

## **2010 Vehicle Theft Award of Merit**

### **Agency (76-250 Officers) Recognition: Bellevue, Washington, Police Department, of which Linda Pillo is the Chief of Police**

The Bellevue Police Department, with its 182 officers and 99 civilians, is responsible for law enforcement in Washington's fifth largest city. It utilizes a combination of educational and enforcement efforts to attack vehicle thefts on a regional basis.

Among the Department's educational efforts are its providing Community Station Officers, through the Vehicle Crimes Reduction Project, with a structured response dealing with businesses or neighborhoods experiencing vehicle theft issues; its including in its 10-week Citizens' Police Academy an "auto theft" segment in which the problem is defined and tips are offered; and its assisting in the organization of the Washington Auto Theft Prevention Authority's first Auto Theft Conference.

The Department's regional enforcement approach uses:

- crime analysis, coupled with the involvement of the Auto Theft Tactical Analysis Center of King County (ATTACK);
- the Special Enforcement Team and auto theft detectives focusing on the recognition of problems, on the identification of vehicle-theft suspects, and on the development of quality cases against them;
- the deployment of covert surveillance equipment, license plate readers, and GPS tracking devices;
- an expanded bicycle patrol unit; and,
- latent-print processing of recovered stolen vehicles by patrol officers and the prompt in-house analysis of fingerprint evidence by Bellevue's automated fingerprint identification system (AFIS).

The Bellevue Police Department reduced auto thefts 34.7 percent in 2009 over 2008 (from 274 in 2008 to 179 in 2009) and effected 103 arrests in 2008 and another 58 in 2009.

### **Agency (251-1,000 Officers) Recognition: Norfolk, Virginia, Police Department, of which Bruce P. Marquis is the Chief of Police**

The Norfolk Police Department focused on a three-mile area surrounding the Norfolk International Airport from which 112 rental vehicles had been stolen in 2008. The Police Department determined that the primary cause of these thefts was the lack of any rental business staff between 12:00 A.M. and 6:00 A.M., so keys were left in the ignitions of vehicles returned during those hours. It recommended to the rental companies (1) the hiring of a security guard during the six hours in questions, (2) the installation of permanent lock boxes into which those returning rental vehicles could deposit the vehicles' keys, (3) improved lighting and visibility, and (4) the posting of "no trespassing" signs that Norfolk police officers were authorized to enforce.

Working with other law enforcement agencies, the Norfolk Police Department also has provided vehicle-theft training, which has included actually inspecting shipping containers and VIN-etching vehicles.

The Norfolk Police Department, in collaboration with the airport rental businesses, reduced vehicle thefts 53 percent, from 112 vehicles stolen in 2008 to 53 in 2009. Additionally, its recovery rate was 81 percent in 2008 and 75 percent in 2009.

**Agency (1,001+ Officers) Recognition: Winnipeg, Canada, Police Service, of which Keith McCaskill is the Chief of Police**

The Winnipeg Police Service is responsible for law enforcement in Canada's eighth largest city. Between 2003 and 2008, Winnipeg held the dubious honor of having the highest rate of motor vehicle theft in North America. Its motor vehicle theft rate was four times Canada's average between 2004 and 2006, and one in five Criminal Code offenses in 2006 was vehicle theft.

Extensive research indicated that virtually all vehicles had been stolen by young people for joyriding or temporary transportation. The Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy (WATSS) was implemented. It based intervention upon risk, e.g., Level One provided public education by parents and teachers with support from school resource officers and youth services agencies, while Level Five required daily in-person contact, as well as telephone contact at three-hour intervals, with a probation officer; curfew; intensive programming with families and schools; zero tolerance for noncompliance; and prosecutorial advocacy for custody.

In addition to intensive supervision, electronic immobilizers were voluntarily installed on high-risk vehicles, and the social causes of vehicle theft were attacked primarily by youth probation officers and community partners, such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

The results of the original WATSS were positive, but they could not be sustained. The issues were studied in greater depth, and WATSS was modified. Initially, additional officers were detailed to target high-risk offenders around the clock, since analysis had revealed that when the top 50 offenders were not confined, the average number of vehicles stolen daily increased exponentially. Furthermore, electronic immobilizers were mandated on the 100,000 vehicles most at risk of theft. Finally, the assignment to platoons of officers with specialized vehicle-theft training to work with the Stolen Auto Unit was crucial to the success of this effort, as was increased communication between police and probation services.

Arrests for probation violations increased from 180 in 2005, to 191 in 2006, and to 339 in 2009. Vehicle thefts decreased 29 percent in 2007, 42 percent in 2008, and 34 percent in 2009. Other crimes have not increased during this time period.

**Multi-Agency Task Force Recognition: Baltimore, Maryland, Regional Auto Theft Team (RATT), of which Lieutenant Matthew Gorman is the Commanding Officer**

The Baltimore Regional Auto Theft Team (RATT) had its inception in 1995; now is comprised of the Baltimore County Police Department, the Maryland State Police, and the Baltimore City Police Department; and has seen auto thefts decrease 64 percent between 1994 and 2009, owing to its 14,004 arrests and 12,356 recoveries.

RATT employs multiple strategies to combat the ever-changing vehicle theft problem:

- RATT conducts courses of instruction to ensure officers remain competent in this realm and receive the most up-to-date information available: two-day “Street Investigation of Vehicle Theft” (six times each year), five-day “Basic Vehicle Investigator Course” (once a year), and five-day “Advanced Auto Theft Investigator Course” (once a year).
- RATT shares its expertise with other agencies, e.g.,
  - assisting the Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, Police Department with its Memorial Week Bike Rally;
  - providing in Norfolk, Virginia, its “Basic Vehicle Investigator Course,” which included VIN-etching;
  - producing a six-minute roll-call video and pocket reference card to train officers to document victims’ responses to seven questions relative to identifying insurance fraud;
  - participating in “expert conferences” sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice and the National White Collar Crime Center to explain the National Vehicle Title Information System (NMVTIS); and,
  - organizing regional meetings to exchange information and to update training.
- RATT implemented an automated license plate recognition (ALPR) program, which has been enhanced to allow officers to search the database for leads and the database of which has been integrated into a statewide database within the Maryland Fusion Center.
- RATT provides four levels of crime analysis (suspect-centered, incident-centered, trend and content, and fusion center) and networks with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

Additionally, RATT has produced crime prevention videos, offered expert testimony during government rule-making, proposed state legislation dealing with vehicle theft, and monitored the VINS of vehicles purchased by scrap dealers. Finally, its investigators conduct roving patrols, employing ALPR devices, laptop computers linked to multiple databases, LoJack, and aviation, and also concentrate on truck and cargo thefts, construction equipment, and motorcycles.

**Individual Recognition: Investigator David M. Monticelli, of the Henrico County Division of Police**

Investigator David M. Monticelli is the sole investigator assigned to the Auto Theft Unit of the Henrico County, Virginia, Division of Police. Of the almost 800 vehicles stolen and recovered in Henrico County in 2009, he cleared 122 of them, had 36 reclassified

as “unfounded,” and closed 18 by arrest. His investigative efforts have led to the solution of other crimes, as well as to the discovery of insurance frauds. Additionally, Investigator Monticelli has promoted the H.E.A.T. [Help End Auto Theft] program throughout Henrico County and made presentations to citizen groups and during the police academy’s entrance-level course.