

Body-Worn Camera Training and Technical Assistance Metropolitan Police Department

Dominique Burton: Welcome to part two of our podcast with the Metropolitan Police Department with Commander Ralph Ennis of the Technical Services Department, Derek Meeks who is director of the BWC program and technology innovation, and Anita Ravishshankar, PhD research fellow.

Todd Maxwell: Great, so just for background since we've been talking about this, can we give our listeners a background on the size of MPD, how many officers has the area patrolled and then just briefly an overview about how many other law enforcement agencies you interact with inside the district?

Ralph Ennis: Yes, MPD is – well we're authorized strength of 4,000. We currently have about 3,750 on the force. The population of the district that we served is about 670,000 that live here. I'd been told it goes upward of a couple of million everyday for the people who work in (inaudible) of the city. We have seven police district with your – you know within our 68 square miles that we have here.

What's unique about D.C. compared of other places is that because D.C. is a district we are the city, the state, the federal, we are all of those policing activities rolled up into one. We don't have state police who do traffic enforcement, we don't have sheriffs to handle our prisoners. So, the police department, ourselves, is the multi-faceted department that have to handle tasks that other departments might have a specialty agency that would handle for them.

The 35 other law enforcement agencies that work with us, (with) inside the district, they range in size and (inaudible) that merely police a building to agencies like the Capitol Police and United States Secret Service Uniformed Division and the Park Police which were – which were a very large agency. And let me correct myself, I think I gave the wrong size of D.C.. D.C. is actually 68 square miles.

And then, you know, we work closely with these federal because of the federal presence in D.C. and the fact that we have to protect the President or assisting in protecting the President. We have very good relationships with agency such as the Secret Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Agency and Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. I mean we're – we have a unique little relationship here in the district. So, we have our hands full in coordination but because we do it all the time we're pretty good at it. And we worked very well with our partners here.

(Crosstalk)

Derek Meeks: And for me ...

(Crosstalk)

Todd Maxwell: Sorry.

Derek Meeks: Sorry – sorry for interrupting, to me it's one of those things where it speaks to kind of the overall philosophy that Chief (inaudible) brought to the table and I think it's a department philosophy at large which is the kind of inclusiveness and considering the holistic perspective including all of the different law enforcement partners and the conversation and then the ongoing dialogue as the program continues to develop. So, same kind of things happened with community members, the special interest groups kind of across the board. It's truly a – how do we find the – a solution that makes as much sense to everybody as possible.

Ralph Ennis: Yes, and one thing I wanted to add because I kind of give overview of the city because D.C. is made the way it is, is that we have a local government. So, we have a mayor and a city council but we're also accountable to the Congress and to all the executive branch agencies in the city too. So, it's quite a labyrinth to navigate everyday to make sure that when we're trying to have an initiative, especially something of the magnitude of the body camera program that we do so, engaging all the stakeholders, so we don't – so we a little – as little as resistance as possible.

Todd Maxwell: Well, thank you for that and that's – it's only to give the listeners a background because of all the intricacies of the different (title) and the – and local law enforcement agency you have to worked with and the policy considerations around that in the effort that you guys have gone through to do that. So, I just wanted to commend on your efforts.

You mentioned the uniqueness of – of your department and that holds true for the prosecutorial and judicial side too. So, can you talk about that side and the collaboration there and what – how that affected policy formation also?

Ralph Ennis: Yes, so we have prosecutors – also, attorney generals responsible for prosecuting low-level adult offenses and for the sake of explaining my definition of low-level it is disorderly conduct-type arrest, traffic arrest for driving long, toxicated those types of arrest, so the attorney general prosecute those and then all juvenile cases that are not prosecuted as an adult. The attorney generals are local agency that is accountable to the mayor.

Then, for all of our adult cases and the serious cases, anything from a shoplifting up to a homicide, they're prosecuted by the United States attorney's office and the United States attorney's office is accountable to the president and to the attorney general of the United States. So, you can see just from that, we have people, you know, where they're coming from when they're making decisions of policy cases and even the infrastructure they have within the offices exactly different depending on where you're sitting.

So, one of the things we did when we were in the planning process for BWCs, we coordinated with the prosecutors. Just one of the very first things we did, we ensured that we included them prior to finalizing our policy as well because we wanted to make that we weren't infringing upon their ability to prosecute cases from any aspect of our program. So, we have meetings with them and as a result of the meetings, we were able to consider their concerns and they have some and as we progress with our program and implementation we changed things.

