Belize: Reflections on Police Training and Professionalization

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ABSTRACT

This article looks to analyze the preparation process the Belizean police force goes through with the objective of training the officers for duty. It also has the purpose of detailing the entrails the officers have to confront in their way up the corporate ladder as they develop into a professional police officer. Seen from a regional objectivity, Belize has been singled out to be in the center of numerous regional and hemispherical security problems; it is facing several of the same security challenges as its neighbors and explains the use of armed forces at the service of the public safety and the necessity to upgrade their law enforcement tactics and practices. The country also participates in many several mutual support instruments designed to assist and receive preparation and instruction from other nation's police bodies. An example of that international aid came in a report from 2008 entitled "Review of the Belize Department" written by a Jamaican consultant in which the Police Plan elaborated in 2006 was analyzed and critiqued pointed out the strong and weak points of that project.

Keywords: Military aid, National Security, Crime Prevention and Police Professionalization.

1 Introduction

Belize is a relatively small country, nearly 23,000 square kilometers[1], scarcely populated, 312,971 habitants, according to the May 2010 census. More than half the population lives in rural areas. The most significant urban concentration is Belize City, a beautiful colonial town destroyed by hurricanes and devastated by the lack of maintenance from the authorities, where ample layers of poverty on the society can be seen[2]. Belmopan, the country's capital, can be found just an hour and a half from Belize City, and its airport, which connects with San Salvador, and several cities in the United States[3].

Belmopan is the administrative city where the main government ministries, offices and the University of Belize, the most important higher education institution of Belize, are concentrated. The public offices reflect the nation's administrative Achilles' heel, while other buildings, mainly the embassies, especially the American, British and Mexican contrast and make evident the important presence that the international community holds in this country. Belmopan is a small city, to where civil servants and students displace themselves on a daily manner from their residences in small towns near the Guatemalan border, or from Belize City itself[4].

As an old British colony it forms part of the Commonwealth, and has strict relations with the countries members of the CARICOM; nevertheless its positioning on the Central American continent, the shared problems, as well as the cultural diversity[5], pushes Belize to form part of the integration dynamic of Central America. Its location,

[1] It is a bit larger than El Salvador in size.
[2] This city deserves the attention and support from the international community for its reconstruction before it is too late and the beautiful wooden houses are lost forever, with the different styles that compose it.
[3] The capital of Belize City was moved to Belmopan by the effects of hurricanes and floods. Its foundations date back to 1961 after Hurricane Hattie destroyed Belize City. In 1970, most government offices were already functioning in the town so it was declared the capital. It lies inland and is less vulnerable to the effects of natural phenomena. There are several U.S. cities that have direct flights to Belize; Los Angeles, Charlotte, Miami and Houston.
[4] According to interviews conducted, a great number of the people who work or study in Belmopan does not live in the capital for distinct motives. This generates important displacements of persons on the buses that serve as regional public transport.
[5] Most of the population is mestizo, most of them from Central America, Mexican or Maya, the other important group is that of African descent (also with different origins). The presence of Asians, mostly Taiwaneseis increasingly highlighted. The official language is English, which also unites all groups, but Creole, Spanish, and Chinese are widely used languages. This is also reflected in the political speeches of the two major parties: the United Democratic Party (UDP), which defends Caribbean unity and the People's United Party (PUP), actively seeking more integration with Central America.

bordering by land with Mexico and Guatemala, but also by water with Honduras, turns Belize into a strategic point for the smuggling of weapons, drugs and immigrants[6]. This historic, geographic and strategic situation also explains the influence of Great Britain, United States, Mexico and Taiwan.

The head of State is Queen Isabel II, represented by a Governor General, Sir Corville Young; the British contain leverage in the symbolic, economic and cultural aspects[7] (although it seems to be diminishing in the security playing field)[8]. The United States and Mexico act as the main political and commercial partners of the country. This is reflected in the cooperation policies especially in the fields of military and law enforcement, as well as in commercial aspects[9], and in tourism[10]. The CARICOM members enjoy a significant political, cultural and symbolic presence while the Central American countries, as already mentioned, because of geographical reasons, share a common luck that goes from the need for cooperation and efforts of regional integration, to the historical lack of trust, border delimitation disputes and the political and social inequity that separates them –for this case the cultural differences and lack of knowledge can be added-. Taiwan, with its strong presence in Central America, excels especially in Belize, as a result of the elevated number of Taiwanese citizens in the small and medium size stores and shops around the country, as well as the role this country plays as a platform for Asian transit towards the United States.

2 Belize in the Context of Hemispheric Security

The importance this country plays as a trampoline towards the north has already been mentioned. This situation contrasts with the visible weakness of the local political authorities when they have to deal with this threat. Under the shadow of Great Britain and under the shelter of the United States, Mexico and the countries of the CARICOM, Belize has had to deal, since its independence in 1981, with a very reduced army the “Guatemalan” threats. In maps and official documents, some of which are still today displayed in public places, Guatemala states that Belize was part of its territory[11]. Given the size and the economic capacity of Belize, the army has always been reduced in numbers, practically inexistent[12], which is why in this text we will refer specifically to the law enforcement of the country, and we are going to analyze somberly its dynamics, structures, reflecting on the formation, instruction and specialization of the elements belonging to this institution.

