

1996 HERMAN GOLDSTEIN EXCELLENCE IN PROBLEM SOLVING AWARD METRO-DADE POLICE DEPARTMENT, AIRPORT DISTRICT TOURIST-ORIENTED POLICE PROGRAM

PROJECT ABSTRACT

A: SCANNING:

The early 1990's saw a plague of violent crime against tourists and visitors strike the State of Florida, particularly Dade County. During 1992 and 1993, several particularly violent robbery-murders of foreign tourists brought world wide media attention. Dade County and the Greater Miami area were portrayed as dangerous places to visit. There was an immediate reduction in the number of visitors, which severely impacted the area, where tourism is the number one economic force. The epidemic of violence was also striking local residents, mainly in the form of robberies.

Studies indicated that Miami International Airport (MIA) was the focal point of several types of crime against both tourists and residents. So-called "follow-home," "smash and grab," "driveway," and "highway" robberies were initiated when criminal subjects preyed on people leaving the airport area in rental cars, which were easily identified, and attacked them en route to their destination, or once they had arrived. Secondly, many visitors became lost after renting cars at the airport, and sometimes became victims of "smash and grab" robbers as they searched for their destination. While the crimes occurred throughout the county, they had a common point of origin, an area east of the airport known as the "Triangle."

The Metro-Dade Police Department, the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Dade County State Attorney's Office, the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, and the Dade County Commission were involved in a series of meetings and strategy sessions regarding the crime issue. The idea of a Tourist-Oriented Police (TOP) Program came from this process, and Commissioner Pedro Reboledo spearheaded the effort through the political process.

The decision to implement the TOP Program stemmed from a review of the total scope of the problem confronting Dade County. The rapid increase in crimes against tourists, particularly robberies, was mirrored in a similar increase in robberies against the resident population. A significant portion of these crimes originated in the MIA area, particularly the Triangle, where the major car rental companies and other hospitality industry businesses are located.

The TOP Program Mission was stated as follows:

"THE MISSION OF THE TOURIST-ORIENTED POLICE PROGRAM OF THE METRO-DADE POLICE DEPARTMENT IS TO PROVIDE POLICE SERVICES TO THE CITIZENS OF DADE COUNTY, BUT EQUALLY AS IMPORTANT, TO THE TOURIST POPULATION VISITING THE SOUTH FLORIDA AREA."

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B. ANALYSIS

The problem of crimes against tourists in Greater Miami came into focus as a result of several high-profile robbery-homicides in 1991 and 1992. Up to that point, most law enforcement agencies did not track crimes against tourists as a separate category. As the agencies and the State Attorney began to do so, it became apparent that there was a significant problem. Crime analysis trends showed an increase in such activities, and that a major contributing factor was the transportation routes linking the airport and the various tourist destinations.

An analysis of the tourist crime data revealed problems in several areas relating to the renting of vehicles and transiting from the airport area to various tourist destinations in Greater Miami. In other words, people were getting lost, or they were being followed from the airport by subjects. Among the problems were the high visibility of rental vehicles (special license plates and rental car company stickers), poor directional signs on and around highways in Dade County, rental agencies located in the confusing Triangle Area, and the existence of toll booths on both east-west highways leading from the airport.

The problem plagued the millions of visitors to Miami and the hospitality industry, which is the most significant aspect of the local economy. The perpetrators of the crimes were identified as a relatively small group (a few dozen), with extensive criminal pasts. These subjects began to prey on tourists because of the ease of identifying them, plus the lucrative nature of the crimes. Additionally, they could count on most visitors being unprepared for the eventuality of a violent robbery attack.

The human and economic impact of these crimes was extensive, ranging from loss of life and property to a significant decrease in tourism in Miami in 1992, 1993, and 1994.

The analysis of the problem revealed the need to replace the disjointed efforts of local law enforcement agencies and the State Attorney. The result was the decision to combine increased enforcement and prosecutorial efforts with a program to educate and assist the tourists, residents, and the hospitality industry, in order to address the scope of the problem. Information was developed that showed the transportation links to and from the airport as the key to the problem. The issue was aired heavily in the local media (as well as nationally and internationally), and many organizations and individuals became involved in the process.

