

You you're listening to On the Job with PORAC, hosted by PORAC President Brian Marvel

And Vice President Ben Therriault .

On the Job with PORAC is your go to podcast for insights into the challenges and opportunities facing law enforcement professionals here in California and across the nation. Our goal is to provide an inside look at these issues from the perspective of officers who risk their lives to protect and serve their communities.

Welcome to on the job with PORAC. You're inside track to the world of law enforcement. I'm Brian Marvel, joined by my co-host Ben Therriault. Today we're honored to have the distinguished guest, U.S. Justice Department Director Colonel Hugh T Clements Jr, who heads the office of the Community Oriented Policing Services, better known as Cops. With decades of experience in law enforcement, Colonel Clements brings invaluable insight to our discussion on community police relations.

So let's dive into this crucial conversation. Thank you for being with us, director. Thank you, Mister President. Brian and Mister VP.

you've spent a lifetime, a career in law enforcement. 40 years with Providence, Rhode Island. What sort of got you involved in wanting to be a police officer and then being when you were a cop?

And today, you know, a couple of the differences that you're seeing out there and, and things that we can do to improve the profession that you've done for us over these years. So I didn't always want to be a police officer, but, back in the mid 80s, there was a program going on in Rhode Island with, the Rhode Island Park Police and several friends of mine.

A couple played football at URI, and they had been giving that opportunity, and they asked if I'd be interested. And I said, sure. And the very first day in the academy, it was a mini academy that I went to. And then they assigned me to a beach where I had a uniform, a badge, a firearm, full arrest, powers on state property.

From minute one that I walked out of the pavilion, I said, I want to be a police officer and I really only want wanted to be a cop in the city. In the city. I'm from Providence, Rhode Island. I applied

and, I eventually get on. In 1985. And as you say, the world of policing, the world itself has changed significantly.

It is so complex. The world of policing is so dynamic now. When I first came on the job, you know, they gave us a firearm and we had very few tools. We did not have body worn cameras. My academy was the first academy to have a, academy wide police radio. So some of the, recruits that came on before me, they would share radios and look at us.

Now. We have body worn cameras. You look at the young officers with the Molly vests, and I felt that was important. As I ascended throughout my career to give the officers every single tool they need, both with equipment and with training, to do this very difficult assignment out there. And it's getting more difficult by the moment. You know, one of the issues that we're facing, and obviously from the federal level, you're probably seeing it on a much greater, level than we are here in California.

But, you know, the recruiting retention is just a national problem. Especially in the rural areas. What are you seeing from the cops office? Like innovative hiring programs or what do you see that's working that other agencies can use, to maybe model after successful programs that you see nationally.

So good question. And that is the question everywhere I go.

So I have crisscrossed the country and speaking to the larger law enforcement groups is to what their challenges are with their concerns are. And that's number one. And I think it will remain number one for a while, because there is no magic fix. However, there have been some attempts to tackle this. So one is we had a convening session, the Cops office, along with BJA, Bureau of Justice Assistance.

We have the ability in the office to use the bully pulpit of the office to bring in leaders from all over the country to speak about, what we can do to move forward in a innovative way to address this challenge. And it wasn't only police executives, it was, there were, union officials there as well.

They were community leaders. And the media was there, to assist in other sectors of, of, professions who are assisting. And what we found was early on, many of the agencies felt they would go towards sign up bonuses. So we had that convening session and we put out a great publication, and we've done some analysis behind it in early on, we saw the sign up bonuses appeared to be the way all the agencies were going in almost from the beginning.

I didn't feel like that was going to be a good approach. And you saw it just like we did. There was a flurry of activity and it became almost like a free agency with, police officers where and the larger departments would throw more money on the table and you would see officers go to an agency for a year and then switch for more money and more money.

And what we found was that practice is now becoming almost obsolete. And it really was a detriment to smaller agencies who couldn't financially compete with larger agencies. And we know, smaller agencies make up, agencies with less than ten officers, make up more than half of the departments in the United States. So they just couldn't compete. And we were eating our own and hurting our own profession.