Until June 2010in Belize there was one only ministry of “National Security” under the hand of Carlos Perdomo, a civil minister who was closely related to Prime Minister Dean Barrow[13]. This ministry was responsible of the army, police force, migration and coastal guard, which with the help of the United States have been gaining center stage attention in recent years[14]. However, a rise in crime rates, and the perception of escalation in criminal activities discerned in the public opinion, provoked a change headed by the Prime Minister, on that date, which divided the ministry into two separate organisms. Carlos Perdomo maintained his post at the Ministry of

[6]Belize has consulates in different countries; the flow of undocumented immigrants calls especial attention to the consulates Nigeria, Taiwan and Cuba, where, according to interviews, especially in the first two obtaining the Belizean nationality can be achieved easily before travelling to the country.

[7]To this very day, in order to obtain very common college degrees, students must go to Great Britain, or the University of the West Indies, Jamaica or Barbados. All the attorneys that practice law in the country have been prepared in higher education institutions in other countries.

[8]The actual British military presence is symbolic. They went from having 70 soldiers to now only posting 30. There have been talks of leaving behind a platoon composed of ten elements.

[9]Sugar cane, critics, shrimp and tourism are the top economic activities in Belize. Oil exploration is slowly becoming an economic alternative.

[10]The tourist potential of this country is very large. There Americans are currently the major consumers of this product.

[11]In some borders such as Guatemala-Honduras, through Puerto Barrios-Corinto, in the Guatemalan immigration office, you can still find a map where Belize forms part of Guatemala. The same map was recently withdrawn from the border between Guatemala and Belize. We should remember that Guatemala recently had to correct in their white book of Defense, due to the fact that Belize was reported as part of its territory. The road that connects Peten with Belize was unpaved until a few months down the side of Guatemala, in fact the works are still incomplete. From the Belizean side of the signs made no mention of Guatemala, but rather of the "Western Border." Today, both countries have used international forums to settle once and for all what is now considered a conflict of "border limits."

[12]According to Military Balance in 2007, Belize had a military force composed of 1.050 active elements, plus 700 in reserve. Combat teams were practically nonexistent. IISS (2007). The Belize Defence Force was established on January 1978 and is headquartered in Ladyville. Minister Perdomo noted that in the 31st anniversary of the institution, "the primary military mission was to support the defense agencies of law and order in the fight against crime and other illegal activities that contributed to the destabilization social community." On the same note, he states that the training of new soldiers lasts 16 weeks."31st Anniversary of BDF & Passing Out of Recruit Intake # 51" Ministry of National Security, 01-30-09

[13]In a previous UDP administration, led by Manuel Esquivel, which ended in 1998, Barrow was the Minister of National Security, and Perdomo was the Executive Director of the Ministry.

[14]The Coast Guard was created in 2005. Admiral Cedric Borland was the first commander. The Coast Guard began with 60 elements and six boats. In August 2009 Captain John Borland, second in command, formed in England and Sweden, took over of a force of 86 elements and 12 boats. The United States has provided support to this force. "Comdr. Johnnie Borland Coast Guard Takes Over Command" Reporter 8/21/2009.

Defence and Immigration, while the Belizean Defence Force was now responsibility of the Brigade General Dario Tapia, and the Immigration Department under the supervision of Ruth Meighan[15]. In addition, Douglas Singh, an important Senator[16], who collaborated in the design of the Official strategy "RESTORE Belize"[17], had been selected to head the Ministry of Police and Public Safety" substituting the Police Commissioner Crispin Jeffries.

The reasons given for the switch were in part because the department responsibilities were too ample and minister Perdomo was incapable of responding positively to these, challenge that was assumed by the new minister[18]. The expected announcement of the RESTORE Belize Program, as well as the separation of the Ministry in two was given in the first of June; parallel to these announcements, the previous night, in Belize City, Rodwell Williams, attorney at law and friend, as well as main business partner of the Prime Minister, had been seriously injured in front of the Barrow and Williams' head office[19].

The police leaders were appointed by the preceding PUP government in the last gasps of their term in office. Aside from the destitution of the previous police chief, the acting police force commander and his team do not enclose the endorsement of the actual governors who since May of 2009 have extended on a yearly basis Jeffries' contract, and as we shall see ahead, openly show their public inconformity with him; they are also searching for a suited substitute outside of the country, attributing his term to scarce results within the police force, as well as the negative public image that fell under Minister Singh.

Belize finds itself in the middle of many troubles, as it has been mentioned above, mainly related to regional and hemispheric security issues. The great difference of this country is probably the disproportionate lack of preparation and professionalization, resources and elements available in their corporations, in comparison to their neighbors. Aside from this handicap, in all of the countries in the region, including Mexico, law enforcement and security corps do not have enough personnel to confront their problems that interrelate the different security forces, mixing missions, and internal objectives without a rational logic.

