

Interview

After more than 40 years as a law enforcement professional, **Charles Reynolds** continues to augment his impressive range of experience. Most recently, Mr. Reynolds has added international experience to his years of U.S.-based policing work. He has participated in major police reform endeavors in Belize and Northern Ireland. Mr. Reynolds' stateside experience includes 26 years as the police chief of a number of New England jurisdictions. In addition, he was one of the first court-appointed monitors to oversee a consent decree between the U.S. Department of Justice and a local police agency. He has served as a consultant for municipalities in 17 states. The following interview is divided into three parts focusing on Mr. Reynolds work in Steubenville, Ohio, Northern Ireland, and Belize.

In 1997, Steubenville and its police department entered into a consent decree with the Department of Justice to settle a suit alleging that the police had engaged in a pattern or practice of failing to investigate alleged misconduct, discipline officers, or provide adequate training or supervision. In the approximately 20 years prior to the consent decree, Steubenville had paid \$850,000 in settlements for police misconduct lawsuits. Mr. Reynolds assumed the role of monitor for the Steubenville Police Department in 1997.

Steubenville, Ohio

PARC: *Did you experience any personal difficulties or adjustments when you transitioned from your longstanding role as a police chief to the role of an independent auditor?*

CR: On the contrary, I think my background in policing and my familiarity with the "police department culture" has been helpful. Without it, I think the job would have been quite difficult. In addition, I found that my experience with police accreditation was extremely beneficial, both as the chief of a department that went through the accreditation process and most especially as an assessor. I often compare the requirements of the consent decree with the accreditation standards, both of which require the development of and compliance with good policies, procedures and practices. Also in both cases, the parties enter into an agreement to do so. Thus I believe that my knowledge of policing and the accreditation process provided me with the necessary background for a smooth transition.

PARC: *Since 1997 when you assumed the role of independent auditor in Steubenville, do you think that the role of auditor has become more widely accepted by law enforcement managers and personnel nationwide?*

CR: I think it varies with the sophistication of the particular law enforcement leadership. Generally, however, police chiefs and police officers want to work in a department that they can be proud of and that is respected by

the community. Sometimes outside oversight is the answer.

In a broader sense however, it appears that police accountability or more specifically the lack of police accountability is becoming of more concern to the public, and the establishment of oversight bodies, whether under the provisions of a decree or otherwise, is becoming a popular remedy. This is truly unfortunate since it is the police chief who should be given the authority, support and opportunity to hold his or her personnel accountable for their actions without outside interference.

In addition, police departments already have legally mandated oversight by governors, mayors, legislators, city councilors, city managers, police commissions and other bodies. It is generally when these bodies have failed to effectively do their jobs to support the police, but at the same time to hold the police accountable, that the need for an oversight body arises.

PARC: *In Steubenville you were required to work with a chief that was not supportive of the consent decree. Were you able to establish a productive relationship with the chief? If so, how did you accomplish that and what were the main components of that relationship?*

CR: I was able to establish a productive relationship with the chief by being open, frank, and transparent. There were no surprises when the quarterly report was released and I was always available to him. He knew that if I made an error in the report, he merely had to bring it to my attention and it would be corrected.

PARC: *Did the attitudes and culture of the town have any adverse effects on the culture of the department and its efforts to comply*

with the consent decree?

CR: In most cases the police department reflects the culture of the community, both good and otherwise. This community went through some really hard economic times and has not yet recovered. Of course that had an effect on the police department, but the hope always is that good shall prevail and that seems to be the case here. At the time the decree was entered there was a lot of support for it from citizens and police officers alike. Of course there was opposition as well, especially from within the department. While there are those still resisting the decree for reasons even they cannot explain, most see the benefits that have resulted from it.

PARC: *What did you do to gain support within the Steubenville Police Department among the command staff and the rank and file?*

CR: I initially met with the command staff and officers both in their offices and on patrol. They were uncertain, inquisitive and misinformed about the decree. I explained that I was there to monitor compliance with an *agreement* that the city had entered into with the Department of Justice. My basic message was that the consent decree simply required them to follow good police practice similar to that found in most police departments in the country.

When they questioned this premise, in a friendly way, I challenged them to cite a decree requirement that was inconsistent with best policing practices.

During one particular meeting with the senior staff, a sergeant complained that the decree required the department to accept and fully investigate every citizen

complaint, and he went on to describe with some contempt the type of people who make complaints against the police. I answered his comments with the following question, "When a citizen believes he or she has a complaint, where should he or she go -- to the police department, to the sheriff, county prosecutor, state patrol, state bureau of criminal investigation, attorney general, the U.S. Attorney, FBI, the media or somewhere else?" He replied that he wanted them to, "come right here," to which I replied, "That is the correct answer." There are other examples as well.