The Airport District Crime Analysis Unit provides crime analysis data for the Triangle Area to the Triangle Enforcement Unit. The data is used to plan manpower allotments,

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directed patrol efforts, surveillance operations, and to place decoy police vehicles. Samples of the data generated by this unit are contained in the Appendix.

C: RESPONSE

In February 1994, a specialized unit, the Tourist-Oriented Police, was formed and assigned to the Metro-Dade Police Department's Airport District. TOP, funded by a unique agreement between Dade County, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the airlines serving MIA, provided an increased uniform presence in the Triangle. But the unit did much more than that. Using a holistic approach, the TOP unit combined the best of traditional law enforcement with a problem-oriented policing style, and a unique tourist safety approach. TOP officers are specially trained to assist those transiting through the MIA area, to educate area businesses concerning improving the quality and quantity of information given to visitors, and to positively impact the area environment through improved signs, better government services, better lighting, and the like.

The decision was made to transfer responsibility for the Triangle (an area approximately one-half square mile bounded by the-Miami River, LeJeune Road, and NW 21st Street), from the Doral District to the Airport District. This decision was made for two major reasons - the proximity of the area to the airport, and the fact that the unit was being funded by airport revenues. Police managers determined that a three-pronged approach would best serve the stated mission and the goal of reducing crimes against tourists and residents:

1. Increased uniform patrols to enhance visibility, enforcement efforts, and improve response times.
2. A problem-oriented approach to improve the area and generate active support from businesses and other government agencies (there are no residences in the Triangle area).
3. A unique tourist safety approach, involving a proactive style of providing information directly to tourists and police input into the types and method of tourist safety information and directions provided by area businesses.

Once the funding was in place and the mission and methodology determined, the implementation date of February 7, 1994 was set. Personnel were selected using a

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structured interview and background review process, and a specialized training program was developed (See Selection & Training), to ensure that each officer in the program fully understood his or her role. The TOP Program took over operations in the Triangle area as scheduled. The Airport District Crime Analysis Unit (CAU) was tasked with collecting and analyzing data relating to the project, particularly crime statistics and trends (See ANALYSIS).

Initial staffing of the TOP Unit was, 1 Lieutenant, 5 Sergeants, 13 Police Officers, and 5 Public Service Aides. Subsequently, one Police Officer was added as a Community Services Officer, and the midnight shift Public Service Aide was eliminated. Current staffing is 1 Lieutenant, 5 Sergeants, 14 Police Officers, and 4 Public Service Aides.

Under the overall mission statement, there were numerous sub-goals devised to direct project personnel toward successful accomplishment of the program mission. As these sub-goals have evolved with the program, many have been achieved and replaced by new goals, while some were eliminated due to being beyond the scope of the project, or inconsistent with subsequent strategies. The TOP Program was the first of its kind in many respects, and there were no direct models on which to benchmark. Some of the project's sub-goals have changed and evolved to a certain degree; however, the initial methodology has had a remarkably effective impact on the original problem of crime against tourists.

The major sub-goals of the project at inception (and results) were:

1. A 20% reduction of crime in the Triangle in the first year. (11 % overall reduction, 45% reduction in robbery, the primary target offense)
2. Development of an informational message to be broadcast on the Airport Radio Station. (Accomplished)
3. Development of a tourist hotline/Crime Stoppers Program. (Accomplished through a tie-in with the existing Dade County Crime Stoppers Program)
4. Development of a Triangle Business Crime Watch Program. (Accomplished)
5. Development of a newsletter with crime reduction tips for the Business Crime Watch Program. (Accomplished as a series of informational flyers sent to all area businesses on a regular basis)

