

BIASED MINNEAPOLIS AFTER-ACTION REPORT NEGLECTS PREVENTION AND EFFECTS OF POLICE VIOLENCE ON THE COMMUNITY

The Minneapolis City Council recently received an after-action report on police operations during the uprising after the murder of George Floyd. The council had commissioned this report from security organization Hillard Heintze (part of Jensen Hughes).

In its advertising, Hillard Heintze bills itself as “one of the leading security risk management firms in the world, serving Fortune-ranked enterprises, professional sports leagues and law enforcement agencies as well as many of the world's most affluent families.” Founder Arnette Heintze spent twenty years as a secret service agent¹, and Terry Hillard was a Chicago police officer for 35 years² including 5 years as its superintendent. Hillard was named in civil lawsuits totaling almost \$23 million dollars during his time on the force.³ Of particular relevance, while Hillard was superintendent, the Chicago PD paid out over \$10 million in damages after its abuse of Iraq War demonstrators in 2003.

Process and Bias

The Hillard Heintz (HH) report suffers from both a flawed process and a biased perspective. The city paid \$229,490.55 for the 86-page report. Despite their claims of providing a thorough analysis of the uprising, the HH report is written from the perspective of how police can organize to more effectively suppress dissent in the future. The bias toward police could not be more obvious:

- By its own admission, HH only looked at 30 hours of Minneapolis Police Department body-worn camera footage captured between May 25 and June 3, 2020 out of many thousands of hours captured. There is nothing in the report to indicate how that footage was selected. It was likely hand-selected by the city.
- The report is littered with references to “violent protesters” but fails to acknowledge violent policing and its impact on the community, including the police violence that led to the murder of Mr. Floyd and the shooting and beating of Jaleel Stallings on May 30.
- Protesters are held out as separate from the community and not members of the community. HH fails to recognize the thousands of community members who were moved to join protests against the grotesque police violence that has plagued people of color and poor people in Minneapolis for generations. The report represents the protests as something regrettable that happened *to* the community, rather than something positive led *by* the community.
- There are only scant references to the injuries suffered by protesters at the hands of police. The New England Journal of Medicine report on these injuries was only included in the report at the insistence of one of our board members, who attended HH's two public hearings.
- HH claims that they talked to 85 people around the city including city staff, elected officials and people in a focus group. That represents a mere 0.0197% of population of Minneapolis.
- There is not a single mention of the violations of civil rights and injuries experienced by members of the media at the hands of police.
- There is no mention of the role of white supremacists, who used the uprising to attack businesses owned by people of color in an attempt to start a “race war.”
- There is little mention of other law enforcement agencies and their misconduct.
- There is an extensive emphasis on officer well-being, including a rather bizarre discussion of officer feelings of loneliness while “on the front lines.”

Part of the reason so little was mentioned in the report about impacts to the community is that there was little effort to hear from the community. HH held two “listening sessions”—one mid-day on a Thursday and one in the early evening on a Friday. These were poorly advertised and only through city channels,

¹ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/arnetteheintze/>

² <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2003-08-15-0308150276-story.html>

³ <https://projects.chicagoreporter.com/settlements/officer/7557/>

thus were poorly attended. Not a single person of color attended the Thursday event and only one attendee had participated in the protests following the murder of George Floyd. This pattern repeated itself at the Friday event, though there was one person of color at that event and two people who had participated in protests.

By contrast, CUAPB, an all-volunteer organization, convened five widely-publicized People's George Floyd Commission events at parks around Minneapolis where hundreds of people were able to speak as freely as they wanted to, vent their frustrations, and share their solutions.

Recommendations that Miss the Mark

Much of what passes for recommendations in the HH report are little more than platitudes about “rebuilding trust” between the community and the MPD. This is a phony framing because there can be no trust with institutions that refuse to be accountable to the community. Until the city addresses accountability, no amount of “facilitated discussions” will help because the issue isn’t about relationships. In fact, if police were held accountable for their actions in meaningful ways, police misconduct would nearly disappear and police-community relations would improve on its own, with no special efforts needed.

HH claimed that while the city changed its use of force policy, officers weren’t trained in the new policy. This is utter nonsense as officers should not need to be told not to go out “hunting” protesters to shoot with 40 mm rounds, not to aim these rounds at people’s heads, not to beat people after they are handcuffed, not to brutalize members of the media and not to violate people’s First Amendment rights.

There’s a ton of emphasis on Incident Command Structure and better coordination with the State Troopers, National Guard and other law enforcement agencies. What they don’t tell you is that Minneapolis had more National Guard soldiers roaming our streets than soldiers in Afghanistan at the time Mr. Floyd was murdered. There is also no mention of the further inflaming of tensions caused by such a massive deployment of troops and military equipment on the streets of Minneapolis, including soldiers equipped with live ammunition. On a per capita basis, the number of National Guard troops in Minneapolis was over three times the concentration of US and NATO soldiers in Afghanistan at the height of that occupation. This is in addition to other law enforcement officers in Minneapolis.

Despite a few statements about respecting the First Amendment, the near constant references to “violent protesters” and the outsized emphasis on “incident management” makes it clear that the real purpose of their recommendations is to ensure police are prepared “next time” to more effectively suppress dissent. Their true intent is further indicated by the lack of a single recommendation addressing the horrific police violence and lack of accountability that led to the protests.

The Bottom Line

This report has zero recommendations that are worth following. The report’s biased framing led to recommendations that will, if followed, take the city in the wrong direction. However, this result comes as no surprise to anyone who has analyzed Hillard Heintze’s after-action reports in other cities. It would appear that the city specifically chose this vendor, even over less expensive bids, to assure a whitewash of police violence in an attempt to escape liability for harms to the community and grievously injured individuals.

A true and unbiased after-action report is still badly needed as a guide for effective reforms, not just in this instance but in all police critical incidents including the killings of Terrance Franklin, Jamar Clark, Justine Damond Ruszczyk, Thurman Blevins, Chiasher Vue, Travis Jordan, Dolal Idd, Amir Locke, and so many others.

Information provided by **COMMUNITIES UNITED AGAINST POLICE BRUTALITY**. Join us! We meet every Saturday at 1:30 at 4200 Cedar Avenue South in Minneapolis. For more information or for help with a police brutality incident, call our 24-hour hotline: **612-874-STOP** or see our website at **www.CUAPB.org**.