

# Crime Prevention

*A series of timely reports to meet the needs of people working to build safer communities...*

## Crime Prevention Can Spur and Support Homeland Security in Neighborhoods and Communities

### THIS REPORT

This report outlines similarities between preventing crime and preventing terrorism, describes the assets crime prevention offers to move community-based homeland security activities forward, and suggests the benefits of the two disciplines working together.

**T**he events of September 11, 2001, brought home to Americans the reality of terrorism's threat to our communities. We have learned that terrorism is a complex issue, involving federal, state, and local governments as well as other nations and international organizations and groups. But many aspects of terrorism prevention parallel those of crime prevention. In fact, because of the similarities, individual, neighborhood, and community crime prevention offer many assets that can strengthen citizens' roles in improving homeland security.

How can the two work together? One example: In Stafford County, Virginia, the sheriff's office identified sites that might be attractive to terrorists, such as reservoirs, train tracks, and bridges. Neighborhood Watches near these sites were invited to get special training in what to report and how to report it with

respect to possible threats to these targets. All residents of the county were offered education on preparedness and mitigation strategies.<sup>1</sup> In Philadelphia's Central Business District, longtime crime prevention specialist Stacy Irving has brought homeland security planning into the crime prevention strategies of the businesses and residents she works with, linking it with the crime prevention strategies with which they are already familiar.<sup>2</sup>

### What Preventing Crime and Preventing Terrorism Share

First and foremost, terrorism is a crime—it violates the law as much as any robbery or burglary or homicide. This fact helps make it amenable to the basic concepts of crime prevention. As Sheriff Larry Campbell of Leon County, Florida, puts it, "Terrorism prevention is crime prevention. You just have to look at it differently than the tradi-



tional crimes we deal with on a daily basis.”<sup>3</sup>

Second, both crime prevention and terrorism prevention help us achieve safety and security, which psychologist Abraham Maslow ranked among the most essential human needs. Only food, shelter, and clothing are considered more basic.<sup>4</sup> Crime has long been seen as a threat to the security and safety of individuals, neighborhoods, and communities. In a number of countries, terrorism has for some time been recognized as an equally serious threat, though differently motivated. Attacks on Americans overseas coupled with attacks here at home have made Americans recognize that terrorism presents a real threat to them and their loved ones, just as they have recognized for years that other crimes threaten the security of their families and communities.

Third, crime and terrorism prevention both require action by individuals and by neighborhood groups as well as by numerous agencies and other organizations in the community. Though the roles of each kind of participant vary, each role is important, sometimes vital, to success. Watchful, prepared residents who know what to look for and how to report effectively are important in both kinds of prevention. As Iowa's Homeland Security Office puts it, “Be nosy. Get to know your neighbors. Pay attention to unusual vehicles or suspicious activities and report them to local law enforcement.”<sup>5</sup> Coordinated local services that look at both immediate issues and longer-term preventive measures are required in both kinds of prevention. Research, analysis, and practical strategies are vital to both as well.

Fourth, crime prevention and terrorism prevention must both cope

with the issue of fear. Fear of crime, as research has demonstrated, is often independent of the actual levels and risks of crime in the neighborhood or community.<sup>6</sup> Fear of crime, however, can debilitate the community despite a relatively low crime rate. Fear imprisons those who would otherwise populate streets, sidewalks, porches, and yards. Fear captures those who would otherwise take part in meetings, attend plays, visit libraries, go to movies, or walk in the park. Terrorism engendered similar fears, particularly acute after the September 11 attacks. For some, the fears drove nearly frenzied activity. Others withdrew into their homes. Others took the path of denial and avoidance. All these choices cripple our ability to fight back, whether against terror or crime. Crime prevention has learned a number of strategies to surmount or circumvent fear, strategies that can be applied against fear of terrorism as well.