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6. Coordination of enforcement efforts with other law enforcement agencies. (Accomplished with all surrounding agencies, plus state agencies)
7. Establishment of a 24-hour police information counter in the airport terminal. (Still in the design phase. Delayed due to extensive airport terminal redesign)
8. Installation of "tourist telephones" in the terminal and the Triangle with direct access to the Airport District Desk Operations Center. (Accomplished; 24 telephones in the terminal, 18 in the Triangle)
9. Establish a "continual cleanup" of the Triangle Area through Dade County Public Works, Dade County Building & Zoning, Dade County Health Department, Florida Power & Light, and other agencies to ensure civic pride and ownership in the area. (Accomplished and ongoing)
10. Encourage positive media contacts regarding the TOP Program and about tourist safety. (Accomplished; hundreds of media contacts, including many "ride-alongs" with TOP officers have been conducted for foreign and domestic journalists)
11. Production of an informational video dealing with Greater Miami as a tourist destination, the TOP Program, getting around Miami, and travel safety tips, for showing on in-bound aircraft and in-terminal at MIA. (Accomplished)
12. TOP participation in the improvement of roadway signs throughout the county, particularly in the Triangle and along expressways connecting with the airport area. (Accomplished - over 500 new signs were erected from 1994 to 1996)

Given the initial success of the program in the Triangle, the decision was made to expand the concept to the entire Airport District several months later. All District personnel attended TOP training and began to wear the TOP patch on their left shoulder (See Appendix). The focus of this project abstract is the Triangle area, as that area of the project has been consistent since inception and the data analysis has continued to focus there.

Many other initiatives were pursued which complemented the TOP efforts. The Florida Legislature enacted legislation calling for the issuance of regular license plates to replace the easily identified plates on rental vehicles. The Dade County Commission enacted ordinances requiring that detailed maps and directions be provided with every

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vehicle rented in the county, and the removal of identifying stickers or decals from rental vehicles. The TOP Program worked to educate the traveling public, both directly and through the rental car agencies and other hospitality industry businesses, on how to use common sense safety tips and how to get around Dade County. TOP had input into highway signs via the Florida Department of Transportation and the Dade County Public Works Department; as a result, over 500 directional signs have been installed in the county, dozens of them in the Triangle area. The TOP video is shown on many inbound international flights, and TOP maps and brochures are distributed in the Airport and at Triangle businesses.

One TOP initiative to rental car agencies resulted in a program to ensure that those renting vehicles knew about and had funds for the highway tolls, thus avoiding the problem of having visitors leave the safety of the highway for lack of a quarter to pay a toll. A second initiative involves TOP personnel making presentations to hospitality and tourism industry groups to foster better visitor information at all Dade venues, including the transit system.

TOP officers are trained and encouraged to proactively contact motorists who appear lost or confused, and to provide them with directions or an escort if necessary. Each TOP officer is equipped with a cellular telephone and can access information, translation services, or other types of assistance quickly and efficiently. Officers also have maps, brochures, and other tourist information in a variety of languages to distribute as necessary. The officers are evaluated on the number of tourists that they contact, thus encouraging positive, proactive contacts and the prevention of many crimes. The unit averages over 1000 tourist contacts per month (See Appendix).

On the patrol side, high visibility patrol is utilized both to provide a sense of safety to visitors and to warn potential criminals that the area is under protection. The TOP Program provides four to five times the police resources that were previously dedicated to the Triangle area. This is supplemented by various special operations, such as the use of the Department's Motorcycle Unit during peak holiday periods, the regular use of "decoy" parked police vehicles, and undercover operations which target "hot spots." Full patrol strength is maintained by using overtime to ensure full staffing when officers take leave or are in training.

Since the program's inception, the Unit has averaged 78 arrests, 265 field interviews of suspicious persons, and 296 traffic citations per month (See Appendix).

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During the 1995 peak holiday season, the unit achieved overall decreases in crime of 49% in November, 54% in December, 12% in January 1996 and 21% in February 1996, as compared with the same months of the prior year. The most recent report through June 1996, showed a 17% overall decrease in crime as compared to the prior twelve month period, including a 60% decrease for June 1996.

