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CRIME STATISTICS PERFORMANCE AUDIT

JUNE 2014

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To: Audit Services Oversight Committee
From: Germaine Brewington, Director
Audit Services Department
Date: **June 9, 2014**
Re: Durham Police Department Crime Statistics
Performance Audit

The Department of Audit Services completed the report on the DPD Crime Statistics Performance Audit dated June, 2014. The purpose of the audit was to determine the review of the crime reporting process and determine if quality control processes are sufficient to ensure accuracy of crime statistics reported by the Police Department.

This report presents the observations, results, and recommendations of the DPD Crime Statistics Performance Audit dated June, 2014. City management concur with the recommendations made. Management's response to the recommendations is included with the attached report.

The Department of Audit Services appreciates the contribution of time and other resources from employees of the Durham Police Department in the completion of this audit.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Crime statistics are used in various ways by different groups. From a broad societal overview, crime statistics provide a comparative benchmark for any criminal justice system. Operationally, crime statistics provide concrete data to support the allocation of resources. Politically crime statistics validate the qualitative and quantitative merits of policies; an activity that would be difficult without accurate crime statistics. While crime statistics provide insight into how to manage and monitor local crime prevention, the statistics by themselves cannot be utilized in a vacuum; nor can they be used as the only tool against crime prevention (ISS, 2010).

The Police Department uses a Records Management System (RMS) to collect data on crime statistics. A RMS provides for the storage, retrieval, retention, archiving, and viewing of information, records, documents, or files pertaining to law enforcement operations. A record is created for each incident reported in the RMS. Each incident is assigned a classification code based on the type of crime incident the event is determined to be.

Crime statistics are reported by the Police Department to Durham residents, City Council members, and Police department management. Additionally, crime statistics are also reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) through the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program. The UCR program is a voluntary City, university and college, county, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement program that provides a nationwide view of crime based on the submission of statistics by law enforcement agencies throughout the country. To best depict total crime and to provide the most meaningful data to police administrators, the UCR Program collects data on known offenses and persons arrested by law enforcement agencies. The FBI strongly discourages data users against using rankings as a benchmarking tool to evaluate the effectiveness of their law enforcement agencies.

ISS. (2010). Why are crime statistics important? *The UK's Independent Review of Official Crime Statistics 2009*. Retrieved May 19, 2014 from: <http://www.issafrika.org/crimehub/topics/crime-statistics/why-are-crime-statistics-important>

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The process for reporting incidents that undergird crime statistics analyses is as follows:

- Incidents can be reported to the Police Department by residents placing a 911 call, officers on duty viewing an incident or residents reporting an incident in person.
- The officer verifies the incident and a report is completed electronically. Part of the report taking process is the classification of the crime or crimes reported, which is performed initially by the officer preparing the incident report. The police officer selects the type of crime/classification code based on the drop down list provided in the RMS system database. The type of crime selected has an identifier code. Crime statistics are grouped based on the type of classification code selected.
- An officer can go to the scene to investigate the incident and determine that the incident is unfounded at the scene; at that point it is considered unfounded and an incident report is not generated.
- A crime can be unfounded based on further investigation at a later point in time. In that case, the unfounded account will be captured in the reporting period in which it was unfounded and not in the period in which the original incident report was completed.
- Once a report is filed, it is submitted electronically to a police supervisor for review. The supervisor may either approve or disapprove with comments. The officer is notified of comments and the officer will resubmit the corrected report to the supervisor for approval once the changes are made.
- After the supervisor approves the report it becomes part of the RMS system database. After this point, if the officer needs to make changes, s (he) has to submit a supplemental form describing the changes that need to be made.
- Once in RMS, the incident reports pertaining to Part I crime incident reports are reviewed by the Crime Analysis Division personnel for accuracy and completeness of information. They also ensure that Part I crimes are classified accurately.

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- Part II crimes are reviewed by the Records Management Division personnel for accuracy and completeness of information. They also ensure that the incident was classified properly based on the definitions of the UCR regulations.
- The final decision authority in case of disagreement on classification of crime resides with the Analytical Services Manager. The Analytical Services Manager will consult with State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) personnel if further clarification is needed regarding classification guidelines.
- The system is also used to track crime clearance rates. If an arrest is made by the officer at the time of investigating the reported crime, the officer clears the crime in the RMS system database.
- If an arrest is made at a later point in time, the officer cannot enter that arrest into the system. The officer has to request that the arrest be cleared. The Records Management Division Supervisor has to process the clearance. The clearance is tied directly to the incident report in the system.