So, there are certain small policies we change to make sure that videos that were more easily available to them. So – so, we really did consider their feedback. Basically, the major considerations which I will talk about a little bit later I think, but the considerations of recording policies, when you're doing do not record how long you keep the video, your retention and then the private concerns were all coordinated with input from the prosecutors because all of those issues directly affect them being able to prosecute their case to the entire judicial process.

The other thing you have to consider – this is a big deal especially when you're in a small accounting or, you know, a more complex areas where you have elected spaces or even things like that but you have to consider the ability of the prosecutor to be able to get the video that they need. So, we ensure they had easy access to the video and that we help them train the prosecutors on accessing the video. So, we ended up going up with a vendor solution which was a Cloud based solution which allow the U.S. attorney and the office of attorney general direct access into the system themselves.

And we made the determination early on that we weren't going to be the controller of the video in other words that we were going to allow them to have open and unfettered access into our system the full video whenever they need it. That's also something I understand being debated around the country as, you know, agencies are deciding implemented program or not, but we're proud of our department. We're proud of, you know, our officers work so we figure that there was no problem for them having open-access and (they may like this or not) because then we weren't have to transport video back-and-forth, so we're having somebody dedicated to sharing video with them.

So, you know, the system allows them immediate access, we don't have to rely on PVDs anymore and so far we received pretty good positive feedback from the prosecutors and like I said we use our lessons learned to make changes as we needed to. One thing I do want to point out though is that I mean I don't think we have two days to maintain these discussions, so we can't go too deep into it though is that body-camera video changes the dynamics of prosecutions.

And, you know, certain things that before we're having to be explained through word of mouth to understand now or in front of you on the video and so they have to look at how they were actually approaching their prosecutions and, you know, through their different motions hearing things like that so it gave them a whole new list of issues that they had to address when they were, you know, taking the cases to court or even deciding whether they were going to take a case to court or not.

Todd Maxwell: OK.

Derek Meeks: Another aspect of engaging with them – the prosecutors, and especially something that's true internally as well the pure volume of information is extraordinary. And so that's – that's been something that while we anticipated, I think while we all anticipated, the magnitude I think was even more special if you will. And it's something that we're looking forward to finding, you know, increasing technology ways to cope with that but we're still on a position where it is a – it is a challenge just to the overall volume.

Ralph Ennis: Yes, I mean they have a lot of considerations. I'll just leave it at this but, you know, when you – when you're – when you're thinking about, you know, jinks and braiding material and things like that, you know, when you have 20 videos from one crime scene at least the prosecutors in a precarious situation to be – to have someone to be able to review that to make sure that they're disclosing everything that needed to be disclosed and there are hearings in court.

Derek Meeks: And this is a slightly light-hardened moment talking with some of the prosecutors, my understanding of the popcorn sales have gone up dramatically because of the volume of the video that they have to watch...

(Off-Mike)

Todd Maxwell: Right, yes working with PGA and our BWC (ticket) provider some of the biggest questions we get are around one storage and then analytics and

reduction, ways to speed that up and then on the policy side on whether (or not it) has the right to review a video before making a statement especially in (used) cases, the use of forced cases and then frequent information and releasing videos have been the two big policy ones that have come up over and over. I'm sure you guys have seen across the nation and so those are the topics we're working and so I appreciate addressing some of those in your mark so far.

Ralph Ennis: Yes.

Todd Maxwell: I know I need...

(Crosstalk)

Todd Maxwell: Yes, go ahead.

Ralph Ennis: I was just going to say is that the reality is that those – the answers to those questions very so widely depending on where you are in the country, what the climate is in the country politically and those types of things. But at the end of the day, the biggest – in my opinion, the biggest hurdle for body-camera program is making sure that you're protecting people's right – right to privacy and that that you're not because it's a very first police (entering) people's (house) with cameras on in their personal space.

So, before you decide that you're going to go have a program or you're going to roll out a program, you need to think through all of those issues and make sure that you're not putting yourself, your city, your department in a position to not have the adequate protections in place and then the enforce that turn things over that ultimately should not be.