A Community Services component was added to the TOP Program in late 1994. Currently staffed by a sergeant and one police officer, the program has been able to establish a viable Triangle Business Crime Watch organization, as well as ongoing contacts with all area businesses. Community-Oriented Policing programs have established the fact that when an area is improved, the residents take more pride and ownership, and the crime rate often drops. This concept has proven true in the Triangle, where extensive clean-up efforts were initiated by the TOP personnel. Improved street lighting, trash pick-up, mowing of abandoned lots and the roadside right-of-way areas, building and zoning enforcement, and health and safety enforcement have resulted in a more aware and involved group of business operators. The actions of the community services officer also resulted in the closing of several illegal businesses in the area, including a chop-shop.

Taken together, the patrol/enforcement, tourist safety/education, and community services components of the TOP Program have resulted in the achievement of the major goals set at the outset of the program. The current challenge is to continue to reduce the crime rate, while providing innovative methods to expand the operations of the unit and to foster and assist in the development of TOP units elsewhere in the Metro-Dade Police Department and in other police agencies.

The result of this multi-faceted effort at the center of origin of much of the tourist-related crime, has been an overall reduction of crimes against tourists in Dade County of nearly 80%, with a drop in robbery of 73.8% in the past two years. The TOP program alone cannot take credit for those reductions, however, it has been a central component of a variety of community-based efforts promoting tourist safety.

Selection & Training of Personnel

The TOP Program is a proactive, community-based model of law enforcement, with a strong enforcement and visibility emphasis. This differs substantially from the police role in the more traditional patrol functions in the Metro-Dade Police Department. Additionally, there is a greater emphasis on positive public relations and dealing with a diverse population of travelers from a variety of nations. This necessitated a policy

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of special selection and training for TOP Program personnel. The following basic criteria were followed when selecting supervisors, officers, and Public Service Aides:

1. No involuntary transfers of personnel into the Unit.
2. Must have a record of satisfactory performance; no sustained personnel complaints in prior two years.
3. Demonstrated record of initiative and dependability.
4. Minimal sick leave usage over prior two years.
5. Preference for multi-lingual abilities.
6. Preference given to the following: computer skills, experience in team police, investigative, or community services assignments.

The TOP Training Program was designed by Airport District and Training Bureau personnel. The goal of the training program is:

TO CONVEY TO TOP PERSONNEL THAT THE MAJOR FOCUS OF OUR SERVICE IS TO THE VISITORS AND CITIZENS WHO TRAVEL WITHIN OUR JURISDICTION AND WHO ARE THE MAJOR ECONOMIC FORCE IN OUR COMMUNITY.

Instructional staff for the TOP Training Program were drawn from the Metro-Dade Police Department, the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, representatives of foreign consular services and tour agencies, the Dade County State Attorney's Office, the Victim Services Center, and the Dade County Aviation Department.

The following topics were included in the 40-hour training program:

Tourism Industry

- Area Tourist Attractions
- Out-of-Area Attractions
- Road & Highway Familiarity
- Tourist Information Services
- Tourism & The Economy
- Body Language & Non-Verbal

Communications

- Cultural Differences & Sensitivity
- Expressions to Use/Avoid
- Gestures to Use/Avoid
- Crime Prevention Strategies
- Expandable Baton Certification
- Interpersonal Skills

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Frequently-Used Foreign Language
Expressions
Crisis Intervention & Management
Stress Reduction Techniques
Image Projection & Appearance
Community Organization Skills

Tourist-Directed Crimes

- Types of Robberies
- Distraction Thefts
- Pickpockets
- Bag Switches

The 40-hour course was given twice. Following that, the course was reduced to 24 hours by eliminating the 8-hour expandable baton certification and condensing some other topics. All personnel assigned to the Airport District attend the 24 hour TOP Training Course, from the District Commander through Public Service Aides. Plans are currently being made to offer the training course to other departmental entities and other law enforcement agencies.

D. EVALUATION:

Crime has continued to drop in the Triangle, especially crime against visitors. In the past two years (February 1994 through January 1996),- robberies are down 50%, Motor Vehicle Thefts 79%, and Commercial Burglaries 20%. Overall crime has been reduced by 18%. One area that has been difficult to impact is larcenies, which has actually increased by 23% in the past two years. The reason for this trend can be traced primarily to two factors, one is the fact that many thefts, reported when the rental vehicle is checked-in at the Triangle car rental agency, actually occurred elsewhere, although the victim is unsure where. A second is incidents involving thefts by employees of rental car companies of belongings left in vehicles at check-in. This is an area now being targeted for 1996, through various surveillance and decoy operations, and is an example of the kind of innovation that the TOP Program continues to apply to crimes against tourists.