With that sign up bonus. What we found and what we heard was that, agencies and municipalities and community leaders and police executives would, would be much better served by, posing their attention towards retaining, especially in the larger departments. But then that filtered down into the smaller departments as we recruit and we take on it, are departments, a younger generation of police officers, they have a, a greater, vision towards work life balance and job satisfaction.

So we learn that things that could be helpful to them. You've seen it, where you are, I saw it where I was. Many of the officers weren't working overtime. They weren't taking the details. They didn't want to be there 50 hours a week. They wanted to do 40 hours a week, and that was it. So job satisfaction in that they wanted the credentials.

They wanted the training. They wanted the clearances, often, often times to put on their resume. So giving, giving those, recruits something that would give them greater satisfaction in the work they were doing, as well as with the more senior officers and the skill sets that they had is instead of using sign up bonuses, use retention bonuses to keep the skill set of the officers that you had walking out the door in droves, whether their skill set was in, criminal investigation, crime scene investigation, narcotics, they were great supervisors and they saw all these young individuals coming on the job getting, as much as 25,000, \$30,000 bonuses.

And what about me? I've been here 20 years and poured my heart and soul into this agency. So that was one item that we saw in particular. And as well, just taking care of the officer's families. And I'm sure we'll speak about that a little further on with the officers safety and wellness, with the recruitment and retention, officers wanted to be recognized for the difficult work they do in the field.

And I think one of the things that came up in that convening session that we had as well were individuals, young individuals, all individuals, even if they were a veteran, wanted to come to an agency where they felt the leader supported the difficult work they were doing, in the community. Yeah, absolutely. In the in the mayor, the elected officials, they wanted to go to a place where an elected official was supporting their police department.

Very true. I see that here in California, with our governor, Governor Gavin Newsom. He has really been highlighting and pushing the California Highway Patrol. And, last year he said, I want to hire a thousand new CHP officers. And I think because of the way that he talks about them and he's always saying, hey, there's this great job.

We need more CHP officers. They've already hit their thousand mark before the end of the year. They've had over 13,000 applications. And I've told the Electeds when we go to DC and even in California, if you start talking more positively about your police officers and your community and the benefit that they provide the community, people are going to want to do the job because I find that, you know, when you pin the badge on and everybody hates you, who wants to do that job?

So having, positive comments about it's a great middle class job, retirement security. It's just. And there's so much you can do that benefits the community. One incident you could touch and change somebody's life for their their whole life.

From your perspective, do you think that's is that reaching like law enforcement leadership? Because obviously you get you get a pretty good top level and an interaction with folks because that's really where the heart of a lot of things are as culture and whether, you know, people want to stay in a place, you know, out in California, there's places where they're offering up to \$75,000 to be, you know, to be a police officer.

But the retention part is in it's often missed. And I think a lot of it has to do with internal culture. And I would even go further say that, you know, sometimes we've been devoid of law enforcement leadership in the past, you know, a few years. And I'm sure from your, you know, your tenure in the profession, you could probably speak to that.

I mean, like that where there seems to have been kind of some a time period we've kind of lost. And so at your level, do you feel like that's, being upheld or do we have some work to do that how how that transcends down to the rank and file cop? I think based on this convening session that we had and the publication that we put out, I think it's mixed.

And I do think that it's a good point. I think we have some work to do. I think leaders, both on the police executive side and the, elected side, need to recognize if you truly are intending on greater recruitment levels, then you need to recognize and value, the important work these officers will be doing in your city or, or your agency.

Yeah. I just think the officers today are the best train we've ever seen in the history of the United States. And, you know, you touched on a little bit earlier about how quickly law enforcement has evolved from the time you've joined. From the time I've joined since the time Ben's joined the, the computers, I mean, it's just exponentially increasing the technical aspect of law enforcement.