Fifth, crime prevention and terrorism prevention both need informed risk assessments. Which crimes are more frequent, which are more feared, and which are higher risk for personal injury and loss—each of these can help refine and more effectively direct and prioritize prevention strategies. Crime analysis and crime mapping, combined with the intelligence gathered by other police resources, have moved knowledge and assessment of crime risks to a new level.<sup>7</sup> Preventing terrorism, particularly from a community involvement perspective, requires area-specific intelligence and risk analysis as well. Localizing threat information has helped several jurisdictions clarify for their residents how a terrorism threat may affect that particular area, which helps rationalize response and ameliorate

unwarranted fear. Pasadena, California; Provo, Utah; and the State of Hawaii have developed such localized assessments that tie actions by state and local governments and community residents to each of several threat levels, with the top one being a terrorist event in that specific jurisdiction.<sup>8</sup> They understand how their city or state will react if something happens “in their back yard.” San Jose, California's, police department has established an e-mail system that can send alerts about crime, terrorism, natural disasters, or suspicious circumstances to the whole city, to specific kinds of organizations, or to specific geographic segments of the city.<sup>9</sup> And crime prevention experts can testify that accurate information, coupled with realistic understanding of risk, can go a long way toward ameliorating fear.

Crime prevention has some advantages over terrorism prevention in engaging community residents. First, most adults in this country will acknowledge that crime is a problem across the nation and that no community is immune. They see, or can readily be persuaded to see, immediate, local reasons for their involvement. Concern about terrorism prevention, on the other hand, is not as acute a reality to many who live outside the September 11 strike areas, as studies have shown.<sup>10</sup>

Second, crime prevention has 25 years of effective history on which to build, with such programs as Neighborhood Watch, home security surveys, and citizen patrols being familiar to many.<sup>11</sup> Terrorism prevention is newer on the landscape. It is less familiar, less understood, and less developed in its local applications. Can crime prevention's experience benefit this goal? Unquestionably, yes.



Third, crime prevention as a field has had to work through many of the same challenges that terrorism prevention now faces—identifying engaging roles for community residents that they can carry out and that meet community needs, providing awareness and skills, developing neighborhood and community organizations, and building effective partnerships and coalitions, to name a few.

### Crime Prevention Knowledge Can Give Terrorism Prevention a Boost

Many of the skills and know-how developed in the practice of crime prevention transfer readily to meet the needs of homeland security at the neighborhood and community level.

The St. Petersburg, Florida, Police Department outlined from its perspective a series of basic crime prevention strategies that demonstrate how well crime prevention know-how translates to terrorism prevention:

Following are basic crime prevention principles:

- Teach community members to take steps to secure their family, their residence, their business, and their personal property.
- Teach community members to always be alert and aware of their surroundings.
- Encourage the reporting of suspicious activity through appropriate channels.
- Activate Neighborhood Watch or block group programs.
- Create a liaison between neighborhood groups and your law enforcement agency.

■ Develop a system to disseminate information in the neighborhood in order to

- Create immediate awareness of potential dangers
- Counteract false information and rumors that may be spreading.

Prevention is the key ingredient to avoiding or minimizing disasters and tragedies.<sup>12</sup>

The table on pages 4 and 5 summarizes an even wider range of connections, which are explored in more detail in the report.

### Awareness

For people to take action, they must have some understanding of the issue—hopefully an accurate understanding. Homeland security needs to help individuals in all parts of the nation develop an understanding of terrorism—not an academic course, but a commonsense grounding in its nature and complexities, in its causes as well as its symptoms and ways residents of the community can help prevent it. Crime prevention found within its first two decades that some level of education and information about the problem of crime made people more comfortable talking about it and more thoughtful in dealing with it. That experience is available to the homeland security field.

Equally important, preventing terrorism requires that people understand the roles they can play and how those roles contribute to the goal of a more secure homeland. The Citizens' Corps Council for Homeland Security of Southern Arizona stated the need plainly: "Community preparedness is not the work of any one group. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of every citizen in every community."<sup>13</sup> In order to actualize that statement, it is necessary to be able to

tell "every citizen" what role he or she can fulfill. That role must be within the capabilities of the individual, seen by the individual and others in the group as useful, and of sufficient interest to sustain the individual's participation. Crime prevention has found that a mix of roles is not only possible but necessary in most community groups. Organizers, resource finders, instructors, mentors, recorders, advocates, and others are some of the frequent roles in the local mix, whatever the program or group's specific purpose. The group must see a mission for its role and its members must see missions for their roles—a challenge when the threat of terrorist action is not seen as immediate.

