



# Maryland Crime Report

A MARYLAND CRIME INVESTIGATING COMMISSION PUBLICATION

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*"Dedicated to Reducing Crime and Delinquency in Maryland"*

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## THE APRIL, 1968 CIVIL DISTURBANCES

On April 6, 1968, at 8:00 p.m., Maryland Governor Spiro T. Agnew proclaimed that "a state of public crisis, emergency, and civil disturbance exists within the City of Baltimore". The following four nights and three days brought looting, burning, and vandalism, and resulted in Federal troops being called into Baltimore for the first time in almost a hundred years. Before it was all over, six persons were dead, more than 700 others were injured, more than 1,000 businesses were looted or destroyed, approximately 5,500 persons were arrested, and insurance agencies were required to pay some \$12,000,000 to meet some 1600 claims from the riot victims. In addition, some 70 suits asking more than five million in damages from Baltimore City for failure to protect have been filed in Superior Court.

Estimates of direct cost to the City government because of the disturbance add up to more than \$800,000. This will cause a property tax increase of 2-3¢ in the next fiscal year, according to the City's finance director. About 80% of the bill is for overtime charges.

An early street-by-street survey of the riot-stricken areas showed the liquor stores, drug stores, taverns and groceries were the most frequent targets of burning, looting and vandalism during the outburst which subsided on April 11, 1968. The survey listed 127 grocery stores looted, another 30 both looted and burned, and 3 burned but not showing evidence of looting. Another 29 showed broken windows or other signs of vandalism. Seventy-four liquor stores were looted, another 16 burned and looted, and 4 burned without looting. The report showed that 32 drug stores, including those with liquor licenses, were looted, another 2 burned, and 8 subjected to both fire and looting. Four more were vandalized. Looting was reported at 40 taverns and bars, with another 2 burned, and 9 both looted and burned. Signs of vandalism were found at 7 others. (Later riot reports set the total businesses damaged at 1,049.)

## EARLY INACTION OF THE AUTHORITIES

In the beginning of the disorder, there were too many reports of police and guardsmen merely standing by while hoodlums smashed windows and grabbed liquor and clothes and other merchandise. This gave many other people the impression that

they too could loot with impunity. It was vital that the police crack down immediately on those first looters to let others know that law and order would be maintained. Inadequate instructions by command figures left the lawman in the field confused as to the amount of force which he could use to maintain order.

## GAS GRENADES

It is unfortunate that sufficient foresight did not set up the machinery and know-how to provide the authorities with an adequate number of gas grenades that would do the job of an armed guard. When a squad found a store window broken, a gas grenade would have made it impossible for anyone to enter the store for two or three hours. This would serve to better protect the property of store owners during such times.

## AREA COVERED

Generally speaking, the riot area was bounded by Patterson Park Avenue on the east, West Belvedere Avenue and 33rd Street on the north, Hilton Street and Hilton Road on the west, and Pratt Street and Washington Boulevard on the south.

It is interesting to note that Cherry Hill, a community of 40,000 Negroes, did not have a single window broken nor a single looting occurrence during the general disturbance. This is interesting in view of the fact that no soldiers from the National Guard or the Army were on duty in the area. There were over 30 places of business in the Cherry Hill area and all were spared.

## A TWO-PRONGED PROBLEM

In analyzing the civil disorder, we quickly see a two-pronged problem. First, we have not worked diligently, either the black community or the white community, to change those conditions which bred the recent civil disorders. Those conditions include ignorance, apathy, almost complete discrimination, slums, poverty, disease, and lack of opportunity for decent jobs. We must attack those and other obvious problems immediately and consistently. It is the right thing to do. The other aspect of the problem must be dealt with just as aggressively if we are to move along in a positive, proper, and constitutionally correct way. We mean that any lawlessness while working for changes must be dealt with quickly and severely. The potential victims of the law violators should expect nothing less and should be given nothing less.

*Local Govts*

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## DISORDER BACKGROUND

The background of disorder is often as complex and difficult to analyze as the disorder itself. But we find that certain general conclusions can be drawn. Social and economic conditions in the looted areas constituted a clear pattern of severe disadvantage for Negroes compared with whites. There is no evidence to contradict the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders' Report that the looter had completed only a few years of education. Very few had attended high school. As compared to the white community, more citizens in the disturbed areas were likely to be unemployed and, if employed, were three times as likely to be in unskilled and service jobs. They average only 70% of the income earned by whites and are more than twice as likely to be living in poverty. Although housing costs the Negroes relatively more, they actually have worse housing and are three times as likely to be overcrowded and substandard. When compared to white suburbs, the relative disadvantages are even more pronounced.

