



## *Greater Boston Police Council, Inc.*

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### **HISTORY OF THE GBPC**

In 1970, the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts, experienced a number of large civil disturbances in its Harvard Square area. Assistance was requested and received from more than twenty-five neighboring communities such that by the end of the first disturbance, more than 1,200 police officers were assembled in an attempt to quell the riots that had begun in protest to the Vietnam War. A major problem experienced by the Cambridge Police was that there was no way to command and control all the police officers who were dispatched to Cambridge's aid. In one well-remembered incident, as told by Captain Richard E. Duffy, then a lieutenant and commander of the Newton Police Tactical Patrol Force, Captain Duffy remembers calmly waiting on a corner at Harvard Square with his officers. He thought that the day would prove to be uneventful, when in fact at that very moment, a contingent of 30 men of the Cambridge Police were being backed into a corner on the opposite side of Harvard Square by a large, angry, brick throwing mob. Unfortunately, the Newton Officers had no way of knowing of the Cambridge Officers' plight because the communications equipment of both these departments was incompatible. The Cambridge Unit Commander could only talk to other far removed Cambridge contingents while the same situation prevailed with the Newton Police Unit.

On October 14, 1973, at 3:58 p.m., a small fire in a Redevelopment Authority Building on 122 Summer Street, Chelsea, quickly spread in a matter of a few hours to become one of the largest fires experienced in Massachusetts. Again, as in Cambridge, the local police were unable to control all of the police resources that were immediately sent to Chelsea's assistance because there was no way that Chelsea's Police Chief, Abraham Burgin, could communicate with the commanders of the 26 police units that were sent to his aid.

The above events illustrate a major deficiency that existed in the communications systems of the Metropolitan Boston area police departments. Shortly following the second Harvard Square riot in 1970, former Commissioner Edmund McNamara of the Boston Police Department convened all the chiefs of police who had sent contingents of officers to Cambridge to consider what action they might jointly take to rectify the problems experienced during the riots. As a result of this meeting, the decision was made to form a new organization that would be dedicated to improving interdepartmental police services. This organization was named "The Greater Boston Police Council" and was initially comprised of 23 police departments.

As one of the first orders of business for the new council, the member chiefs determined that positive action should be taken toward improving the radio systems of all the members. After many planning sessions and policy meetings, it was decided

that a totally new radio system should be designed and built. Upon agreeing to the general system objectives, the Greater Boston Police Council, acting through Chief William Quinn of Newton, began the development of the system which has come to be known as the Boston Area Police Radio Network (BAPERN).