

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS REGARDING STRESS

2/20/73

January, 1971

Detroit Police Department creates STRESS program. One of the ingredients of the new program designed to reduce street crime is the use of the decoy method--one officer acts as a decoy, often disguised as a woman, a drunk, or some other common robbery victim, while two or three other police officers conceal themselves to protect the decoy and assist in the apprehension of the alleged criminal.

September 17, 1971

STRESS officers fatally shoot Ricardo Buck, age 15, and Craig Mitchell, age 16. The officer involved in the fatal shootings was Patrolman Richard Worobec, the officer seriously wounded in the confrontation with members of the Republic of New Africa at the New Bethel Baptist Church in March, 1969.

The shootings galvanize citizen protest against STRESS. As of these shootings, 10 citizens, nine black men and one white man, had been killed by STRESS officers.

September 23, 1971

Rally held in downtown Detroit to protest shootings of Buck and Mitchell, which drew about 5,000 participants.

October 2, 1971

Detroit Commission on Community Relations releases recommendations regarding the STRESS operation, calling for tighter control of the use of firearms, revision of selection procedures for STRESS officers, consideration of nonlethal weapons, and methods of fighting crime which focused on root causes of crime rather than acts of criminals alone.

December 13, 1971

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission releases the report of findings and recommendations following its fact-finding investigation into the STRESS operation. (See Attachment for Summary of Findings and Recommendations). One of the principal recommendations was to abandon the decoy method. As of this date, eleven (11) citizens had been killed by STRESS officers--ten (10) black men and one (1) white man. Ten of the eleven fatalities had occurred in conjunction with the decoy method. One black STRESS officer had also been killed.

March 9, 1972

STRESS officers raid an apartment where off-duty Wayne County Sheriff's deputies are playing cards. A shoot-out ensues in which one Wayne Co. Sheriff's deputy is fatally shot. Incident again galvanizes community opposition to STRESS.

March 17, 1972

Mayor Gribbs and Police Commissioner Nichols announce changes in STRESS operation, while fully supporting concept. (See Attachment.) However, decoy operations were suspended for all intents and purposes. Justin Ravitz, attorney representing a group suing for the abolition for STRESS, claims that decoy operations were not again utilized until November, 1972. Police officials deny that decoy method was abandoned.

March 26, 1972

Rally held at University of Detroit calling for end to STRESS.

April 6, 1972

Suit filed against Commissioner Nichols, Mayor Gribbs, and Wayne Co. Prosecutor Cahalan calling for abolition of STRESS.

December 4, 1972

Four STRESS officers wounded by three gunmen, later identified by police as Hayward Brown, John Boyd, and Mark Bethune. Police carry out intensive search.

December 27, 1972

Two STRESS officers, engaged in non-decoy operations, were fired upon. One officer was fatally shot and the other critically wounded. The wounded officer identified the gunmen as Brown, Boyd and Bethune. Police intensify search for the three, resulting in protests from the community about police abuse and harassment.

January 11, 1973

Detroit Common Council holds hearings on citizen allegations of police harassment and abuse. Hearing was held in Ford Auditorium because of the size of the crowd. Commissioner Nichols attempted to read statement, but was unable to complete it. Copy of statements is attached.

January 12, 1973

Hayward Brown is captured by Detroit Police. Boyd and Bethune, two other suspects in the police shootings, eluded an intensive search by the police.

January 24, 1973

A group called the United Black Coalition, issues a press release, calling for the abolition of STRESS, an end to police harassment, and a complete investigation of the police-community relations issue in Detroit. The same group later called for an FBI investigation of the Detroit Police Department. Copy of the press release is attached.

February 5, 1973 -  
February 17, 1973

Independent Black Commission forms and holds hearings throughout the community regarding citizen allegations of police harassment and abuse.

February 8, 1973

Detroit Common Council approves Resolution introduced by Councilwoman Erma Henderson calling for the creation of a nine-member Study Commission to assess the state of relations between the Detroit Police Department and the community, and to identify creative ways of providing for more meaningful involvement of citizens in the Detroit Police Department. Copies of the Resolution are attached.

February 11, 1973

Community rally held to protest STRESS and police harassment.

February 14, 1973

Police Commissioner Nichols reported to the Detroit Common Council members of citizen allegations of police harassment. He stated flatly that there had been no harassment of citizens by Detroit police officers.

February 15, 1973

Wayne Co. Circuit Judge Thomas J. Foley ruled that police searches in conjunction with their pursuit of Boyd and Bethune were illegal. In his opinion, he cited 56 instances in which the police entered homes without search warrants, inappropriately and illegally. He also continued the injunction against the Detroit Police Department regarding acts of harassment directed against the families of Brown, Boyd, and Bethune.

February 17, 1973

Joint meetings of United Black Coalition and group, headed by Bishop Emrich of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan (a group composed of predominantly white, liberal membership) held to explore ways in which the two groups could work cooperatively.

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As of the present date, the United Black Coalition reports that STRESS operations have been responsible for 15 citizen deaths (14 blacks and one white) and that nine police officers have been killed in police-citizen confrontations.

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2/20/73

Attachments (