## POSSIBLE DISORDERS THIS SUMMER

We may have more disturbances by August, 1968, and better control of such disorders is most important. In line with the President's Riot Report, we recommend the following, to maintain better control of those incidents which could lead to serious disorders:

1. Assign seasoned, well-trained policemen and supervisory officers to patrol the ghetto areas, and to respond quickly to disturbances.
2. Develop plans which will quickly muster maximum police manpower and highly-qualified senior commanders at the outbreak of disorders.
3. Provide special training in the prevention of disorders and prepare police for riot control and for operation in units, with adequate command and control and field communications for proper discipline and effectiveness.
4. Develop guide lines governing the use of control equipment and provide effective alternatives to the use of lethal weapons.
5. Establish an intelligence system to provide police and other public officials with reliable information that may help to prevent the outbreak of a disorder and to institute effective control procedures in the event a riot erupts.
6. Develop continuing contacts with ghetto residents to make use of the forces for order which exist within those communities.
7. Establish machinery for neutralizing rumors and enabling Negro leaders and residents to obtain the facts. Create special rumor details to collect, evaluate, and dispel rumors that may lead to a civil disorder.

## FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Further, we recommend:

1. That more adequate police protection be provided to the ghetto residents to eliminate their high sense of insecurity and the belief of many Negro citizens in the existence of a dual standard of law enforcement.
2. Better educate the citizen in the ghetto of the procedure for bringing grievances against the police and other municipal employees.
3. Develop and use better programs to insure widespread community support for law enforcement.
4. Recruit more Negroes into the regular police force and continue to review promotion policies to insure fair promotion for Negro officers.
5. Recruit more of the ghetto youth into the Police Cadet program. These junior officers could perform duties in the ghetto neighborhoods but would not have full police authority.

## POLICE CHIEFS ON RIOTS

Police from all over the country attending last Fall's police chiefs' convention focused their main attention on riot control. There was almost unanimous agreement on three points:

1. The best way to control a riot is never to let it get started. This is primarily the task of the whole community through its social welfare agencies, but it is also the task of the police department, for the policeman, even though he may only cruise the streets in a patrol car, sees at first-hand the squalor and anguish of the ghetto, and he is the first to feel the impact of its anger.
2. When an incident does occur that threatens to explode into a riot, the police must cool it quickly, using whatever force is needed. Half-hearted measures won't work. In Detroit and Newark and Baltimore, the first response to mob action was slow and cautious. This cost these cities and many of their citizens some very unfortunate results.
3. Whether a riot is to be prevented through the civilized methods of a police community relations program, or controlled by force once it is under way, the police commander must have full and complete information on the mood of the ghetto, its goals and aspirations, its angers and frustrations, the identity of its leaders, friendly and unfriendly, and its potential power to destroy once its fury is unleashed.

## OPPOSITION TO LAW

It is well to draw some important distinctions between violence and dissent and between moral rights and legal rights. Violent opposition to law—



any law—or forcible disregard of another's freedom to disagree falls beyond the pale of legitimate dissent or even of civil disobedience. Properly understood, it is nothing short of rebellion.

There is a clear line between such actions and the non-violent form of civil disobedience championed by Dr. Martin Luther King, that sought to expose "injustices that were perpetrated under the banner of law." One day our nation will point with pride not only to the courage of those who risked punishment in order to challenge injustice but also to the morality of their actions in scrupulously avoiding violence. However, one who contemplates civil disobedience out of moral conviction should not be surprised and must not be bitter if a criminal conviction ensues. He must accept the fact that organized society can not endure on any other basis. His hope is that he may aid in getting the law changed, but if he does not succeed in that, he should not complain if the prevailing law is applied to him.

### PROFILE OF THE VICTIMS

Several thousand business people lost their stores, stock, and livelihoods in the recent disturbance within Baltimore. It is unfortunate that many new Americans who came here after World War II as refugees were so hard-hit. Hard work and thrift, long hours and perseverance, built up the small independent grocery, hardware, or beverage business. Only in the downtown areas was he able to do so. The independent store owner finds it near impossible to compete with the big supermarkets in the suburban areas. It was this small business man, averaging in most cases about \$7,500 in annual net income, who has, in many cases, been completely wiped out. Who is this awful perpetrator of foul deeds who deserved the looters wrath? He is over 50 years of age, possesses few skills, little capital, and frequently only a bare working knowledge of the English language.

He has been accused of taking advantage of his customers. Perhaps his prices are higher by 10 or 20%, but it is well to explain why. Much is lost monetarily due to liberal credit given that is never repaid. Much is stolen from the stores. Much is lost by customers moving away, and denying their obligations. Much is lost by customers losing their jobs, and giving excuses instead of installments. Wholesalers very often will charge this type of retailer more for smaller deliveries than his superstore counterpart. Insurance is higher in many of the areas (if it is possible to get insurance at all in some locations). The robbery and burglary rates are much higher in these areas. The storekeepers often work 72 hours a week. Therefore, the risks are immeasurably greater and the net often

smaller than that of the large store in the suburban areas.

