

Patrol focusing on Contributing to a Safer Ohio

It is a new day in the Ohio State Highway Patrol, and troopers have recently been tasked with this question – “What will you do today to contribute to a safer Ohio?” The answer can be found in the Patrol’s new symbol of its efforts, Trooper Shield, which challenges troopers to measure progress one day at a time, one less fatality than the day before or one more dangerous driver removed from the roadway.

Troopers are targeting impaired and dangerous drivers while concentrating on criminal patrol efforts and major crimes occurring on Ohio’s highways. There is now an equal emphasis on traffic safety and criminal patrol. However, the Patrol will not be petty fault finders, as troopers are being directed to focus their efforts on the problems that are most important to the motorists they serve. Troopers are tasked with ensuring our children drive on roads safer than those we drive on today. To accomplish this, an increased emphasis is being placed on arresting impaired drivers. Provisional data indicates that in 2010 Patrol OVI arrests were their lowest in 25 years. This decrease in enforcement coupled with an increase in fatalities on Ohio’s roadways has been deemed unacceptable, in light of the fact that alcohol and impaired traffic crash deaths remain a significant problem in Ohio.

In an effort to improve public service, Colonel John Born swiftly moved to improve the organization’s internal structure upon assuming command on January 10. This can be seen through the reassignment of sworn officers taken out of General Headquarters and put into operational roles in the field.

By doing this, the Patrol is relying more on professional staff to manage and is providing civilian supervisors the tools to be successful at their jobs. In addition, the creation of the Critical Information and Communications Center (CICC) – which, under the management of Major Kevin Teaford, is the first federally compliant National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Com-

mand System (ICS) center in Ohio. In addition, post commanders may be given the option to designate one administrative sergeant at the post to handle administrative duties, and in-turn free up the other sergeants so they can focus on working the road and supporting their troopers.

The Patrol is investing in leaders. The senior staff designation has been replaced by the senior advisor designation. The senior advisor group consists of selected majors and GHQ and field captains. In addition, the promotional process for troopers to sergeant is going to be improved. Major George Williams, Office of Personnel, is overseeing the review of the promotional process for promotions to the rank of sergeant with a goal of creating a comprehensive system in which each trooper can see where they stand and know what steps are needed to improve their promotional ranking. There has also been more flexibility in scheduling created for lieutenants and above so that time is spent operationally instead of administratively.

The Patrol is building upon its partnerships near highly populated areas of Ohio while staying true to its statutory mission. Personnel and resources are being reallocated to provide core traffic safety and criminal patrol operations near high concentrations of population, business and infrastructure.

The Columbus Metro Unit, which began full operation in February under the management of Lt. Gary Lewis, has seen great success. In addition, the Patrol wants to build on partnerships between law enforcement and safety advocate groups, such as MADD, the insurance industry, health care and emergency providers.

The Patrol and the Ohio State Troopers Association recently conducted a dispatcher survey to weigh the opinion of every dispatcher regarding dispatching locations around the state. After these results are compiled, a cost analysis will be done for all options with a final decision expected in early spring.



Critical Information and Communications Center

The CICC, located in the Columbus Communications Center, in conjunction with the Emergency Management Agency and the Emergency Operations Center, is staffed 24-hours-a-day, 365-days-a-year by command personnel who have received training and experience in coordinating assets and information during critical incidents. In the event of a critical incident, personnel from the CICC can also staff the Emergency Operations Center.

CICC personnel are using state-of-the-art equipment to monitor and disseminate critical information to and from operational units in the field and are assisting Homeland Security personnel in collecting and disseminating critical information with regards to criminal activity that could pose a security threat.

The center also serves as a 24-hour intake point for evidence during non-business hours.

Criminal Patrol Structure

Major Paul Pride, Office of Special Operations, has the assignment to successfully elevate Criminal Patrol to the same emphasis level as traffic safety. In so doing, troopers are tasked with stopping more vehicles and looking beyond the traffic stop to detect and interdict criminal activity.

Four new regional lieutenants are managing the criminal patrol units to ensure sergeants can focus on operations and investigations instead of administrative duties. The new regional lieutenants are:

- Lt. William Stidam, Northwest Regional Criminal Patrol Commander
- Lt. Michael Combs, Northeast Regional Criminal Patrol Commander
- Lt. Jon Payer, Southwest Regional Criminal Patrol Commander
- Lt. Richard Meadows, Southeast Regional Criminal Patrol Commander

Capt. Brigette Charles is assisting with the development of regional training to bolster criminal patrol efforts throughout the state. There will also be a new criminal patrol communications protocol to include reporting and documentation. In coordination with Capt. J.D. Brink, more personnel from the Office of Investigations will be incorporated into criminal patrol operations as investigators reduce time spent on cases in Ohio detention facilities.

Criminal Intel is also being moved to be closer to the Criminal Patrol and SRT units in Columbus to improve inter-office coordination.



Facilities and Fleet

New Facilities commander, Capt. Michelle Henderson, is working to ensure all staff lieutenants and below are assigned marked cruisers so they can operationally be on the road – be seen – be busy – and be accessible. All unmarked cars are also being outfitted with light packages to allow for officers driving those vehicles to stop with disabled vehicles and at crash scenes.

Officer safety is always of utmost importance, and in 2011 the Patrol will be replacing light bars and light packages on all Patrol cruisers using seized contraband money. With the age of the current light bars and the amount of repairs that were necessary, Colonel Born believes this was an investment that the Patrol had to make.