PARC: *Use of force was also a major focus of the consent decree. Has the department been able to successfully implement the proposed reporting methodology and policies? If not, what obstacles have arisen? If the implementation was successful, what have been the major benefits?*

CR: The policies and reporting procedures have been implemented, but the problem involved more than simply reporting methodology and policies. It also involved supervision and disciplinary issues. Nevertheless, this is another area that has been a success story. While there have been excessive force complaints since 1997, each has been investigated and resolved by internal affairs, and there have been no civil suits. I think it is safe to say that uses of force are now watched more closely and taken more seriously than they were before 1997.

PARC: *What elements of the consent decree have been the most difficult for you to measure and report on as the independent auditor?*

CR: Supervision and discipline. This entails more than developing policies, completing forms, and checking the correct boxes. It is leadership, training, counseling, encouragement and the whole gamut of supervisory issues that must be internalized and practiced not only by the chief, but by middle managers, first line supervisors and ultimately by the officers on the street. This is difficult to quantify and report on in a precise way.

PARC: *Besides improved police practices, what benefits did the Steubenville department gain as a result of the consent decree?*

CR: Better organization, training opportunities and better equipment. The leadership training as of late has been especially helpful. The management information system has also been helpful in acquiring the data necessary to make judgments about police conduct.

PARC: *Can you attribute any of the consent decree compliance difficulties that the Steubenville department has had to the fact that it is a small department with limited resources?*

CR: Limited resources or the inappropriate prioritization of resources appears to have been a fundamental problem leading up to the decree as well as compliance with the decree. Simply put, this police department did not train or equip its personnel, and endured the result. As a result of the decree, an extensive training program has been instituted and officers are frequently sent to outside specialized schools, a sophisticated computer system is in place, and there have been other improvements. However, this has not been easy. Often the necessary talent and experience was not available internally

and funds were not readily available to hire outside technical assistance. A larger department would undoubtedly have staff capable of addressing many of the decree requirements and funding would be available for outside assistance when required. This is not always the case in the smaller departments. However, Steubenville has committed significant resources to the improvement of the department and continues to do so.

PARC: *How does the Steubenville department differ today from your initial visit in December of 1997?*

CR: The facility is renovated, training is ongoing, officers prepare their reports on computers and information is automated. There is a realization that citizens have a right to complain and, when they do, a full investigation will be conducted. There is also the realization that even if citizens do not complain, misconduct is likely to be discovered. Consequently, there is a better relationship with the public, with the legal community and, I believe, with the political leaders within the community.

Northern Ireland

PARC: *Can you describe your position and duties in the Northern Ireland police reform efforts?*

CR: I serve as a consultant and evaluator to the Office of the Oversight Commissioner for Policing Reform in Northern Ireland. The Oversight Commissioner is Tom Constantine, former superintendent of the New York State Police and former DEA Administrator. This office was created as a result of the Good Friday Agreement and the subsequent study of the Royal Ulster Constabulary by the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern

Ireland. The Independent Commission produced its report containing 175 recommendations in September 1999. As the name implies, the Oversight Commissioner has the responsibility for overseeing and reporting on progress with the implementation of these recommendations at least three times each year. I serve as a member of a team that originally consisted of the Commissioner, myself and two other consultant/evaluators as well as a full-time staff in Belfast. The team is now expanded by two additional consultant/evaluators.

PARC: *What are your primary areas of focus relating to the Independent Commission on Policing's recommendations in Northern Ireland?*

CR: The Report of the Independent Commission is one of the most comprehensive and far-reaching reports on policing that perhaps have been completed since the U.S. President's Commission Report many years ago. My focus is on the topical areas of *Policing in a Peaceful Society*, *Public Order Policing*, *Special Branch*, *Size of the Police Service*, and *Composition and Recruitment*. *Policing in a Peaceful Society* involves such things as building new and renovating existing police stations to appear more like ordinary buildings rather than the fortified compounds that now exist, but have been necessary for the protection of the officers. It also includes the increased use of ordinary vehicles on patrol rather than armored Land Rovers that have been and are now used in many places. *Public Order Policing* involves the deployment, training and tactics used by the Police Service when called to police public order situations. *Special Branch* is the intelligence component of the police service. Of interest here is the size of the

unit and the sharing of information with district commanders and criminal investigators. *The Size of the Police Service* deals with the recommended downsizing of the police service from approximately 11,000 officers to 7,500 through a severance program and normal attrition. *Composition and Recruitment* pertains to the recruitment of police officers and civilians, and the development of a police service that is more representative of the community it serves by appointing to the service an equal number of Catholic and non-Catholic recruits and civilians.

PARC: *Have cultural, social or systemic policing differences presented any unique challenges for you as an auditor in Northern Ireland?*

CR: There is an adjustment when dealing with the cultural and social differences. It has also been somewhat of a challenge to understand the history that led to the current situation in Northern Ireland. However, the policing differences are relatively easy to understand and adjust to. Policing is policing, and police officers are police officers, wherever they may be.

