



POLICING PUBLIC PROTESTS

Date: November 24, 2023

Disclaimer: This briefing note contains the encapsulation of views presented by the speaker and does not exclusively represent the views of the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies.

KEY EVENTS

On November 24, 2022, Mr. Colum Price, police advisor for the Royal Brunei Police Force and owner of Top2% training and consultancy, presented *Policing Public Protests*. The key points discussed were the challenges of managing the freedom to protest, the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP), and various frameworks to mitigate risk during large-scale public events. The presentation was followed by a question-and-answer period with questions from the audience and CASIS Vancouver executives.

NATURE OF DISCUSSION

Presentation

Mr. Price discussed how protests have continued to grow in size and frequency; thus, increasing the importance of how police manage protests. Mr. Price emphasised how large-scale protests can quickly become unlawful when hijacked by small groups with different agendas. Mr. Price described JESIP and its various models, including the Joint Decision Model and M/ETHANE, stating that interoperability between first responders at large-scale public events is critical to saving lives and quelling disorder.

Question & Answer Period

The implications of social disobedience falling below the criminal threshold, the future of protests, how to counter unlawful protests, and intelligence for crisis management were discussed by Mr. Price.

BACKGROUND

Presentation

Mr. Price discussed how protests have increased in frequency and scale over the past ten years, noting that there were at least 900 protests with more than 10,000 participants between 2010 and 2020, with more than a million people attending protests in at least 10 countries during the same period. He stated that protests are a part of society and lawful protests are ingrained in the culture of democratic societies, as they are seen as a means of creating change.

Mr. Price stated that the challenge of protests from the perspective of law enforcement is keeping people safe, and a lack of planning, resources, coordination and communication can lead to situations that threaten life, property, and the credibility of law enforcement. For example, some would say the Ottawa Freedom Convoy was successfully managed considering no one died; however, others would argue that the Ottawa Police Service lacked the competence to manage a large-scale event with the potential for violence. Mr. Price noted that large-scale protests who maintain good relations with police can be hijacked by small groups with different agendas and turn unlawful, and this will test the communication skills of the tasked agencies.

Mr. Price discussed the UK-developed Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP), which was created to promote an interoperability common framework between first responders in large-scale public events with the goal of saving lives. The principles of JESIP are co-location, communication, coordination, joint understanding of risk, and shared situational awareness. Colocation is the gathering of all first responder organisations at the strategic, tactical, and operational levels as a means of streamlining communications, and this is typically done through preliminary round-robin meetings in a physical location to communicate all relevant information. Communication represents the shared language between services used to convey essential information surrounding immediate tasks. Coordination is the organisation of the different services' control rooms so that the intelligence received is jointly understood. Lastly, shared situational awareness is the process of ensuring all relevant information is moved to frontline first responders so they can make the best decisions.

Mr. Price closed with a discussion of two universally employed frameworks for first responder, the Joint Decision Model (JDM) and M/ETHANE. The JDM is used by emergency services to justify the decision-making process over the

course of an operation. It is a cycle consisting of: 1) gathering information and intelligence; 2) assessing threats and risks in order to develop a working strategy; 3) considering powers, policies, and procedures; 4) identifying options and contingencies; and 5) taking action and reviewing the results. This model is then repeated for following decisions with the goal of coordinating emergency services in order to save lives and reduce harm. Whereas M/ETHANE is a method for emergency services to categorise an event and communicate it to other emergency services. M/ETHANE stands for Major event, Exact location, Type of incident, Hazards, Access (best way for emergency services to access the incident), Number of casualties, Emergency services—on-scene or required.

Question & Answer Period

In reference to how social disobedience falling below a criminal threshold is handled, Mr. Price state that if a protest does not fall below the legal threshold, then it is a lawful protest. The freedom to protest is sacrosanct and it is not right for police to overstep legal boundaries. Legislation can change what is considered a lawful protest; but Mr. Price prefers a police service that is not driven by politics.

Mr. Price believes that police must change the public perception of police during protests in reference to what protests will look like in five to ten years. The police are generally targeted when a protest becomes unlawful. Too often police are seen as protecting what the protesters are protesting against rather than preserving peace, life, and democracy. Engaging with the public through social media to change the public's perception of the police's role during protests is the future of policing; gathering intelligence will be critical to communicating effectively with the public.

Mr. Price state that public order officers need the moral high ground to quell unlawful protests in a way that is seen as morally justified by the public to prevent public outcry. Decisions that are made by commanders on the ground will be dissected by video recordings over time. Ensuring the public's confidence and faith in police actions is critical for future police operations at large-scale public events.

Mr. Price believes that investment in intelligence analysts and operatives who understand what is going on with different groups that are being interacted with is critical to successfully managing large-scale public events.

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

Presentation

- Protests have increased in frequency and scale over the past ten years; with at least 900 protests with more than 10,000 participants occurring between 2010 and 2020.
- Lack of law enforcement planning, resources, coordination and communication can lead to situations that threaten life, property, and the credibility of law enforcement.
- Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) was developed in the United Kingdom to create interoperability between first responders in large-scale public events with the goal of saving lives.
- The principles of JESIP are Co-location, Communication, Coordination, Joint Understanding of Risk, and Shared Situational Awareness.
- The Joint Decision Model and M/ETHANE are decision making models and categorization frameworks developed by JESIP for emergency services.

Question & Answer Period

- The freedom to protest is sacrosanct and it is not right for police to overstep legal boundaries.
- Engaging with the public through social media to change the public's perception of the police's role during protests is the future of policing; gathering intelligence will be critical to communicating effectively with the public.
- Public order officers need the moral high ground to quell unlawful protests in a way that is seen as morally justified by the public.



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