

# Pearls in Policing



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## Assignment 2016-2017

### International Action Learning Group (IALG)

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#### Introduction

Modern policing is often trapped in a positive feedback loop, in which unexpected shocks and violent crimes lead to public anxiety and 'hard' policing responses, which in turn worsens the culture of fear around crime. This cycle draws public, political and police attention and resources away from increasingly important but less-visible threats, particularly those in cyberspace.

So how do we create the shock-resistant police organisations of the future that defuse that cycle and can stay focused on preventative and proactive, rather than reactionary, policing? How do we create flexible, agile and networked police organisations that are able to:

- a) rapidly integrate lessons from international experience and emerging best practice
- b) plan effectively for future known and unknowns
- c) establish partnerships and strategies with the private sector to achieve these goals

#### Context

Participants at Pearls in Policing in 2016 are facing many of the same challenges. In the context of a highly uncertain and rapidly changing security and crime environment into the future, one of the most important challenges is creating policing organisations that are able to weather the future storms. A major impediment however is that unexpected events caused by unknown actors – from acts of terrorism to cybercrime – more than ever become the focus of intense public and media attention. So much so that the political and social agenda can quickly change, and with it the demands on public policing. At its worst, this keeps policing in a largely reactive stance, constantly focused on what was in the newspapers yesterday rather than what the problems will be tomorrow. Such responses draw heavily on our resources and may not

provide the most efficient answer to the challenges faced. But even at its best, unexpected shocks see policing often struggling to respond and adapt to circumstances and contingencies it did not plan for.

As several commissioners at Pearls in Policing 2016 further noted, one of the most common manifestations of this problem has been the reversion to 'hard policing' in many Western European nations in response to terrorism events in the past decade. This is usually a short-term response – a more visible and more forceful security presence helps alleviate public fears. However, there is also a problematic cycle which has emerged in some areas, where hard responses lead to more disillusionment and disconnection with at-risk communities, which in turn leads to more extremism and thus even harder responses. In either case, hard policing becomes a narrow and short-term reaction which can sideline broad and long-term prevention strategies. For most police leaders at Pearls in 2016, this is not where they want their agencies to go. This is particularly true when considering some of the major crime threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Cyber, for example, poses an enormous threat, with both known and unknown dimensions. Yet the war in cyberspace cannot be fought through traditional 'hard' policing methods. Even combating threats like ISIS is taking on an increasingly cyber dimension, as radicalisation, recruitment and propaganda over the internet poses a challenge just as formidable as public security.

## Assignment

**Shock-Resistance:** So how do you make policing organisations more 'shock-resistant'? That is, how do you create police organisations that are better able to respond to the short-term needs of the public and of society as a whole without drawing attention and resources unduly away from the long-term and preventative vision of modern policing? What strategies can police leaders use to react to immediate crises and yet not be dominated by them? And how can you keep your organisation from reverting back to the short-term orientation of 'hard policing' which can create more problems in the long term?

The IALG task is thus to come up with ideas on shock-proofing policing organisations for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In light of this task, the assignments asks the IALG to consider the following dimensions:

- *Future Planning:* How do police organisations better plan for future shocks? Is this even possible? And while we can be sure that some threats (like terrorism and cybercrime) will be ongoing and continue to manifest, what about the unknown threats of the future? Can policing do to better prepare for what it cannot foresee?
- *Learning:* As all participants at Pearls in Policing attest, policing faces common problems globally. Many police organisations have faced similar challenges and have valuable experience in dealing with crises and shocks that other jurisdictions will face

in the future. So what are the best ways to share this experience? Can we improve the way in which the police learn from each other internationally?

- *Partnership*: Policing cannot be an island in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and must be able to learn and create solutions not just with other police organisations, but with the private and non-profit sector as well. What partnerships can help the police better to better achieve shock-resistance and future-proofing?
- *Innovation*: How do we develop a culture of innovation in police organisations that is as effective as the best from industry but adapted for the particularities of the police world? As a global law enforcement community why are we not more dynamic and 'leading-edge' in designing solutions of the future?

**Cybercrime:** In discussing the assignment for 2016-2017, nearly half of the Pearls in Policing participants were keen for cybercrime to have an especial focus. Indeed, one area in which the previously mentioned dimensions are particularly clear is cybercrime, and it provides a clear example of the problem. In the case of cybercrime, most would agree that policing is largely reactive, rather than proactive and preventative. Policing is often caught off-guard by new trends in cybercrime. Future planning is critical but the nature of future cyber-threats is hard to predict, so how do we plan for the cyber unknowns of the future? How do we acquire enough expertise without becoming experts ourselves? Learning is also critical, as many jurisdictions face similar challenges with cybercrime, but as yet there is still only piecemeal sharing of information and experience that come from dealing with those challenges. And finally, partnerships with the private sector are critical to deal with future cyber threats, so how do we lay those foundations now so that we are prepared for the future when those partnerships are most needed?

Although the IALG should not feel constrained to talk about shock-resistance solely in the context of cybersecurity, because of the importance of this subject to many Pearls participants, cybercrime should form a core aspect of the work of the IALG in this assignment and the application of the key concepts.

## **Format**

By tradition, the IALG assignment is always a complex one that tackles a wicked problem. The exercise is designed to encourage big-picture and future-orientated thinking. Making policing shock-resistant for the future is no exception. Considering the assignment then, the IALG is asked to present ideas, strategies, concrete approaches and practices that police leaders can themselves use in their own organisations, individually or collectively, to help reach that goal. However, the IALG outputs should be grounded in:

- **Thinking outside the square.** The IALG is encouraged to be bold and look for ideas and solutions outside the everyday. Unconventional, creative and future-orientated thinking is an essential part of this assignment.
- **Providing practical advice and tangible strategies or practices.** Although this assignment encourages the IALG to ‘think big’, the ultimate outputs should be clear and tangible. What can a police leader go home and immediately look into for their own organisation?
- **Finding what works.** Shock-resistance is something of interest across government and the private sector. How are other large organisations tackling the same problems that the police are now facing looking forward?