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ASSESSMENT INDICATES MPD DATA-DRIVEN POLICING HAS IMPACT ON CRIME LEVEL

An assessment by the University of Memphis Public Safety Institute (PSI) of data-driven police practices by the Memphis Police Department (MPD) during calendar year 2017 indicates an immediate positive impact on the level of crime within identified “hot spots.”

Through the data-driven process used by the MPD, geographic hot spots are selected in each precinct each week based on the number of crimes reported in specified categories (robberies, aggravated assaults, burglaries, auto thefts and thefts from autos). As part of the assessment, the PSI looked at whether reported crimes in the specified categories declined the week after a hot spot was identified.

The assessment revealed that, when looking at all nine MPD precincts together, crimes in the specified categories within the designated hot spots decreased 100 percent of the time in 2017 (all 52 weeks). On average, the number of reported crimes in the specified categories decreased in each precinct by more than 10 during the week after hot spots were designated. The Tillman MPD precinct had the highest average decrease - an average decline of 14.85 reported crimes.

When looking at individual precincts, one MPD precinct - Old Allen - had a decrease within designated hot spots 100 percent of the time (all 52 weeks). Three other MPD precincts - Crump, Tillman and Airways - had decreases over 90 percent of the time.

The decline in reported crimes in the designated hot spots does not account for factors such as crime displacement (crime decreasing in one area but moving to another area). In addition, the assessment did not analyze the data to determine the degree to which crime reductions in hot spot areas were sustainable over time given the MPD’s current resources.

In 2019, the PSI plans to conduct an analysis of data-driven deployment by MPD during calendar year 2018, including an examination of whether crime reductions in hot spot areas are sustained over time.

“Based on this assessment of the MPD’s data-driven deployment of resources in 2017, the approach appears to have an immediate positive impact on the level of crime within identified precinct hot spots,” said Bill Gibbons, executive director of the PSI.

Dr. Angela Madden serves as Research Associate Professor for the PSI, with James ‘Max’ Helms serving as Research Assistant.

The full report on the assessment may be viewed on the PSI’s website at www.memphis.edu/psi/research.

Data-driven deployment of law enforcement resources is a major part of the local Operation: Safe Community plan to reduce crime, the implementation of which is being led by the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission. Under an agreement between the Crime Commission and the University of Memphis, the PSI is conducting independent assessments and evaluations of various parts of the plan as they are implemented.

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