### Organization

Crime prevention has found that people organize most readily against a security threat when that threat is perceived as locally relevant and when the proposed organization is close to home. Neighborhoods, apartment buildings, housing developments, or city blocks may be the venue, but they work because the residents feel some mutuality—some sense of sharing space that all (or a sizable number) care about and want to protect and improve. Terrorism prevention may find itself working well in the neighborhood organizations, especially Neighborhood Watches, that have grown up around crime prevention, given the safety and security goals the two share. The Virginia Crime Prevention Association, a leader in bringing crime prevention and terrorism prevention together in neighborhoods, pointed out that "[Neighborhood Watch] is a natural tool to get people involved and to enlist the eyes and ears of all Americans in the war against terrorism."<sup>14</sup> Commander Keith Parks of



Homeland Security Needs	Crime Prevention Offers
<b>Awareness</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ People need to understand the nature and complexity of the problem</li> <li>■ People need to understand the roles of individuals and community groups vs. professionals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Experience in educating people on general and specific facets of crime and how it can be prevented</li> <li>■ Models for distinguishing these roles and helping them enrich and support each other</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Residents need to be accessible through neighborhood/block level networks that provide formal and informal communication</li> <li>■ Groups in particular need to be accessible through area-wide networks that offer both formal and informal communication</li> <li>■ Local leadership needs to be identified and developed</li>   <li>■ Homeland security professionals need to be able to link with other organizations with or without law enforcement as connector</li>   <li>■ Terrorism prevention needs to be able to tap knowledge of local neighborhood and nearby community conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Established and expanding networks of neighborhood- and block-level groups, networks that communicate both formally and informally</li> <li>■ Formal and informal networks of neighborhood groups and of community organizations and government agencies</li> <li>■ Mechanisms in many communities are in place to identify and develop local residents as leaders of their blocks and neighborhoods and to identify and link with current and emerging community leaders</li> <li>■ Crime prevention has substantial experience with collaborations, coalitions, and partnerships that bring together government, private nonprofit, and community-based organizations to address local problems and needs with or without law enforcement as the connecting agency</li> <li>■ Experience in communicating information to neighborhoods and in gathering information from residents to incorporate with knowledge from other sources</li> </ul>
<b>Skills Instruction</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ability to make accurate and useful observations</li> <li>■ Capacity to record observations/events accurately</li>   <li>■ Ability to report appropriate incidents to proper authorities</li>   <li>■ Skills in recognizing breaks in neighborhood routine and patterns of activity</li>   <li>■ Capacity to make sustained, properly recorded observations in various situations</li>   <li>■ Ability to engage basic problem-solving strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Teaching observation techniques</li> <li>■ Instruction in recording observations in timely and helpful ways with high accuracy</li> <li>■ Encouraging and instructing community residents in effective reporting in terms of emergency versus nonemergency situations and proper agencies to which to report</li> <li>■ Helping residents to understand the importance of recognizing neighborhood patterns of activity and what breaks those patterns in ways that should cause concern</li> <li>■ Ability to sustain observation and recording when an ongoing situation in neighborhood warrants it</li> <li>■ Working with residents to help them solve problems and to teach them problem-solving techniques both directly and by example</li> </ul>



Homeland Security Needs	Crime Prevention Offers
<b>Connection</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reliable link(s) between neighborhood and community groups and local law enforcement</li> <li>■ Ability for local groups to communicate effectively with local law enforcement.</li> <li>■ Functional connections with other local community groups, including communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Building and gaining resident confidence in both effective communication with and partnership-style links with local law enforcement</li> <li>■ Through instruction and example, demonstrating and building effective resident-law enforcement communication</li> <li>■ Connections built between neighborhoods and community resources, developed to connect neighborhoods with civic resources</li> </ul>
<b>Tools for Success</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Collection and dissemination of prevention/mitigation strategies</li> <li>■ Ability for neighborhood groups to deal with multiple issues at once</li> <li>■ Coalition building for prevention, intervention, mitigation, and restoration</li> <li>■ Building around common desire/need for safety and security to motivate action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More than two decades of experience using several government and nongovernment channels to gather and spread news about tested prevention/mitigation strategies</li> <li>■ Experience in working with local groups that face a wide mix of problems and to help groups prioritize and organize to deal with problems simultaneously or sequentially, as needed</li> <li>■ Almost 25 years of the Crime Prevention Coalition of America and numerous state and local coalitions and associations</li> <li>■ More than 25 years of helping people recognize and exert their power to reduce crime and build stronger, safer neighborhoods</li> </ul>