PARC: *Generally speaking, have the police departments in Northern Ireland been receptive to the revisions set forth by the Independent Commission on Policing?*

CR: This report recommends far-reaching and comprehensive changes that are advanced by any standard. The Police Service is working to accommodate and implement the recommended changes.

PARC: *The issue of human rights has been referred to as the "centerpiece" of the Independent Police Commission's recommendations. What are the main causes for concern, and what adjustments are being made by the police agencies within Northern*

Ireland?

CR: After emerging from a civil war and achieving a "cease fire" the police are shifting some of their focus away from security to ordinary policing concerns. In so doing, they are reviewing all policies and plans for compliance with the UK Human Rights Act of 1998, which went into effect in 2000 and which is in conformance with the European Convention on Human Rights. Some of the specific steps they have or are taking are the development of a new oath of allegiance and a new statement of ethics, a revamping of their entire training curriculum to include a strong human rights component, and the developing of a promotional process that includes an evaluation of the officer's human rights consciousness and performance.

PARC: *Did the commission find models of "human rights-based policing" elsewhere?*

CR: The models used were largely from the United States and Canada, but also included some European countries, and of course the United Kingdom.

PARC: *Do you think this approach is being used by any departments in the U.S.? Could such an approach be used in the U.S.?*

CR: Our Bill of Rights is the basis for the approach used in the United States. Of course, some seem to enjoy debating the degree to which the police adhere to the Bill of Rights, but the high degree of public respect enjoyed by the police speaks for itself.

PARC: *One of the listed objectives is to move towards a "routinely unarmed police force." Presently, this recommendation has not been met. Are there extenuating circumstances that have impeded the implementation of this*

recommendation?

CR: The police service has not yet moved ahead with this recommendation due to the existing security situation, which *at this time* appears to be inconsistent with the notion of an unarmed police force.

PARC: *A key component of the restructuring process pertains to the recruitment of diverse new officers so that all segments of the population are represented? Can you provide insight into the premise and overall importance of this task? In addition, which segments of the population are presently under-represented in the police force and what efforts are being made to recruit them?*

CR: The premise is based on the fact that the police force was 90% Protestant, and therefore a large segment of the community believed that the police force did not represent them. The Consensia Partnership, which is the private recruitment firm hired to do the recruitment, has done a masterful job of recruiting applicants that are fairly representative of the community. In the first recruitment campaign, Consensia received 20,283 application requests, which resulted in 7,518 actual applications. Amongst the received applications, 35.6% were Catholic and 40.9% women. The second campaign produced 9,607 application requests and 4,885 applications received, which 38.7% were Catholic and 38.8% women.

PARC: *Have you learned anything about policing in Northern Ireland that would be useful to police in the U.S.? In other words, do the police in Northern Ireland have anything to teach the police in the U.S.?*

CR: There are some lessons to be learned from the situation in Northern Ireland. The police in the United States should

learn what may occur when any segments of the community believes that they are not being treated fairly and equally. For a number of reasons, the police in Northern Ireland are combating the perception, true or not, that they treat certain segments of the population more favorably than others. The police in the United States should do whatever they can to avoid having this occur to them.

With this said, in my opinion the police here should refrain from participation in partisan politics, which could quickly become the basis for a similar perception, especially on a local level. The police should represent everyone equally and must guard against becoming involving in any conduct that creates the *perception* that they are not doing so. The police code of ethics is a good foundation to rely on for guidance.

PARC: *What advice can you draw from your experiences in Northern Ireland, and impart to civilian overseers in the U.S.?*

CR: It is critically important that civilian overseers are rigorous, but honest, objective, fair and sensitive to the fact that their every word means something to the people involved. This is no job for someone with a preconceived notion that his or her way is the only way, who will not listen, or who has an agenda other than to do a fair and objective job.

Belize

PARC: *Can you provide an overview of the work you are performing in Belize?*

CR: I am presently working with the Belizean government to improve the capabilities of its police department to deal with crime and the delivery of police service. Belize is a laid-back developing country that has had all of the problems

of globalization thrust upon it, including crime. Crimes foreign to its culture such as murder, drive by shootings, torture, and robberies are out-stripping its capabilities and we are working to develop the means to effectively deal with this situation. The government is committed to doing so, and I am confident that we will be able to do so. The Belize Police Department consists of nearly 1,000 officers who have police and national security responsibilities for a population of 250,000, in a country a little larger than the state of Massachusetts. They have but 70 vehicles, little or no technology, and limited forensics, intelligence, and training. They also have internal discipline and related problems. The government is serious about attacking these problems and the group that I am associated with on this project, USA International, is working with the government to develop a plan to address these and other issues and reduce crime.