

# Research paper on police role and functions

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## **Police Role and Functions**

Nowadays, it is common to see drama and crime series on television featuring the function, roles and responsibilities of policemen each time a crime is reported. From responding to 911 calls to man-hunt operations and to cross-examination of evidences, these television series depict that policemen are the ones in charge in sustaining peace and order in the area. However, in some cases, policemen are seen as the ones disrupting peace as some would succumb to corruption by allowing law breakers and criminals break free from the police and even join the crimes themselves. While these incidents of crimes within the police force occur, many still believe that the police can continue to fulfill their roles as peacekeepers and disciplinarians in society. In the United States, the police force varies for both local, state and federal level to function in various instances to ensure that the citizens are protected and at the same time, crimes are prevented and solved to maintain peace.

According to Worrall and Schmallegger (2011), law enforcement agencies in the United States is tasked to maintain the public's safety by resolving and preventing crimes to be committed in American society. The police force, in their end, is charged with two important roles: crime fighting and order maintenance. Both Worrall and Schmallegger and Dempsey and Forst (2011) emphasized that the police functions as the main line of defense of society in case a crime occurs: the crime fighters. Dempsey and Forst stated that the US police force, throughout the years, had overemphasized their roles as crime fighters rather than also being peace keepers because today's society recognizes a police officer's work when they are involved in solving crimes.

However, they stated that statistics show that US policemen had taken their job as crimefighters with almost 13.7 million arrests, both for serious crimes and petty crimes. In addition, police officers make their arrests as peaceful as possible to ensure that safety is still sustained. Steverson (2008) then adds that the police also is in charge in investigating the causes and evidences that lead to criminal activity. Investigators, dressed in either uniform or casual clothing, respond to the crime and determines the cause of the crime and review the evidences to pinpoint a subject of interest or the suspected criminal. In terms of order maintenance, policemen are in charge in enforcing the law effectively to ensure that the public is aware of the consequences of breaking the law. Schmalleger and Worrall also adds that the police also provide other services to citizens in need of help like giving directions, providing medical aid, and victim recovery efforts after a crime occurs. They may also provide seminars to volunteers and new police officers should they wish to aid in peacekeeping . Policemen are also tasked to handle patrols or patrol work to ensure peace and order. Steverson (2008) stated that almost 60-70% of a police officer's duty is dedicated into ensuring that patrols are done regularly to ensure peace and can be considered the most important duty of a police. In the current context, patrols are crucial measures utilized by the police to foresee possible criminal activity within the area and to 'stand guard' to respond to any emergency that occurs. Patrol officers also sustain the police organization as they handle administrative duties to ensure that officers respond to 911 calls and citizens in need of help . Upon the aftermath of 9/11, policemen were seen as the frontline defense of the country against terrorist attacks. The

various departments of the police force in all levels had also mobilized their own anti-terrorist forces to ensure to the public that they can deter any attack from attackers .

Police forces throughout the globe, especially in the US, are divided into various types to cover specific roles and functions in the local, state, and federal level. According to Stevens ( ) the country currently has 17, 876 police departments under the state level with 12, 766 local departments, 49 state police agencies and 17 federal law enforcement agencies. Under the local level, policemen are tasked to provide regular monitoring and patrol within their jurisdictions, maintain peace, provide basic services and emergency functions, and enforce the law in their region. Local policemen are classified into four types to handle specified police work. Municipal police are those who provide regular police services within cities and towns. It is often that it is the municipal police departments that experiences a high turnout of serious crimes than other jurisdictions as they handle at least 3 million or more citizens in their reach, like New York, Los Angeles, and Memphis. County police or the sheriffs, on the other hand, are often elected officials that are accountable to the voters and not to government officials. Sheriff's offices are seen as the " chief law enforcement office" in most US counties like in Rhode Island, Colorado, and in Dade County, Florida as they do not have a specified police agency. In some areas, policemen are known as constables that can either be full law enforcement officers or a vital representative of the court they serve. Finally, the county coroner confirms the death of an individual under its jurisdiction and may call for investigations to identify the cause of death. Death records are often kept by

the coroner's office and are tasked to handle post mortem examinations should the police need further explanation over one's cause of death.

In the state level, policemen handle four major responsibilities: maintenance of the state's crime lab, perform delicate investigations for the local level for crimes such as homicide and murder, provide statewide services for victims and for the police like stress debriefing and SWAT, and finally, training of specialized troops. State police are under the state government with the exception of Hawaii. State police also handle duties such as highway/airport patrol, and emergency assistance like first aid and firefighting. It is also notable that state police also have their own identification and investigation bureaus that organizes the statewide records on crimes and cases. In some areas like in Massachusetts, they have state trooper units to serve as both patrol divisions and parole officers for the Department of Corrections. Some state troopers also are tasked to maintain the sex offender registry and disposes chemicals and machinery used for drug creation. There are also capital police under the state level tasked to preserve order and prevent crimes from state capital complex and its agencies. Tribal police are also prominent in the state level to handle issues for Native American tribes, mostly in the Indian counties, whether it may be for public safety maintenance or law enforcement. Finally, federal law enforcement agencies are assigned to handle more specialized crimes that affects national security like terrorism, cybercrimes, corruption and organized crimes. After 9/11, federal law enforcement agencies are handled by the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that enforcers can stop terrorists, criminals and other illegal substances or components from entering the country's borders.

The FBI and the CIA handles major criminal investigations and intelligence analysis to further secure national security. Federal law enforcement agencies cooperate with different taskforces in all levels to prosecute criminals within US territory .

Today, the police force is still considered a vital part of law enforcement throughout the US as they serve as the first line of defense in any given emergency. After 9/11, the US had restructured its federal, state, and local law enforcement bureaus to adapt into any given situation to assure the safety of the public wherever they are in the country. Not only did it reassert the mission of the police force and the entire law enforcement agency of the US, it had also organized as to how the police force would handle crimes and possible threats that can cause chaos in the region. While the adaptations on dramas can be inaccurate in terms on how a citizen should see the police, the police should be respected as a vital actor in maintain peace and order within the society.

## **References**

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