Among many new challenges facing the Patrol, the need for enhanced arms training for new ordinance, continued and expanded qualifying and the ongoing training of both Basic and Cadet classes will require improvements to the Training Academy Firing Range.

Already one of the largest indoor firing ranges in the United States, Academy range staff and users will be provided with a number of new physical improvements to enhance and maintain their world-class training facility. Lt. Ron Raines and staff have been diligently researching equipment needs and have determined new range target equipment. Additional bullet resistant baffles, lighting improvements, stall replacement, control room acoustic

improvements and replacement flooring materials will be included in this phase of the improvements. The new range target equipment will provide a wireless, battery-operated, self-contained motorized control unit, which will recharge with each return to the home position. Reasonable damage to the track component will no longer affect the control unit.

The additional baffles to be provided will allow larger caliber and more varied training programs, and provide additional deflection/protection of all range components. Lighting enhancements will improve visibility and allow greater variance and control of training scenarios.

The individual stall replacements will vastly improve range safety by providing bullet resistant materials at each stall location. Acoustic improvements within the range control room will improve training officer performance and reaction times. Although the range concrete floor surface has withstood a relentless and constant attack over the last 11 years, floor finishes at the firing line area have exhibited cracking at concrete control/expansion joints and will be replaced.

Improvements are now in the design process, and construction is anticipated to commence July 1, 2011, and completion is expected by September 7, 2011.

HVAC improvements are anticipated for the range in the future, and will likely coordinate with the range schedule in fiscal year 2012, pending funding approval.

Carbine Weapons

The committee that was formed after the contract negotiations in 2009 regarding carbine weapons in Patrol vehicles has come to a conclusion. In a February video, released to sworn personnel, Colonel Born and Ohio State Troopers Association president, Tpr. Larry Phillips, announced that troopers soon will be authorized to carry their own carbine weapon in their Patrol vehicle as long as it meets the specifications of the committee. The Patrol will supply the universal mount for the weapon, as well as the qualifying ammunition and familiarization training during in-service. For those who would like to carry the weapon but are unable to make the investment, the Patrol is looking into a military surplus program to try to procure the weapons. After the budget process is over, if the military surplus program is not an efficient solution, then the Patrol plans to re-examine the funds necessary to ensure that every car during each shift has a carbine weapon.

Training

Capt. Brigitte Charles and Staff Lt. Clifton Spinner's recent establishment of the Regional Training Unit (RTU), based at the Academy, have the responsibility to ensure professional training operations and continued development of quality courses are delivered via the Regional Education & General In-Service (REGIS) Institute.

REGIS is an outreach training program sponsored by the Ohio Department of Public Safety and the Ohio State Highway Patrol to provide quality law enforcement training. The "regional" training concept was developed to assist in the delivery of training at the local post level. In the tradition of the Ohio State Highway Patrol Academy and our commitment to other agencies, the REGIS Institute opportunity is extended to allow other law enforcement agencies to attend regional training courses.

The RTU partners with the Ohio Peace Officers Training Commission (OPOTC), various colleges, universities, vocational schools, and high schools to obtain logistical support and facilities for the training venues. Training courses provided include all mandated learning objectives established by OPOTC and reflect the current trends of our vocation.

Examples of courses offered by the RTU include: First Aid, Crash Investigation (basic & technical), Criminal Patrol, ADAP, Firearms, Tactical Driving, TASER, Self Defense, Leadership training, Dispatcher and Professional Staff training, Officer Involved Shooting Response, Critical and/or Criminal Investigation training, In-Custody Death Prevention & Investigation training, Executive Protection, Fraudulent Document training, BWC Injury Claims training and numerous others.

In addition to the new RTU, starting in the fall, all sergeants will once again have leadership training at the Academy. It has been over a year since this training has been provided.

Discipline

People look to troopers for hope at some of the worst times of their lives – at crash scenes – after losing a loved one – and troopers provide stability. That is why it is so important that the Patrol have a sense of urgency to get on the right path.

In his speech at the January 15 swearing-in ceremony, Colonel Born said, "I will not allow individual misconduct to become organizational misconduct."

As a result, several senior advisors are working to create internal standards for equal treatment with regards to discipline. Similar in concept to a criminal sentencing grid, a discipline grid is going to be produced that will be clear as to the consequences of misconduct. Discipline will be swift and fair; however, dishonesty during an investigation will not be tolerated and will result in recommended termination. Instead of personnel being placed on administrative leave, changes to the process will result in more employees being assigned to a facility on administrative duty.

Inspection Process

Major John Bistor has implemented the new inspection process that includes the recommendations from a committee that was formed last year to review the post inspection process. The committee recommended completing post inspections every two years. The current inspectors, S/Lt. Pat Vessels and S/Lt. Brenda Collins, are scheduling each inspection far in advance and their schedule can be found in policy.

As part of the new process, approximately one week before the actual inspection, the inspectors go to the post and conduct a risk assessment. The following week, the inspectors will arrive at the post and inspect a total of 16 items which were chosen by the committee. On the second day, the major of the Office of Field Operations will arrive in the afternoon to review the inspection with the post management team and the inspectors. Usually the district staff also will attend. The inspectors will read the report to the group and then everyone in the room will give comments related to the inspection. The conversation starts with the post sergeants and ends with comments from the major.

The post is given guidance throughout the process and it is considered a good learning tool for everyone involved. At the end of the process, the post management team can ask questions if any clarification is needed. In going back to this inspection process, the post is left with a clear understanding of the expectations from Field Operations.

