

Two letter-writers with personal experience of victimization wrote:

"My husband is still suffering from the results of his encounter almost a year later. He has no sense of smell or taste and has had to have an operation. Fortunately, however, he is still alive."

"...I was attacked, very near the parking lot in Palmer Park, by a group of about eight to ten Negro boys, and was being beaten until rescued by an officer of the STRESS unit. There is no way for me to thank this officer for his very resourceful and efficient handling of the incident in a way which saved me from serious injury."

Finally, a black minister submitted to the Police Department the results of a poll he took of citizens in his area, including 704 adults and 440 teen-agers. Of 1,144 people, 818 or 71.5 percent supported STRESS and 326 opposed it.

Of the adults, 699 or 99.2 percent supported it, and five opposed it.

Of the teenagers, 119 were in support and 321, or 72.9 percent, were opposed.

AN EVALUATION

There is an old maxim in police work that the rapidity and "certainty" of apprehension, and a speedy and fair adjudication in a court of law, is the most effective deterrent to crime.

In spite of the best intentions in the world on the part of concerned citizens, judges, attorneys, police officers, law makers, and others of good conscience in the criminal justice system, the various statistics of law enforcement suggest that this concept of deterrence becomes less and less "certain" over the years.

This factor of the "certainty" of apprehension is the principal external deterrent to the criminal. This is how he measures his risk, the "odds" he faces when he gambles on a criminal career.

As mentioned before, this is why today's robbery opportunist picks on "easy marks"--the elderly, the infirmed, the vulnerable. They are not only less physically capable of resisting him, but they are more apt to fail to appear or to make confused and uncertain witnesses in a court case, so that even when apprehended and charged, he stands a good chance of avoiding conviction.

By utilizing police officer volunteers to stand in place of potential victims, the department has increased the degree of risk to the criminal, both as to apprehension and final conviction in court.

STRESS has, to some degree, increased the certainty of apprehension for the crime it is aimed against. This, combined with the public attention focused on the operation, should make many a potential robber more reluctant to take the crime-risk than he would be if there were no such operation.

The use of fatal force in some arrests is a tragic necessity which neither the department nor individual police officers take lightly. The Department's rules and guidelines could hardly be more explicit. Nevertheless, there is always the element of final discretion in a street situation.