

# LO5 Describe the Proactive Tactics Being Used by Investigators

## Decoy Operations

### decoy operations

Operations in which officers dress as and play the role of potential victims in the hope of attracting and catching a criminal.

### blending

Plainclothes officers' efforts to blend into an area in an attempt to catch a criminal.

### sting operations

Undercover police operations in which police pose as criminals in order to arrest law violators.



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One of the primary purposes of police patrol is to prevent crime by creating a sense of omnipresence; potential criminals are deterred from committing crime because of the presence or potential presence of the police. Omnipresence does not always work well, however. We have crime both on our streets and in areas where ordinary police patrols cannot see crime developing, such as

the inside of a store or the hallway of a housing project. We have also seen that retroactive investigations of crimes, with the intent to identify and arrest perpetrators, are not very effective.

One proactive approach to apprehending criminals in the course of committing a crime is **decoy operations**. Decoy operations take several forms, among them blending and decoy. In **blending**, officers dressed in civilian clothes try to blend into an area and patrol it on foot or in unmarked police cars in an attempt to catch a criminal in the act of committing a crime. Officers may target

areas where a significant amount of crime occurs, or they may follow particular people who appear to be potential victims or potential offenders. To blend, officers assume the roles and dress of ordinary citizens—construction workers, shoppers, joggers, bicyclists, physically disabled persons, and so on—so that the officers, without being recognized as officers, can be close enough to observe and intervene should a crime occur.

In decoy operations, officers dress as, and play the role of, potential victims—drunks, nurses, businesspeople, tourists, prostitutes, blind people, isolated subway riders, or defenseless elderly people. The officers wait to be the subject of a crime while a team of backup officers is ready to apprehend the violator in the act of committing the crime. Decoy operations are most effective in combating the crimes of robbery, purse snatching, and other larcenies from the person, as well as burglaries and thefts of and from automobiles.

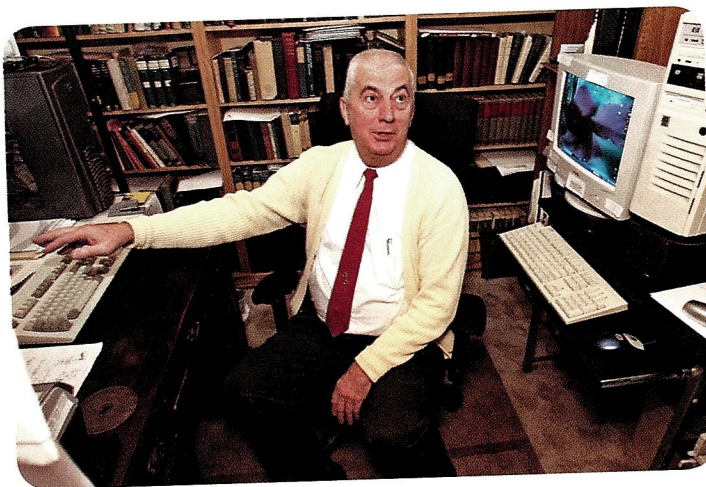
## Stakeout Operations

Many crimes occur indoors, where passing patrol officers cannot see their occurrence. A stakeout consists of a group of heavily armed officers who hide in an area of a store or building waiting for an impending holdup. If armed robbers enter the store and attempt a robbery, the officers yell, "Police!" from their hidden areas. If the perpetrators fail to drop their weapons, the officers open fire. Stakeouts are effective when the police receive a tip that a crime is going to occur in a commercial establishment or when the police discover or come upon a crime pattern. However, stakeouts are extremely expensive in terms of police personnel and are also controversial because they can be dangerous for all involved. The situations are always dynamic, and officers have to decide how far to let the incident progress. There are so many variables in a stakeout that even in the case of a previously nonviolent pattern of crimes, police can never know when violence may erupt, and law enforcement personnel don't want to risk standing by and having innocent people get hurt.

## Sting Operations

**Sting operations**, which have become a major law enforcement technique in recent years, involve using various undercover methods to apprehend thieves and recover stolen property. For example, the police rent a storefront and put the word out on the street that they will buy any stolen property—no questions asked. The police set up hidden video and audio recorders that can be used to identify "customers," who are then located and placed under arrest several months later. The audio and video recorders provide excellent evidence in court.

Traditionally, sting operations involved setting up false storefronts to deal in stolen property, but over the years



AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein

Retired Police Chief Jim Murray regularly patrols the Internet in the persona of a 13-year-old girl and his work has resulted in many arrests of men making online solicitations for sex.

# Undercover Operations, Including Undercover Drug Operations

## LO6 Describe

particular crime problems. as the criminal law, in an attempt to solve using local ordinances and codes, as well ent municipal agencies working together consist of a number of agents from different code enforcement teams, which conditions. These cities have also established code enforcement teams, which laws to force property owners and others. These cities use civil, as well as criminal, the quality of life in their communities. problems that have a negative effect on teams in an attempt to deal with local to civil liability (or code) enforcement have had to deal with. Many have turned conditions that cities and their residents example of the squalid and dangerous intruders.” (Sullivan 25–26) This is an smeared with Vaseline to trip unwary routes. And hallway floors have been walls and floors to provide easy escape frames. Holes have been smashed in the wires have been stretched across window ers’ rivals and the police. Electrified of traps, meant to block out drug deal- “Vacant apartments have become a maze

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Nine out of 10 local law enforcement agencies perform drug enforcement functions.

## Civil Liability and Code Enforcement Teams

**civil liability (or code) enforcement teams** Teams used in jurisdictions to address the crime problem through the enforcement of civil laws and building and occupational codes.

**undercover investigations** Covert investigations involving plainclothes officers.

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become blurred. (Fahri) The type of story and eager to put pedophiles behind bars. Legal outcomes and court challenges will help determine whether these types of arrangements and stings continue.

the parameters of sting operations have expanded. They now often include corruption, prostitution, car theft, drug dealing, child pornography, child sexual abuse, and tobacco and alcohol sales to minors. Generally, a sting operation includes four elements:

- An opportunity or enticement to commit a crime
- A targeted likely offender or offender group
- An undercover or hidden police officer or surrogate, or some form of deception
- A “gotcha” climax when the operation ends with arrests (“Problem Oriented Guides for Police”)

Studies of sting operations have found that they account for a large number of arrests and the recovery of a significant amount of stolen property. However, the studies have failed to demonstrate that the tactic leads to reductions in crime. (Klockars “The Modern Sting”) Another major drawback to sting operations is that they can serve as inducements to burglary and theft because they create a market for stolen goods. Sting operations can also lead to questions regarding ethics. (“Problem Oriented Guides for Police”)

Another kind of sting operation that has been widely discussed is the child predator sting aired on NBC. Law enforcement has been working with the media in operating some of these child pornography stings. Since 2004, *DateLine* on the NBC network has been airing “To Catch a Predator,” in which a sting is set up in a rented home. When the operation began, *DateLine* staff members worked with an organization from Portland, Oregon, called Perverted Justice, whose volunteer members posed as young boys and girls in Internet chat rooms and waited to be contacted by adult men seeking sex with minors. The volunteers lured the men to the rented house, where they were confronted by a *DateLine* reporter on camera. In many situations, NBC did not notify local law enforcement. Citizens became outraged because these men were not arrested, and law enforcement had to explain that they need a certain standard of proof and an investigation has to be conducted. After seeing the popularity of the show, NBC formalized its relationship with Perverted Justice, compensated their members financially, and started working more closely with law enforcement, which resulted in police making more arrests after the confrontations. These operations are not without controversy, however, as roles and relationships have