The Airport District Crime Analysis Unit (CAU) provides crime analysis information and statistics on an ongoing basis. The results of their analyses are provided to officers and supervisors to use for the purpose of designing operational responses to ongoing trends and prevention techniques. They are also used as a component of the personnel evaluation process. Tourist and business contacts are encouraged and tracked for program and individual officer evaluation.

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Other entities collect and distribute data, such as the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors' Bureau, which provides information on tourism figures and tourist satisfaction and perception scales. These are used to measure the impact of the tourist safety effort on the tourism industry. The Dade County State Attorney's Office tracks arrest and conviction rates of subjects. The Metro-Dade Police Department's Robbery Bureau tracks a variety of robbery-related trends, including the ongoing Robbery Intervention Detail (RID), and the Targeted Robbery Offender Program. The TOP Program acts as a clearing house for this data and works with the other entities in planning and evaluating the total community response.

E. PHILOSOPHY & ORGANIZATION

The TOP Program is an innovative solution to a major problem confronting Dade County. A unique combination of factors called for a unique response, and the TOP Program delivered in a significant way. That it accomplished the mission of making its area of responsibility a safer place for tourists and local residents alike would have been a welcome result. The fact that the program did so while also having an area-wide impact, and drew significant support from all segments of the community, plus set a standard for other communities to follow, demonstrates the true effectiveness of the program.

The TOP concept grew out of the input of law enforcement, other government agencies, the business community, the hospitality industry, and numerous individuals. As a result, it can continue to draw upon a wide range of resources for its future development. Rather than creating a stifling atmosphere, the program has developed a tradition of encouraging creativity to promote constant innovation. All program participants anticipate new ideas and new approaches, and take a participatory role in their creation. Continual improvement to promote continuing excellence is the TOP methodology.

TOP was not the first problem-oriented police initiative by the Metro-Dade Police Department, and the experience of prior programs was drawn upon in the design of the TOP concept. TOP was unique in that it took on a specific problem not formerly addressed directly, and in that it involved a variety of public and private agencies and organizations.

With the expansion of the TOP concept to the entire District, the personnel assigned to the Triangle area became the Triangle Enforcement Unit (TEU), a specialized unit

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within the Airport District. Assignment to the District does not guarantee acceptance into the TEU. As indicated earlier, specialized training focusing on a philosophy of problem solving, innovation, and community involvement is essential to the adequate preparation of program personnel.

As conditions in the Miami International Airport area evolve, the mission and structure of the TOP program will be adjusted to meet the changing demands. As a growing center of international trade and tourism, Greater Miami is a very dynamic place, and faces issues that are new to American urban centers. These issues will, however, become the norm as this nation changes to address a growing global economy and increased diversity among the general population. TOP is a program that can be modeled as a means to address significant problems and to adapt to a changing environment.

The Metro-Dade Police Department is proud to submit the Tourist-Oriented Police Program for the prestigious 1996 Herman Goldstein Excellence in Problem Solving Award.

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APPENDICES:

I. STATISTICS

**Triangle Enforcement Unit Enforcement Statistics;
February 1994 through February 1996**

**Triangle Area Crime Statistics;
February 1993 through January 1996**

**Triangle Area Robbery Graph;
February 1993 through January 1996**

**Dade County Robbery Graph (Total County and Tourists);
1992 through 1995**

II. Media Coverage & News Clippings

III. INSIGNIA

Tourist Police Patch

Tourist-Oriented Police Brochure

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APPENDIX I: STATISTICS

**AIRPORT DISTRICT
TRIANGLE ENFORCEMENT UNIT**

**TRIANGLE AREA ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS
THROUGH FEBRUARY 1996**

	February 1996	1996 YEAR TO DATE	TOTAL SINCE FEBRUARY 1994
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PERSONAL CONTACTS:

Tourists:	1162	1961	22975
Businesses:	1422	2314	28993

REPORT:

Case #s Handled:	307	500	5691
Cases Written:	244	405	4780

SELF-INITIATED ACTIVITIES:

Felonies:	17	21	239
Misdemeanors:	27	42	786
Traffic:	58	91	658
Warrants:	8	13	181
F.I. Cards:	228	361	6460

TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS:

HMV:	217	355	2851
NHMV:	267	385	4272
PNHV:	95	127	917

Airport Triangle Area Class 1 Crimes

Source: Airport District Crime Analysis Unit

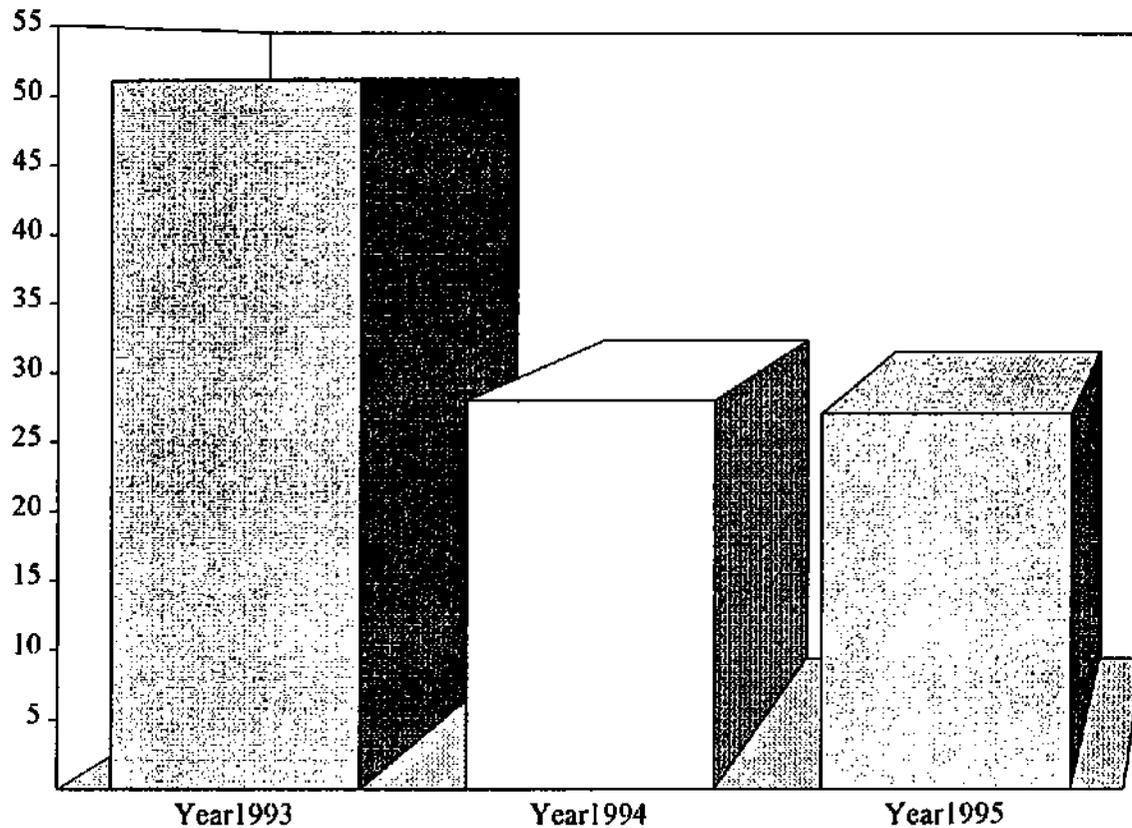
Crimes	Feb. 1993- Jan. 1994	Feb. 1994- Jan. 1995	Percent of Change 1994 over 1993	Feb. 1995- Jan. 1996	Percent of Change 1995 over 1994
Homicides	0	1	+100 %	0	0 %
Sexual Batteries	2	3	+50 %	0	0 %
Robberies	51	28	-45 %	27	-4 %
Commercial Burglaries	42	52	+24 %	35	-33 %
Vehicle Burglaries	185	170	-8 %	172	+2 %
Larcenies	300	385	+28 %	374	-3 %
Motor Vehicle Thefts	270	171	-37 %	92	-46 %
Totals	850	810	-8 %	700	-14 %

1993/1994	
1994/1995	
1995/1996	

Note: The Airport District officially assumed patrol responsibilities for this area in February of 1994, therefore the yearly period used in this study runs from February through January as opposed to the standard calendar year.