Thousand Oaks, California, told a local audience, “Neighborhood Watch concepts adapt perfectly to homeland defense, encouraging all of us to take responsibility for protecting our communities.”<sup>15</sup>

But Neighborhood Watch, though unquestionably the most widespread community crime prevention activity<sup>16</sup>, is far from the only local vehicle for involvement. Neighborhood Watch itself may well be part of a civic association or community organization. It is often most effective when operated in concert with efforts to meet other community needs.<sup>17</sup> Other community-based groups may well take on some

portion of the terrorism prevention task, as they have taken on crime prevention. Civic associations, homeowners’ groups, tenant associations, faith communities, service and social clubs, and youth groups have all demonstrated their capacity to address neighborhood crime problems and use that capacity to help prevent terrorism. These groups are local networks for organization and communication, both formal and informal.

Crime prevention groups and practitioners have also developed area-wide and statewide networks that help to share successes and lessons learned, sustain action, main-

tain current knowledge, and communicate common concerns. The 70 state crime prevention programs and associations<sup>18</sup>, for example, touch directly and indirectly thousands of neighborhoods, businesses, and civic groups. Many jurisdictions have umbrella crime prevention councils. Law enforcement officers, considered central to crime prevention, have an extensive, even overlapping, array of professional and fraternal networks that enrich crime prevention and should equally benefit community-level terrorism prevention.

Crime prevention has learned that it is necessary to develop local leaders, through both formal and



informal strategies, in order to keep neighborhood-level programs thriving. Some leaders have much higher burnout points than others; some face many demands external to the neighborhood commitment, which they see as temporary. Citizen Police Academies, crime prevention councils that bring potential leaders together, public recognition that helps elevate possible leadership candidates, assignments to head special projects, and a local (neighborhood-level) structure that includes rotation of jobs as an accepted practice are all ways to help identify and develop local leaders. Terrorism prevention will need the same kind of local leadership in order to sustain local action. It gains such leaders by fitting itself in with crime prevention or it can borrow from crime prevention experience—but leadership is a must, however it is found.

A key to any effective organization is knowledge—in this case knowledge of the neighborhood and surrounding community. That knowledge is precisely what crime prevention, particularly such strategies as Neighborhood Watch, supports and encourages. The sharing of information targeted to neighborhood needs helps build knowledge instead of rumor, fact instead of guesswork. In St. Johns County, Florida, a countywide e-mail/fax system is under development to “provide information on crime trends specific to your neighborhood, updates on homeland security issues, or sheriff’s office programs being conducted in and around your community.”<sup>19</sup> With information like that, Neighborhood Watch members become the go-to source for everyone in the neighborhood. That same knowledge network can support homeland security efforts,

which also need to spread fact, reduce rumor, and promote accurate statements rather than speculation and hyperbole.

### Skills Instruction

Homeland security at the neighborhood level requires observation, recording of information, and reporting correctly. These skills in turn require surveillance skills, and pattern recognition. Homeland security also requires household and family preparedness, coupled with neighborhood preparedness. Crime prevention has been teaching all these skills to community residents for more than two decades, through a mix of formal and informal instruction that is ongoing and ever-developing. Terrorism prevention will face the need for the skills and for their continual development as terrorist threats evolve over time. Crime prevention can share its tested techniques for training local residents in these vital capabilities. It can also add training in prevention through environmental design, youth as crime prevention assets, safety for children, and helping those with special needs.

