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HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE OPERATIONAL POLICY

Civil Disturbance and Mass Arrest

Distribution:	All Employees	Policy Number:	OPS 0701
Responsible Unit:	Special Operations Division	Rescinds:	MAN2800
Original Issued Date:	12/29/21	Revision #:	1
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Latest Required Review was Completed:	10/07/24	Next Review Due:	10/07/27

1. Purpose

To provide deputies with guidance on responding to mass-demonstrations and civil disturbances.

2. Policy

The Harford County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) will quickly and decisively manage any unlawful civil disturbance.

3. Definitions

CIVIL DISTURBANCE: a gathering that constitutes a breach of the peace or any assembly of persons where there is a threat of violence, destruction of property, or other unlawful acts.

CROWD CONTROL: techniques used to address civil disturbances to include a show of force, crowd containment, crowd dispersal equipment and tactics, and preparation for multiple arrests.

DEMONSTRATION: a lawful assembly of persons organized primarily to engage in First Amendment activity. These may include scheduled events that allow for law enforcement planning such as marches, protests, and other assemblies intended to attract attention.

4. References

- OPS 0501 Use of Force
- OPS 0504 Use of Batons/Impact Weapons
- OPS 0505 Use of Chemical Agents
- OPS 0506 Use of Conducted Electrical Weapons
- OPS 0507 Use of Firearms
- OPS 0731 All Hazards**

5. Procedures

A. General Procedures

1. In the absence of violence, it is essential to determine the legality of the demonstration or gathering prior to taking enforcement action; the State's Attorney **and Agency Legal Affairs Office** should be consulted if there is any question about the legality of the event prior to taking enforcement action.
2. Deputies will not act alone unless exigent circumstances exist.

3. Deputies encountering civil disturbances will abide by Section 5.E. regarding the use of force.
4. If possible, deputies will order the unlawful crowd to disperse utilizing the Agency approved Dispersal Order, prior to using force.
5. Only those units dispatched to the incident will respond.
6. Deputies should formulate a plan (e.g., type of response, procedures, tactics, authorized force) prior to acting.

B. Patrol Response

1. Upon arrival, deputies will observe the situation from a distance and evaluate it.
2. Deputies will only take immediate action to protect innocent civilian bystanders who are not participating in the disturbance.
3. Initially, deputies will:
 - a. Determine the exact location and nature of the incident;
 - b. Determine the lawfulness of the demonstration;
 - c. Perform a scene size-up and notify the Watch Commander and patrol supervisor of the situation;
 - d. Request a patrol supervisor and additional units, as necessary;
 - e. Establish a staging area and incident command post that provides a tactical advantage for law enforcement including safe routes for ingress and egress; and
 - f. Implement the Incident Command System, if necessary.
4. Once on the scene, the patrol supervisor will assume the role of Incident Commander (IC) and will:
 - a. Obtain a briefing from the on-scene deputy prior to assuming command;
 - b. Continually evaluate the situation;
 - c. Attempt to establish contact with the group and identify the leader;
 - d. Identify the intent and likely duration of the incident;
 - e. Determine the need for additional resources including:
 - i. Additional patrol units;
 - ii. Activation of the Mobile Field Force (MFF); and
 - iii. Activation of additional Special Operations Division (SOD) assets.

- f. Request the Duty Officer notify the **Division Commander, and** if necessary:
 - i. Activate off-duty personnel;
 - ii. Coordinate the response of allied emergency services agencies; and
 - iii. Coordinate any additional resources such as State Highway Administration or Harford County Department of Public Works.
- g. Ensure that all units initially respond to the staging area;
- h. Ensure that deputies on-scene have proper equipment, including riot gear;
- i. Coordinate requests for additional equipment as needed;
- j. Establish an inner and outer perimeter and, if necessary, formulate and implement a plan to disperse the crowd; and
- k. Ensure that all deputies are briefed prior to taking enforcement action.

C. SOD Response

- 1. Once on-scene, the SOD Commander or other SOD personnel **may** generally assume the role of IC and receive a briefing from the initial IC.
- 2. The **IC may**, as necessary:
 - a. Assume responsibility for issuing orders to members of his command;
 - b. Determine the need for additional resources;
 - c. Authorize any use of force, engagement with the crowd and arrests;
 - d. Ensure that all deputies are briefed prior to taking enforcement action;
 - e. Designate a liaison to coordinate with other agencies;
 - f. Designate a public information deputy; and
 - g. Appoint a supervisor, who is not involved in tactical operations, to monitor all uses of force incidents and investigate all use of force complaints.

D. Mobile Field Force

- 1. Authorization to Deploy
 - a. MFF will be deployed upon approval of the Chief of the Police Operations Bureau or designee.
 - b. An Incident Action Plan will be developed for all pre-planned events that require the deployment of MFF.

2. MFF Deployment

- a. Upon approval for deployment, the **SOD** Commander of MFF will disseminate all information, to include staging instructions, via text messages and email.
- b. Deputies will respond to the staging for a briefing that includes:
 - i. Personnel assignments and radio identifiers;
 - ii. Rules of engagement and use of force considerations; and
 - iii. Equipment authorizations.


E. Use of Force

- 1. Deputies at civil disturbances are bound by the use of force policies (listed above in References).
- 2. Determinations whether to arrest or not will be based on the availability of resources and the circumstances of the disturbance.
- 3. Unless exigent circumstances require immediate action, deputies will not independently make arrests or employ force without command authorization.
- 4. All allied law enforcement officers providing assistance to HCSO will be briefed on use of force and protocols for crowd control prior to deployment.
- 5. All uses of force will be reported pursuant to policy.

6. Summary of Changes

A. On 10/07/24 a three-year review was conducted with the following edits:

- 1. Added **OPS 0731 – All Hazards** to the list of references;
- 2. Section 5.A.1. added **Agency Legal Affairs Office** for consultation;
- 3. Section 5.A.4. added **utilizing the Agency approved Dispersal Order**;
- 4. Section 5.B.4.a. added **IC will obtain a briefing from the on-scene deputy prior to assuming command**;
- 5. Sections 5.B.4.f. and 5.D.2.a. added **SOD** Commander; and
- 6. Section 5.C. changed the word will to **may**.

Approved

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DATE 10/17/24