

The work of new volunteers, in particular, is watched closely and evaluated by supervision. Critiques are held at daily rollcall. Briefings for a specific day's mission include the latest crime reports, updated daily by computer and plotted on patrol area maps as to location and time of occurrence.

OPERATIONS

The "decoy" phase of STRESS operations is conducted by plainclothes crews, some in unmarked police cars, and some in "civilian-type" vehicles--trucks, cabs, and cars of a model and body style not usually associated with police duty.

The crews may be two, three or four men, depending on the mission and availability of personnel. The most experienced officer is designated as the crew chief. The most popular operating periods are between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., and 8 p.m. to 4 a.m., although different work-spans may be assigned, depending on the nature of the particular crime problem being attacked.

Geographically, a crew will be assigned to a district covering two to four precincts. While the normal precinct scout cars are patrolling their scout car territories, the STRESS unmarked cars are checking the specific streets or neighborhoods showing a high current rate of street crimes.

Depending on street "activity"--observation of the number and kinds of individuals on the street in a neighborhood at a given time--the STRESS crew, at its own discretion, may decide to "drop off a target"--that is, place one of its members on foot in the street situation, in an appropriate disguise. Cover is provided by other members of the crew, on foot or in cars.

To make the operation effective, covering officers have to remain far enough away from the crew's "target" member to avoid exposure.

This heightens the element of risk, not only for the officer posing as a victim, but also for any teammates covering on foot. There have been instances in which the covering officer, also in disguise, has been accosted while the intended victim has been unmolested.

Depending on the time of day and the ethnic characteristics of the neighborhood, the race of the officer may give him away, so this is an important consideration in team composition. At times, even a black and white pair of officers might attract attention. In some predominantly black neighborhoods, even a black officer might be conspicuous in certain disguises at certain times.

Many STRESS arrests have resulted from criminal response to this kind of operation. However, far more apprehensions have resulted from the presence of officers on or near the scene of the crime, operating as surveillance units, unrecognized by the criminal. Occasionally, prospective attackers seemingly recognized something unusual about the disguised officers and avoided contact. In an instance or two, a disguised police officer has been surprised to receive a friendly warning from "street people" that the "man" was in the area.