### Connection

It is not enough for a local neighborhood group to have its own neighborhood in its sights. That neighborhood must be connected with local law enforcement through reliable links and must connect effectively with other neighborhood groups and community organizations, including other local government bodies. It is not sufficient, as most neighborhoods discover on their own, to address only the symptoms of crime. The problems that underlie it must also be dealt with. Those problems may be specific to

the neighborhood—a drug dealer on the block—or they may involve six or eight neighborhoods, or even more. In order to work on these problems, the group must be a reliable partner, an effective communicator (as effective as such groups can be), and a capable connector. Crime prevention has been greatly enriched by community policing in this regard, as local officers have helped residents dig into the causes and solve the problems, often teaching these connection skills along the way. Because terrorism prevention can require large areas of the community working together to spot suspicious activities, it can benefit from the networks and lessons crime prevention has already taught. Ohio Lieutenant Governor Maureen O’Connor observed, “Securing our homeland is only possible through partnerships. . . . The future of crime prevention and homeland security lies in community mobilization and volunteerism.”<sup>20</sup>

### Tools for Success

The crime prevention community realized early on that it could either share successful (and less-than-successful) strategies or keep on reinventing the proverbial wheel in every community in the nation. Sharing won. Sharing of strategies for specific kinds of crime problems and community situations; sharing of coalition-building strategies toward prevention, intervention, prevention, mitigation, and restoration; and building partnerships around a common desire for safety and security have all enriched the crime prevention field and moved it significantly forward.<sup>21</sup> Ohio’s Crime Prevention Association has been a pioneer in building links between crime prevention and community policing and



between these fields and terrorism prevention. Indeed, an article in the Ohio Association of Police Chiefs magazine commended the crime prevention group and observed that "Crime prevention initiatives like community policing have been called one of the 'basics of homeland security' . . ." <sup>22</sup> Moreover, because crime strikes in many ways and from many causes, the crime prevention community has learned ways to deal with multiple problems simultaneously or sequentially as need be, much the same demand that will be placed on the community- and neighborhood-level homeland security effort.

### Security for All

Crime prevention offers a great deal of experience that will enrich and enliven terrorism prevention. Perhaps one of its greatest gifts is its ability to bring together neighbors of all kinds, shapes, sizes, colors, beliefs, and backgrounds toward a common goal of community and family security. Terrorism prevention can, if properly managed, deepen that gift and create the kind of understanding that will reduce reactionary hatreds.

Should these two disciplines work closely together? They will certainly share the stage for years to come. As New York City Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly said, "The days when you could just focus

on crime and quality-of-life violation suppression are over. Not that we're going to back away from that; that's a core mission of the organization. But now you have this whole other area that has to be focused on. We're going to be involved in that for a long, long time." <sup>23</sup>

Far better to build on what is already there and make progress faster and further than to start from scratch and reinvent the lessons already learned and the progress already hard-won.

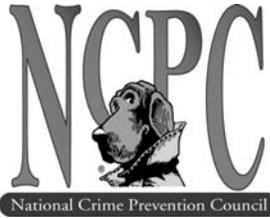
### Endnotes

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18. For a list, see [www.crimepreventcoalition.org](http://www.crimepreventcoalition.org).
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20. Viewed at [www.oacp.org/magazine/fall2002/cjs.html](http://www.oacp.org/magazine/fall2002/cjs.html) on August 2, 2003.
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## MISSION

## STATEMENT

*To enable people to create safer and more caring communities by addressing the causes of crime and violence and reducing the opportunities for crime to occur.*

The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) is a private, nonprofit tax-exempt [501(c)(3)] organization whose primary mission is to enable people to create safer and more caring communities by addressing the causes of crime and violence and reducing the opportunities for crime to occur. NCPC publishes books, kits of camera-ready program materials, posters, and informational and policy reports on a variety of crime prevention and community-building subjects. NCPC offers training, technical assistance, and a national focus for crime prevention: it acts as secretariat for the Crime Prevention Coalition of America, more than 4,000 national, federal, local, and state organizations committed to preventing crime. It hosts a number of Web sites that offer prevention tips to individuals, describe prevention practices for community building, and help anchor prevention policy into laws and budgets. It also operates demonstration programs in schools, neighborhoods, and entire jurisdictions and takes a major leadership role in youth crime prevention and youth service; it also administers the Center for Faith and Service. NCPC manages the McGruff "Take A Bite Out Of Crime" public service advertising campaign. NCPC is funded through a variety of government agencies, corporate and private foundations, and donations from private individuals.

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