And the person that has to join the profession now has to have that technical proficiency outside of like you, when you probably started, would you just have you had a firearm, a nightstick and a radio? And it was like, go take care of business. You know, today we've got tasers, body cameras, cell phones, computers in the car. Cameras are everywhere.

based on your work at the cops office and the grants, the cops office has given billions of dollars to grants. Are there grants that are underutilized that, we can do as association leaders or as a statewide association to to better push out that, to be able to access and utilize those funds because, you know, you were talking a little bit earlier that you do have a lot of applications for a lot of these funds, but are there ones that maybe aren't being utilized as effectively or have that many people wanting to put in for it that you know about?

So yes, it and I spoke about this this morning. The needs far outpaced the funding for each particular area. We would have probably 3 or 4 times the amount of, monies that we have available to give out. But on the law enforcement, mental health and wellness side, I think there are opportunities because we have so many buckets of opportunities where we could use some increase applicants and really spread this around, especially pertaining to, police academies, where we now have through safer outcomes, through, this new program, we're able to provide funding to police academies and to post organizations to have, curriculum wide training.

On, law enforcement, mental health and wellness as well as de-escalation. So there are some great opportunities, for agencies out there. And I know many times, mid or smaller size agencies become frustrated with a process. And, it shouldn't be the case. And we've tried to streamline that, that as best that we can on the cops office side.

I'll speak on about our office. We have A18 hundred number. And they're very accessible. They get back to you in a very timely manner. And I mean it. You have my my personal number if you want to call me or whoever else you know, in the cop's office personally, we will make sure that someone on the Grant side will get back to that agency.

And during the grant application process, we have webinars going on, and we will walk through those agencies through step by step how to complete that application. So when I said that shouldn't be the case, it really shouldn't, because we can walk those agencies through the process and we understand we we fully understand that, many agencies don't have a grant rider, a professional grant rider, and our grants are not set up where you need a professional grant writer to obtain, those monies.

In fact, we walk you through what the process is. We do not give you the formula because everyone would have a grant application. But we walk you through the process where you can submit. And many of the people who have gone through our webinar training end up getting the grant.

That's good, because, you know, I mean, cops fuel another form I get to fill out.

Oh, man, you know, works. Or how many people in your agency really want to be on the grant writing? Oh yeah. I mean, you know, you want to be in the field. That's not sexy.

I want to do that. Yeah, but the what what comes from it is it's huge and the value is amazing. And, you know, like, I said, you don't have the the funding doesn't match up the need.

And you know, somehow we have to we got to be able to level that. And you bring up \$20 billion since 1994. And people rave about that funding everywhere we go. And, you know, many chiefs have come from being high rise of the Chip program, the cops hiring program, many municipal leaders. We had one, agency in Texas where the, the mayor and city council came in.

I think there were three representatives, from the elected official side that were on the police side that were cops, high priests. Wow. I mean, I was hired off a cop's, grant, in the, during the, recession. And, you know, as you know, because that was a way to secure funding, you know, in a time where, you know, it's really hard to, you know, get a cop job.

And I know that's completely flipped, but, you know, that's just a small example of, you know, how it helps. And medium sized small agencies, they need that. I don't think the profession would be where it's at right now if it wasn't for the cops out there. You're right. We've been world of hurt. I, I think it's essential for this funding to remain static or constant or even grow.

We always advocate for more because, like you said, the needs far outpace the wants. And being able to have a special, dedicated program like the Cops office that can provide those resources, because there's just people screaming. The communities are screaming for it. I mean, I think we're sort of seeing it here, nationally and obviously in California that, cops are needed in their communities.

And in order to get the most qualified and best cops out there, they need the training. Training is so critical to our profession and being able to utilize these grants because chiefs and sheriffs and you've experiences, you're having to balance resources. You don't have unlimited resources. So you're sort of choosing, do I send men to training or do I keep them out on the street?

But we really need this training. And who do I pay to backfill that? Sometimes the larger agencies have the ability to sort of be like, well, we'll go short one day. But the smaller agencies, they absolutely do not have that option. So as a chief or a sheriff, they're having to make those hard decisions. With that said though, is there, new training initiatives that are that you'd want to talk about or, pushes or something coming down the pike that may be new in regards to some of the programs that the Cops office.