Airport Triangle Area Robberies

Source: Airport District Crime Analysis Unit

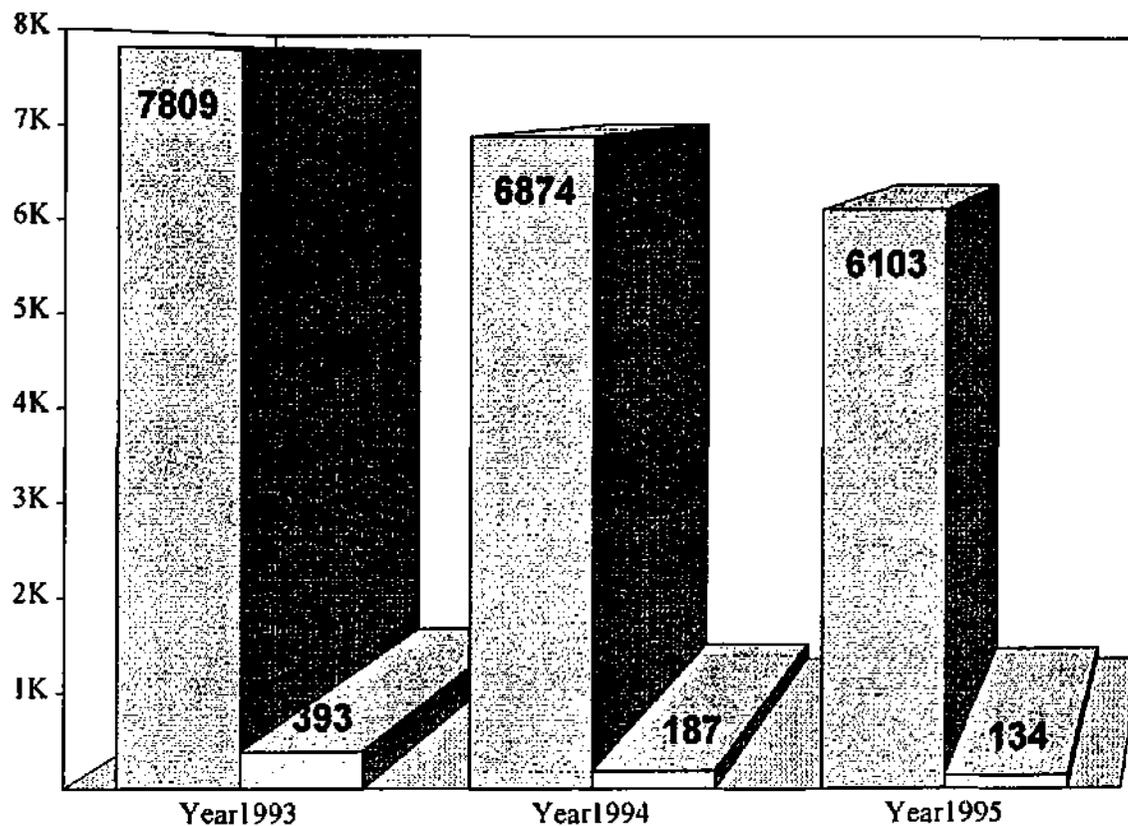


Note: The Airport District officially assumed patrol responsibilities for this area in February of 1994, therefore the yearly period used in this study runs from February through January as opposed to the standard calendar year.

Dade County - All Robberies

Tourist Robberies Compared to Total Robberies

Source: Physical Offenses Bureau - Robbery Section



All Robberies	
Tourist Robberies	