Many of these small ghetto merchants are Jewish. The frustrated ghetto resident found this merchant a handy scapegoat. We must be most careful that we do not encourage the lawless procedure of burning out the white merchant with the design of securing governmental or private funds to rebuild that business location in order that the location may be owned by a Negro in the ghetto area. Upon close analysis, this seems to be not only a criminal conspiracy but a step backwards if we are to follow the integration philosophy consistently.

### GRIEVANCES WHICH INCITE RIOTS

Although specific grievances vary from city to city, at least 12 deeply-held grievances can be identified and ranked into three levels of relative intensity:

#### First level of intensity:

1. Police practices
2. Unemployment and underemployment
3. Inadequate housing

#### Second level of intensity:

4. Inadequate education
5. Poor recreation facilities and programs
6. Ineffectiveness of the political structure and grievance mechanisms

#### Third level of intensity:

7. Disrespectful white attitudes
8. Discriminatory administration of justice
9. Inadequacy of Federal programs
10. Inadequacy of municipal services
11. Discriminatory consumer and credit practices
12. Inadequate welfare programs.

The results of a three-city survey of various Federal programs—manpower, education, housing, welfare, and community action— indicate that, despite substantial expenditures, the number of persons assisted constituted only a fraction of those in need.

### COMMENDATIONS

Many of the cities which experienced disorders had recurring breakdowns in the mechanism for processing, prosecuting, and protecting arrested persons. These resulted mainly from long-standing structural deficiencies in criminal court systems, and from the failure of communities to anticipate and plan for the emergency demand of civil disorders. The Crime Commission commends the general administration of justice procedure during the recent Baltimore disturbances and congratulates the City policemen, the State Police, the troops, the jail personnel, the prosecutors, the defense attorneys and the judiciary who functioned so well during such a very trying time.



## THE FIREMEN

The heroics of the firemen could only be equaled — never exceeded.

## "JUSTICE FOR ALL"

It is well to remember that it takes no more than a small minority of determined and embittered men to initiate and sustain widespread civil disorder. It is also well to remember if Negroes are going to "make it" in American society, they are going to make it within the framework of democratic institutions and through the normal modes of social and economic mobility. Violence is not the way for a civilized people to seek redress for wrongs. Any Negro tempted to follow the cause of militants to turn to violence has but to search the records of the recent senseless rioting, looting, and burning to know the truth. Frustration must not be allowed to turn the colored people of this country against the white. Racial violence delays that day of "justice for all" dreamed of by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. A cool summer will put us much closer to

that day of equality than will a hot one. White America is not blameless for the recent holocausts. It owes it to its colored citizens to end once and for all its hypocritical preachments and to make this a country of equal opportunity for every citizen, no matter his race, color, or creed. Also, when white Americans cry out for respect for law and order, it must be an understanding that the same law must pertain to whites as to the colored.

The detailed report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders is a report which we especially recommend to every responsible citizen. One paragraph capsules the problem: "The finger is pointed to the white, middle-class man who, knowingly or not, establishes barriers of racism. Not flagrant racism, or violent racism, but a sort of "cold-shoulderism" toward the Negro that excludes their feelings and their rights".

## CAPSULED SUMMARY

In summary, the Maryland Crime Investigating Commission recommends:

- That the **entire** community get busy with other than lip-service in attacking the problems which have grown to such proportions as to cause the serious disturbances in Baltimore and other Maryland communities. The Negro can justify his anger and frustration. The militant cannot justify his methods.
- That the elected and appointed officials get busy and establish more effective procedures in dealing with the rioter in the first stages of his lawlessness. Those who advocate violence as a necessary element leading to change should be dealt with **quickly** and **severely**. The essence of a democracy's foundation is LAW. Those laws affecting the citizen's life and property should be enforced with such certainty as to discourage other potential wrongdoers.

A riot is made up of many individual criminal acts. There is no need to develop a new law enforcement attitude or to prescribe a different code of justice toward or for the wrongdoer. Where we find a killer, looter, or burner operating by himself or with co-criminals, great authoritative force is called for immediately. Those who would pacify hoping the problem will minimize itself must carry the guilt of seeing unnecessary harm come to citizens and their property—citizens who expected protection but received it too late.

The Crime Commission will maintain a strong interest in seeing that the citizens, both white and colored, receive the best possible protection under every circumstance.

(This is a summary of the Maryland Crime Investigating Commission's twenty-seven page report on the April, 1968 Baltimore City Disturbance. The full report may be borrowed by those persons so interested.)

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