So we're constantly in the field listening to the needs of departments and agencies around the country, and we deal with the larger agencies that represent like, you know, like PA, act like the Fraternal Order of Police, like ICP, and listen to the needs of, with the leaders want to see for their, their members. And so, yes, there's a ton of good training, I think in many municipalities with funding being an issue, they can't hire enough officers.

So the first thing they cut is training. And then when something goes awry in their community, the first thing that council will say is, well, should know of officers be mandated for A, B and C

training. Yes, it's cut every single year. So I think, you know, going forward I think you'll see a lot of training because there's nothing that replaces in-person training for our staff.

And we know that. However, there are opportunities for certain types of training to have a virtual reality type of training, which we assist and also online data portal training. So the Cops office has a great program. It's growing exponentially and quickly. We have over 115,000 users right now. It's really taken off in the last year. Well, we have 45 courses.

We put out six brand new courses this year, and, one is on motor vehicle pursuits and which is constantly an issue. It's constantly being talked about. Should we, have police, pursuits in our communities and under what circumstances and conditions? Within the first 12 hours that we put the course out, we had 200 individuals sign up, and we had one police executive mandated for his entire the department going forward, we think that one in particular is really going to take off.

And again, the trainings are done by some really good subject matter experts. They're well received. They're vetted properly so an agency can put that out, knowing in good conscience and legality that, the training that is going out will serve their communities and their departments well, as well. We put one out recently, I think it came out yesterday or the day before combating community policing and combating terrorism and extremism in our communities.

So we're always looking for fresh items that occurring at the moment. But we have trainings from everything from law enforcement, mental health and wellness to, active shooter online training to policing, illicit, distribution of narcotics. But right now, there's 45 trainings. I think you're going to see that grow on the, cops training portal to to higher numbers.

You is there. So if somebody had an idea for training, how would they be able to submit that to the Cops program for evaluation? Yes. Reach out to a colleague in the Cops office, and we're always looking for those opportunities and for a really good subject matter expert to, put that together. It's good to hear such a broad, array of, training.

And then on the virtual reality stuff, I think, you know, going for the future. I mean, that's definitely going to be there. And, you know, cops, I mean, legitimacy is everything. So it's good to have, you know, SMEs that can actually, you know, speak to something. And people are like, okay, you know, as we all know, it's like sometimes you might go to trainings and was like, okay, you know, this isn't this isn't legit.

And so to have those things vetted out well and be fully, sort of put out and it's extremely important, it's good to hear that happens. I think the virtual reality is really going to grow as well, because we know, I mean, to take someone off the street for, and take them down to a range, firing range, or to take them to an offsite location for four hours or a complete tour.

The the moneys it takes to backfill their position on the street is, is too much where if you can send them up to the police academy in your city or town and take them off the street for an hour apiece. Then it's great value.

I always find it my I always have the quote about cops. You know, cops hate change and they hate status quo.

So I love that line. Yes.

What's the one thing cops hate? Worse, them change the way things are right now. Exactly. Yeah.

I have, you talked a little bit this morning in our, conference of members here in Palm Desert about the, critique, the collaborative reform initiative, technical Assistance center. Man, what a tremendous idea.

And what a great resource for agencies. Maybe you could tell us a success story that you, you saw critique, perform maybe in the last year or so for an agency? Yes. We're in so many places right now from, large agencies like Philadelphia, San Fran, Boston, Sacramento, really good agencies. That may have just a challenge on one particular issue, like the agencies I just mentioned.

They're really good and have solid leaders and solid chiefs. But I'm one particular area. They're looking to expand their, their leverage and what they're providing to the field. And then on others, it could be a midsize or smaller. Right now we're in places like, Dearborn Heights, Michigan, Hackensack, new Jersey, and Hackensack, new Jersey is a good one.

There's a, a chief there commissioner who had challenges internally, organizationally with his his department. And we came in from the cops office and assisted. I think that's been a really good success. After a very long time, they have named the chief of police that I think everyone is comfortable with, both from a rank and file standpoint. The community, the commissioner and that agency is ready to move forward.