In order to have accurate crime statistics data it is extremely important that the incident is classified appropriately. The Police Department uses the UCR guidelines provided by the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) and FBI guidelines to classify and count crime.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

The purpose of the audit was to review the crime reporting process and determine if quality control processes are sufficient to ensure accuracy of crime statistics reported by the Police Department.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient and appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Results in Brief

Overall, adequate controls exist over the crime reporting process. Incident reports are reviewed at various levels to ensure accuracy and completeness of data reported. Multiple levels of review in the department help promote more uniform subjective decisions and mitigate risk of human error and to a lesser extent manipulation. The review by more experienced supervisors, Crime Analysis Staff, and Records Management personnel provides opportunities for discussion, correction, and ultimately more accurate classifications. In addition, adequate authorization controls exist over the access to the RMS system.

Opportunities to enhance controls were identified in the following areas:

- Monitoring of deletions and changes to data through audit trail logs; and
- Monitoring incident reports that are not reviewed (because they purge from the queue) as required by standard operating procedures.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The Objectives of the audit were to:

- To determine if quality control processes are sufficient to ensure accuracy of crime statistics reported by the Police Department; and
- To review the crime reporting process.

Scope

The audit reviewed all current practices at the Police Department as they pertain to the reporting of crime and crime statistics.

Methodology

To accomplish the objectives of the audit, staff performed the following steps:

1. Interviewed Police Department personnel involved in the crime reporting process;
2. Obtained and reviewed the RMS audit trail report that showed all changes and deletions to the information contained in the system for the period of January 2013 to June 2013;
3. Analyzed the RMS audit trail report to understand how often changes were made to the classification codes;
4. Selected a sample of deletions/changes and investigated the causes for deletions/changes by reviewing the supplemental change form;
5. Compared the RMS classification data to the FBI reports for crime statistics relating to Part I data. Analyzed any discrepancies in the data;
6. Compared the FBI data to the 2012 Durham Police Department Annual Report pertaining to Part I data;
7. Obtained and reviewed a report that showed all incident reports for the period of Jan 2013 to June 2013;

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

8. Chose a sample of Part I and Part II Incident reports and performed the following:
 - a. Reviewed the incident reports and determined that the classification codes were accurately assessed.
 - b. Verified that the proper employees were approving/reviewing the incident reports;
9. Conducted data reliability tests:
 - a. Ensured that the incident reports were in numerical order;
 - b. Selected a sample of missing incident numbers in the data provided and verified the reasons;
10. Reviewed the crime reporting process to discern internal control weaknesses;
11. Reviewed the training for crime reporting and assessed the adequacy of the training provided; and
12. Inquired with Internal Affairs on investigations pertaining to falsification of crime statistics.

During the audit, staff also maintained awareness to the potential existence of fraud.

Adequate controls exist over the crime reporting process. Opportunity to enhance controls were identified by the audit staff.

Incident reports are reviewed at various levels to ensure accuracy and completeness of data reported. Multiple levels of review in the Department helps: promote more uniformity in subjective decisions; and mitigate risk of human error. These levels of review, to a lesser extent help to preclude manipulation of the data. The review by more experienced supervisors, Crime Analysis Staff, and Records Management personnel — provides opportunities for discussion, correction, and ultimately more accurate classifications. Audit staff selected a sample of 75 Part II incident reports. Approximately 93% of all Part II crimes were reviewed by the Records Division personnel and 100% were reviewed by a supervisor. Audit staff selected a sample of 48 incident reports relating to Part I crimes and 100% of these were reviewed by the Crime Analyst Division personnel as well as a supervisor. In addition, audit staff verified the classification of crimes for 123 incident reports. No exceptions were noted.

Opportunity for enhancing controls was identified in the following areas:

Finding 1:

Currently a procedure does not exist to monitor incident reports that are not reviewed. Audit staff requested a report that would show whether or not a review was performed in the RMS system by the Crimes Specialist Unit for Part I crimes and by the Records Management personnel for Part II crimes. Upon analyzing all incident reports for the period of January 2013 to June 2013, it was noted that approximately 8% of the Part II crimes reported were not reviewed by Records Management Division personnel, per RMS data. According to the Analytical Services Manager, some cases pertaining to Fraud/Forgery and Drugs can take investigators a long time to establish and because of this, the incident report falls out of the queue that Records employees review (usually 1-3 days, although it can be up to seven days). There is no reminder or follow-up process for the disposition of

AUDIT RESULTS

incidents that fall out of the queue, so it can be easy to forget to go back to review an old incident. The report analyzed did not have information on whether all incidents reported for the period of January 2013 to June 2013 were reviewed by a supervisor. The reviews by more experienced Records Management personnel provide reinforcement of correct and accurate classification of incidents. For incident reports that are not reviewed, the possibility of inaccurate or incomplete data exists. Monitoring incident reports that are not reviewed specifically by Records Management personnel will ensure that the control is working as designed.

