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# FOX13 Investigates: High crime areas still MPD's focus

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Memphis Police Department's manpower shortage is starting to have impact on its signature blue crush strategy, even as the department told FOX13 "Blue Crush is here to stay."

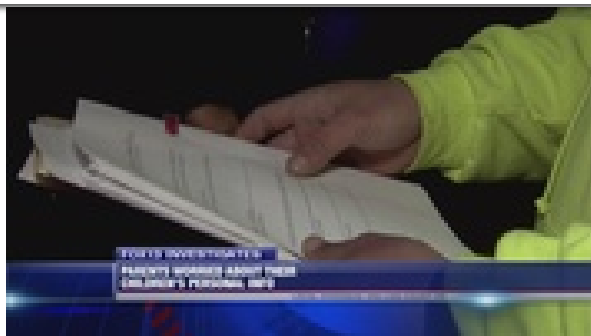
Blue Crush is a tactic where police identify a neighborhood crime problem through computer data and put extra officers in a community to make arrests.



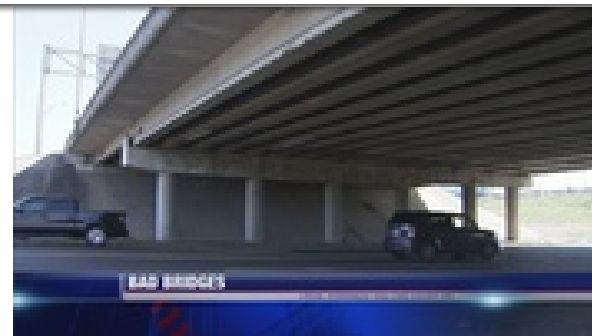
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with an increase in crime.

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"I got some reports of crime happening in the neighborhood," said Calvin Burton who chairs the Whitehaven partnership.

This civic group has pushed back crime from entering their community and Burton is one its leaders.

Burton told FOX13, "I am very active in the community and fighting crime is one of my passions."

FOX13 showed Burton the same figures we obtained from the Memphis Police Department about the number of Blue Crush details at the Raines Police Precinct which covers the Whitehaven neighborhood.

The documents show the number of Blue Crush details in 2014 were 368, dropped to 316 in 2015 and jumped back to 364 in 2016. Burton would like to see them go higher.

"Anybody would like to see the number go up because that means we are getting more things done," Burton said.



We discovered the number of details are sporadic, down in some and up in others. The biggest drops happened in 2015 a year after officers began leaving upset with cuts to their pay and benefits.

"Manpower shortage hurts," said Memphis Police Deputy Director Mike Ryall.

2015 was the same year voters elected Jim Strickland Mayor with a promise to fight crime with more data driven policing such as Blue Crush.

"You have to have manpower," said former Memphis Police Director Larry Godwin.

Godwin ushered in Blue Crush as Memphis Police Director. During a FaceTime interview, FOX13 asked if the man power shortage at MPD hinders the application of blue crush, hinders the department's ability to fight crime.

"You must have boots on the ground" said Godwin "You can have all the technology in the world. But if you don't have the boots on the ground. The officers to interact, the officers to implement the programs.

According to these documents FOX13 requested through open records, Memphis Police has increased Blue Crush details at six of its nine precincts from 2015 to 2016 as Memphis struggled with a record breaking year for homicides.

As the police increased Blue Crush, the department spent nearly two thirds of its overtime budget. Godwin told me blue crush costs when you are low on staffing and it happened to him back in 2006.

"We had to find officers to do Blue Crush. We couldn't pull from the uniform patrol division to just go do blue crush," said Godwin.

Memphis Police Deputy Director Mike Ryall said other "difficult management challenges" also ate into the overtime budget such as the Black Lives Matter protest on the bridge and subsequent threats against police officers the MPD.

Director Ryall told FOX13, "Blue Crush with manpower shortages effected overtime."

Law enforcement experts agree any hopes of fully implementing Blue Crush to what was back in 2014 will require more officers.

Deputy Chief Ryall said the department is working to increase recruiting and retention, use Public Safety Technicians and better cooperation with the Shelby County Sheriff's Department to help ease the strain on the MPD.

Calvin Burton believes more community involvement will help. When asked if Burton knows most of the officers at the Raines Station, he replied "Yes I do."



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They raised money for the sky cop camera and constantly improve their neighborhood watch program.

"I am a part of this community, so why not try to do things that will keep my community in a position where it can try and remain safe," said Burton.

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by Taboola

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