest which she described as "beautiful, a work of art." In the drug case, she was riding in the CPOP van when she saw a man walk away from behind a post where he had been urinating. The CPOP officers stopped the van and began questioning another man who was working on his car in the street. The commotion attracted the walker back to the scene, whereupon the officers arrested him. "What happened was, the man hadn't been urinating, he was dropping vials of crack," she explained. "I don't know how the officers recognized he was doing that, but it was really good. There was no big, dramatic scene; it was a trick and I was really impressed."

In the beginning there was considerable concern about whether the cadets would be accepted by regular officers. "There was some apprehension among rank-and-file officers who didn't understand what the cadets are all about," the corps commander said. "There was an elitist-type stigma attached to the Cadet Corps because we

are advertising that we wanted to increase the number of college-educated people in the police department and some officers thought it was a put-down. But as the cadets went out into the precincts and showed their mettle as good, energetic, motivated people who want to serve, the officers found out that these kids are like everybody else, and they began to accept them more readily."

Most cadets would agree. "At first we were tolerated," one cadet commented, "but then friendship grows. Within the CPOP unit you develop a sort of camaraderie. I'd say within a week or two we were accepted in the unit." Being accepted by the other 150-odd officers in the precinct took a little longer. "You do, I think, have to prove yourself," she added.

Police cadets are commanded to stay away when danger threatens, but sometimes cadets got involved in non-threatening situations. Once, for example, when a CPOP unit was summoned to an apartment where a woman had died, some of the cadets helped to console the woman's daughter. "I picked out her dress for the funeral and did things like that that she was too upset to do," said one female cadet. "We had some interaction like that with people in distress, but with crime, we were just observers."

Occasionally, some cadets accompanied officers when there was a potential for harm. One cadet joined the search for a handcuffed suspect who had escaped from police custody in the 70th precinct in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn. "When we got the call, natural instinct took over and everybody jumped out of the CPOP van and

***“ . . . even if they were to perform no additional service, their presence in society would gradually have a positive effect on public life. Decency and order depend on both police and citizens. ”***

started looking around the neighborhood,” he said. When the cadet spotted the suspect in an alley, he shouted, “Police, don’t move!” and joined in the subsequent chase through backyards. “But my officer was with me,” he added. “You were never alone where you had to interact with a criminal or get yourself in jeopardy.”

This cadet, a computer science major at Baruch College, was transferred to police headquarters to work in the department’s computer unit for his second summer as a cadet. In that assignment, he helped to develop programming packages for the microcomputers that eventually will be in every precinct. “I had a great time down there,” he said, “because the people were excellent and really knew their stuff.”

Another cadet also spent the second summer at headquarters, working in the budget department. But most are assigned to CPOP units and with good reason. The corps commander explained, “The CPOP officers have been carefully chosen for liking to relate to people because that’s what they’re doing. We decided to put the cadets in CPOP units because we wanted those highly motivated officers to transmit that motivation to the cadets.”

In the future, though, more cadets are likely to be exposed to other departmental operations. As an experiment last summer, some senior cadets spent 2 weeks visiting the department’s special units — harbor, aviation, the special group that protects movie makers’ sets, the computer unit, and the details for Yankee and Shea Stadiums, the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, city hall, and police headquarters. “We

want to show them that there’s something in the department for every college major,” said the commander.

New York’s Police Cadet Corps grew out of earlier proposals for adding more college-trained officers to the force. One plan, advanced by John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association, called for giving students who earned high marks on the police civil service test free tuition at John Jay and a \$4,000 stipend to work 100 days a year in the police department. The other plan, proposed by a former chairman of the New York State Investigations Commission and a sociologist, was more sweeping. It would have created a statewide “police corps” of 30,000 who would get free college tuition in return for pledging 3 years of police service after graduation. New York City would have had two-thirds of them; the other third would be in upstate communities.

During their service as patrolmen, the Police Corps graduates would have received lower salaries and fewer benefits than regulars. It was estimated that a Police Corps grad could be put on the street for \$20,000 a year, less than half of what a New York City officer costs in pay and benefits.

Critics of the Police Corps proposal pointed out that probably few members would serve more than their 3-year commitment. “True,” said the proponents, “but even if they were to perform no additional service, their presence in society would gradually have a positive effect on public life. Decency and order depend on both police and citizens.” The advocates added, “The professionalization and insulation of the police have often severed them from the com-

munities they serve. The presence in society of well-trained, experienced former police officers in ever-increasing numbers would greatly aid efforts to mobilize the entire community to fight the criminality that is undermining our way of life.”

The cadet plan finally adopted has elements from both proposals. Perhaps the chief difference between the Police Cadet Corps and the Police Corps plan is that cadets who join the department after graduation from college will become regular officers, with normal pay and benefits. The first duty, like all rookies, will be 5½ months of training at the police academy. There they will follow the normal curriculum, although they will be excused from the full driver training course if they took it as cadets.

The question now is, “How many of the cadets will opt for a police career?” Further down the road, there will be other questions, such as, “Will they stay in and how well will they perform?” The city will also have to decide whether the cadet recruitment package is sufficiently attractive to lure enough students to enlarge the corps. (In the original plan, the hope was that by the 1990’s the department would be drawing half of its annual crop of 1,200 recruits from the Police Cadet Corps.) Some early answers to those questions will come after college commencements in the spring.

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