Finding 2:

Currently deletions/changes are not being monitored. The Police Department does not have a process in place to periodically obtain and review audit trail logs that capture the deletions /changes. Audit staff verified that appropriate personnel have the authority to delete or change records. No exceptions were noted. Audit staff obtained the deletions/changes reports for the period of January 2013 to June 2013 and analyzed the data; tying 27 deletions to supporting documents. A few exceptions were noted where records should not have been deleted however the crime statistics reported were not impacted as a result of these deletions. Audit staff examined 20 changes and verified the supporting documentation to determine if the change was reasonable and no exceptions were noted.

Best practice suggests that monitoring deletions/changes on a regular basis would help flag issues of improper changes to data. Not monitoring the deletions/changes could lead to inappropriate deletion/changes of information. Reports should be reviewed to identify anomalies that might reveal inappropriate deletions/changes to data.

Adequate authorization controls exist over the access to the RMS system.

The Police Department uses the RMS to collect data. Implementing adequate user access controls in an organization can help ensure that users have access to the right data. Access control involves three processes: authentication, authorization and audit. The focus of this audit was on the authorization controls as it related specifically to the RMS system. Audit staff examined authorization controls over the system to ensure that access is assigned on a need only basis.

The authorization process restricts access of authenticated users to specific portions of the system and limits what actions they are permitted to perform. The system has adequate authorization controls in place. All changes and deletions are tracked via an audit trail log generated by the system. According to the Analytical Services Manager, changes/deletions occur in the RMS database in the normal and legitimate course of doing business.

Conclusion

Overall, adequate controls exist over the crime reporting process. Opportunities to enhance controls were identified by the audit staff. Incident reports are reviewed at various levels to ensure accuracy and completeness of data reported. Multiple levels of review in the department help promote more uniform subjective decisions and mitigate risk of human error. The review by more experienced supervisors, Crime Analysis staff, and Records Management personnel provides opportunities for discussion, correction, and ultimately more accurate classifications. In addition, adequate authorization controls exist over access to the RMS system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

The Police Department personnel should periodically review/analyze RMS audit trail reports and, on a sample basis conduct an in-depth review to ensure that data deletions/changes were necessary.

Recommendation 2

The Records Management and Crime Analyst Divisions should periodically monitor the cases not reviewed and take appropriate action based on the results.

MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE

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Memo to: Germaine F. Brewington, Director of Audit Services
From: Jose L. Lopez, Sr., Chief of Police
Date: May 29, 2014
Subject: Management's Response
Crime Statistics Performance Audit (June, 2014)

The following is the management's response to the Crime Statistics Performance Audit (June, 2014). In addition to the content contained in the audit report, the agency is proud of its selection as a model agency by Sean Bair, President of crime analysis software vendor Bair Analytics. As a model agency, the Durham Police Department's data is used in testing, training and sales demonstrations due to the overall quality, accuracy and completeness of the information captured in its RMS system.

Recommendation 1

The Police Department personnel should periodically review/analyze RMS audit trail reports and, on a sample basis conduct an in-depth review to ensure that data deletions/changes were necessary.

Management's Response:

We concur. Management is in full agreement with the recommendation. On a quarterly basis, the Crime Analysis Supervisor and Records Supervisors of the Data Analysis and Records Support Units will conduct a representative sample of the changes/deletions performed by personnel under their command to ensure such actions were necessary. This will be accomplished via a Crystal Report that has already been designed for this purpose during the audit process. In addition, an 'RMS Record Deletion Log' has been developed for Records and Crime Analysis staff to document any records deleted during the course of performing their duties. This can also be used by supervisors to perform spot checks on such activities.



Crime Statistics
Performance Audit
June 2014

Analytical Services Manager Jason Schiess will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the progress of this recommendation.

Implementation Date: July, 2014

Recommendation 2

The Records Management and Crime Analyst Divisions should periodically monitor the cases not reviewed and take appropriate action based on the results.

Management's Response:

We concur. Management is in full agreement with the recommendation. The Records Supervisor of the Data Analysis Unit, who submits monthly crime reports for the police department to the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI), will add this step to the crime data pre-submission checklist. Any cases for the period that have not been reviewed will be assigned to staff for completion.

Analytical Services Manager Jason Schiess will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the progress of this recommendation.

Implementation Date: July, 2014

