



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR MANAGING PROTESTS: A NEW ERA

Date: November 24, 2022

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KEY EVENTS

On November 24, 2022, Chief Superintendent (CS) John Brewer, acting Criminal Operations Officer for Core Policing from the British Columbia Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), presented *Strategic Considerations for Managing Protests: A New Era*. The key points discussed were the objectives of modern-day protests, the individuals attending protests who pose potential security threats, and recommendations on mitigating those security threats.

NATURE OF DISCUSSION

Presentation

CS Brewer stressed the importance of police forces understanding the intent of protests to better identify potential threats. Protests have evolved to disrupting a specific action and can include many different factions of society—often with different issues or grievances than the main focus of the protest—and some might even intend to use violence or commit crimes. CS Brewer recommended that police forces liaise with protest organizers to understand the primary objective of the movement and the overlapping issues to mitigate security threats.

BACKGROUND

Presentation

CS Brewer stated that protesting has evolved into creating blockades and disruptions, where targets are strategically chosen to stop or disrupt a specific action, and planning involves creating the maximum amount of disruption and noticeability. These evolved protest techniques require less resources and less manpower to create the same level of disruption or visibility than a large-scale

protest. This “rebellion of one,” for example, can be a single individual choosing to block a busy intersection by laying down, creating great disruption.

CS Brewer states that police forces need to focus on the fringe groups that attend protests, which account for approximately 3-5% of the overall protesters. These groups, mainly composed of men aged 18-24, intend to carry out planned, illegal actions to invoke a response from the police and gain visibility for potential members to join. Furthermore, approximately 10-15% of protesters would be classified in the disruptive category—individuals who may be attempting to start an altercation with police or counter protesters to showcase on social media. CS Brewer stated that these individuals seek or expect to be arrested while aiming not to escalate the situation in a way that would make police officers employ violence. Lastly, the remaining 80% are peaceful protesters, intending to express their right to protest but unwilling to commit a crime or place themselves in danger.

In order for police forces to successfully mitigate security threats, CS Brewer stated that they need to understand the primary motivation or intent of the protest group and how different issues or grievances are related to the primary intent of the protest. Modern day protests may focus on a main issue, but several different issues may also overlap. Liaising with protest leaders allows police to understand the goal of the protest further and how the issue can intersect with others. It can also aid in allocating protest zones to mitigate security threats while allowing the protesters to express themselves lawfully, peacefully and safe. CS Brewer noted that proactive engagement with protest organizers and peaceful resolutions should be the main objective of police forces; however, all options should still remain available and utilized if necessary.

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

Presentation

- Protest techniques have evolved in a way where less resources are required to create a large-scale disruption.
- Approximately 3-5% of protesters are a part of fringe groups and will actively attempt to use violence or commit crimes to generate publicity.
- An additional 10-15% of protesters intend to be arrested to showcase on social media; however, they will attempt to negotiate with police to be arrested in the most peaceful manner.

- Police forces need to engage with protest organizers to better understand the intent and goal behind protests, which can better help police understand the protest itself and mitigate security threats.
- Police forces should understand that the primary issue behind the protest can overlap with different issues and thus lead to different groups coming together.



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