But it's about reinvigorating these departments and getting them back on track. One at one of the resources that we helped with recently was the tragic death of, Tyree Nichols in Memphis. And there was a call and the attorney general, tapped the cops office on the, on the shoulder to to look into, a publication and give guidance to the field on, you know, the value or the, the challenges with specialized units.

So we had conducted that, convening session and we put out great guidance on specialized units in departments around the country. But, you know, where an agency has, whether it's a high profile incident or complete organization, disarray in these three bucket items that I spoke about, we have Crytek, which is the lowest here in the most, utilized tier.

There's over 1500 agencies that have used Crytek right now. The second tier critical response in the last here, the most intensive form organizational assessment are lesser used ones. But we have helped so many agencies, small and large, with that collaborative reform, initiative. And, I think agencies around the country and leaders around the country, including elected officials, are thankful.

Yeah. I think, I think this really is what helps law enforcement on the national level is to have a Cops program in this CRI tac program, where, you know, we don't want to have to reinvent the wheel when there are models already out there where they've had great success. And these agencies can be like, yeah, you know what?

That probably work in our community, maybe fine tune it a little bit versus spending copious amounts of hours trying to develop a program that's already been developed and not throwing the baby out with the bathwater. I mean, you know, the the whole thing because the what's the knee jerk reaction with specialists? Oh, we just got to get rid of it all.

Yeah, well, we have a problem that needs to be addressed. So who's going to address it. And it's a shoulder shrug that you know where that can come in and help fix that. And, and you know, remold the clay so to speak on that topic. That was the issue that came up, at the in the beginning of this session.

We cannot throw the baby out with the bathwater. And, you know, the mantra of collaborative reform in the cops office is, and it's true by the field, for the field. And let's not reinvent every time we have a major catastrophe, because guess what? There was some unbelievably, good policing, professional policing going on around the country. So with the by the field, for the field and using our subject matter experts who have experienced the exact situation where an agency is having trouble, why wouldn't we tap into that resource in that experience and that success to build upon a best practice and assist that agency and get them back on track in policing their community in a proper way, in a just way, in an equitable way, where they're building trust every single day. Because in the end, that's what we want to do, is make our community safe. And we do that by building trust.

Yeah, I agree, why don't we close this out? Just looking in the future, what do you see as the critical challenge facing law enforcement?

Right now? And, how do you think Cops office will be able to, like, face that challenge and provide the necessary resource or guidance to law enforcement nationally?

So, as we know, I mean, the field that we work in, the profession that we work in, it is so complicated. I think it will continue to be always addressing crime and violent crime.

And that is very complicated with technology. So I think technology will play a big role. We've come a long way in policing. Look at body worn cameras, look at license plate readers, look at real time crime centers. That that is the wave of the future in addressing crime and violent crime

and utilizing our information and intelligence with regional, information coming in on a daily basis.

It will continue to be collecting data and a challenge and a resource will be for official intelligence going forward. We know. We just don't know as we sit here right now exactly what that will look like, but without question, unequivocally artificial intelligence will be in our profession. And we're trying to figure that out right now. We want to make sure because that is a huge, challenge.

And, of course, you know, we're focused in the Cops office on crime, violent crime, drugs. Fentanyl is killing America. And that'll continue to be. But we're starting to get a handle on that, I think, as a nation. And I think thirdly, of course, we have to do a much better job. And we're seeing great success right now in law enforcement, mental health and wellness.

There are so many good programs out there that that have been implemented and are taking taking off. There's one here in San Diego. I know the local union had done a great job with the work life balance with, child care, child care and, you know, I think those will continue to be, top priority issues for the cops office and law enforcement in general.

I appreciate that. I appreciate you coming in. And that concludes another episode of On the Job with PORAC. We'd like to thank director Hugh Clements, Jr for sharing his expertise and time with us. Remember to like, subscribe and share this podcast to help us reach more listeners. Till next time, keep fighting the good fight and stay safe out there.

This is Brian Marvel and Ben Theriault signing off.