Derek Meeks: Well, that – along those lines, that's another point (applied) for me personally with regard to the (urban). I believe we're one of the first large departments who actually have the dedicated privacy officer and her responsibility is to understand – understand those kinds of concerns and make sure that we have a

very clear balance between achieving the voice mentioned versus balancing individual privacy's rights.

Todd Maxwell: Those are both great points and I think that's exactly why BJ encourages agencies to do collaboration with law enforcement and the community partners and the prosecutors that come to a decision that works best for their community around these topics. I want to move on because I know we have Anita on here. We haven't heard from her yet and so could you guys all tell us about your – you mentioned research earlier that have been conducted so far so can you talk about that and then the current state of the researches going on and what you hope (doing)?

Anita Ravishankar: Yes, absolutely. So, I'll just talk a little bit about can a research partnership came to be and then talk a little bit about how we integrated the study kind of directly into the deployment process and what exactly we're looking at. So, NDD is partnered with the lab at D.C. which is a new scientific team that has right within the city government and the office of the city of the administrator.

And it's actually the first city level initiative working to really integrate kind of the scientific method into day-to-day in governance across all policy areas, so the lab has about 10 or 15 experts in social behavioral and data sciences and also a network of universities and research centers that kind of places incredible research resource for our district government and the public. So, the lab – basically, the goal here is to provide timely, relevant, and scientifically rigorous evidence to inform the district's most kind of important debates and decision-making processes and of course body-worn cameras is right up there on that list.

And so we work with the lab to apply for some vent funding to higher an in-house research fellow, (Mr. Houdini) and we also have a fellow research partners at Yale, Columbia, the University of Arizona Law School that have all helped kind of design the study and will also support the analysis of the results. So, as commander and as mentioned earlier, we integrated this research piece right outside of the program and so we are actually running a

randomized controlled trial and we integrated the randomization right into the deployment process. And doing this and kind of timing it out this way kept our marginal cost of conducting a study relatively low, and I think our study is actually one of the bigger ones in the country. We have about 2,200 officers participating, about 50 percent in the treatment group with the cameras and 50 percent in control group without cameras of course.

And in terms of the kind of question we're looking at, use of force and civilian complaints are of course right up there. And with use of force, I think one thing that's a little bit unique to our study is we disaggregate between looking at just all uses of force as well as kind of a serious uses of force, which are defined in our policy. And one of the reasons for this is we think, you know, the cameras might help -- with the cameras we may see a decline serious uses of force but we might actually see an uptick in the more minor uses of force as officers might be more inclined to just report them because the camera has now captured that interaction.

So, that's one of the kind of unique things about our use of force research. Civilian complaint is another piece and then we're also looking at outcome on policing activity so, how does the camera affect officer discretion around arrests like disorderly conduct, simple assault, traffic. We're also looking at the effect of the cameras on officer discretion in domestic violence cases. D.C. of course has a mandatory arrest policy around domestic violence. So we want to see if the cameras are affecting officer behavior along those lines.

And then I finally we are taking a preliminary look at the evidentiary value of the cameras and judicial outcomes. So, our prosecutor are prosecuting more of those cases and then if they are, what's going on there? We see more cases go to trial, more guilty verdicts, more pleas, things along those lines. So we have our cameras are in the field right now. Our studies wrapping up in December and once our data comes in, the research team is going to be excited to dive into that and take a look at what the cameras have meant for the District of Columbia.

Male: So we're proud of our study here because of the fact that I'm told it's very robust because of the method we used to conduct it. Anita, can you explain the difference between this and some of the other studies that have been done.

Anita Ravishankar: Yes. So some of the other work today as believed has going to take a before and after approach or where they look at kind of statistics ready for a complaint, et cetera, before cameras are deployed and then compare those numbers to the same categories after the cameras are deployed. And one thing that of physical to run that is obviously other things change over time that can affect those same things, use of force, civilian complaint, et cetera, or big national events, things along those lines.

Whereas with our kind of randomized control trial approach because we're randomly assigning folks to the camera or to where cameras are not the two groups are effectively exactly the same but for the camera and because we're also evaluating them over the same kind of period of time, both groups are subject to the same external factors whatever they may be. Changes in NPC policy, other national events et cetera. And so we're really able to phone in on the effect of a camera as the cardinal effect for any changes we see in use of force or complaints or what have you.

Dominique Burton; This concludes part two of our podcast with the Metropolitan Police Department.