In this sense, Belize is not so far behind from the rest of its neighbors, since the nation's armed forces are, as said by minister Perdomo, at the service of the country's public safety. Perhaps an advantage to the Belizean level of political control over their armed forces, in respect to their neighbors, is that the reduced number of officers, as well as their lack of corporal tradition, has reduced the corporatist temptation and have not allowed the consolidation of an autonomous political culture or will that may be put in danger, considering the democratic regimen. Another advantage is that, as in the case of military-less countries, the police service in Belize is the oldest, most consolidated and stable security faction with a high level of presence in the territory (not taking into consideration the low number of elements available).

At regional level, Belize part takes in various instruments of mutual support with several of the previously mentioned countries. With Mexico and Guatemala it works conjointly with GANSEF (Grupo de alto Nivel de Seguridad Fronteriza), it is also integrated under the Merida Initiative with Central America, and in the Central American Regional Security Initiative, which complements the American policy in its combat against transnational delinquency and drugs; it is also involved in other organisms that are sponsored by Central American Integration System such as the OCAM (Central American Commission of Directors of Migration) which meets frequently under the CAIS[20]. Belize is also an active member of the CARICOM program known as IMPACS (Implementation

[15]The image offered by the Belizean immigration officials is apparently very correct. In my opinion from all the borders of Central America, including Costa Rica, Belize has possibly the best service and the best deal you get the tourist traffic – the case is not the same with customs agents. Border crossings are few, and perhaps it is easier to train a small number of officers. But corruption scandals are very common. Mexican and U.S. authorities wanted to know more about the "permissiveness" that exists in Taiwan, Cuba and Africa. Recently the director of Belizean migration, Gareth Murillo was replaced for a scandal involving visas to Chinese, Cubans, Sri Lankans and Somalis carrying Kenyan passports. "Director of Immigration, Gareth Murillo, removed from his post following immigration scandal" Channel 5 News, 18/11/2010.

[16]Chairman of the Committee on "Government Business" in the Senate, Chairman of the UDP government party and the owner of one of the leading companies. "Will the new Police Minister, Doug Singh, be tough on crime?". Adele Ramos, Amandala, 04/06/2010.

[17]RESTORE is an acronym for "Re-Establishment Security through Rehabilitation and Education Outreach" "RESTORE Belize needs political and public will, says Mary Vasquez, CEO program" Adele Ramos, Amandala, 04/06/2010.

[18]"Crime Crisis: Takes charge Barrow" Adele Ramos, Amandala, 04/06/2010, "PM announces Cabinet reshuffle Barrow" Aaron Humes. Amandala, 04/06/2010.

[19]"Rodwell Williams shot" Daniel Ortiz and Adele Ramos, Amandala, 01/06/2010. Given the gravity of the wounds, he had to be admitted in a Florida hospital where he recovered.

[20]"Directors of migration grouped in the OCAM, agree draft EU regulation to strengthen migration management" CAIS Secretary General, 23/02/2011. In the Central American Armed Forces Conference (CFAC), Belize only acts as an "observer".

Agency for Crime and Security), that coordinates the efforts of the Caribbean countries as a response to felonies and wrongdoings, through meetings of Commissioners of Police, military chiefs, Immigration, Customs, and Intelligence. This extensive and varied participation situates Belize within Central America and the Caribbean, places it in a privileged position and allows the reception of information, financing and formation through the main regional actors: U. S. and Mexico.

3 Police in Belize: Transformation, Formation and the promotion of its elements

3.1 Historical Background

The Belize Police Department has suffered four important changes since it was established in 1886. Between 1886 and 1902 it was known as the "British Honduras Constabulary Force" and "British Honduras Police Force" between 1902 and 1973. By changing the name once more in 1973, from British Honduras to Belize, the police force went on to be known as the "Belize Police Force", and soon after it was renamed as the "Belize Police Department".

Before 1866, the public order was in the hands of two British army companies stationed in the cities of Belize, Corozal and Orange Walk. Their mission was to protect the communities settled in the borders with the Mayans that were engaged in their own conflict, the Caste War, in the Yucatan Peninsula.

In 1886, Captain M.D. Allen was sent to conscript 60 officers in Barbados; these substituted both companies which had been sent back to Jamaica. They were installed in Orange Walk. After two more recruiting expeditions to Barbados in 1888, Allen had a fleet of 175 police officers under his watch, achieving to install a watch post in Corozal, right on the Mexican border. Between 1891and 1893, the contracts of the majority of the workforce brought over from Barbados expired after having served five years; many of them returned home, while others stayed in Belize. Major Kaye, who was the acting chief of police at the time, travelled to Jamaica where he hired 100 officers to complete the existing law enforcement group (although several of them did not last very long either)[21].

The influence adopted from the British and Caribbean tradition can be seen with clarity today in the structures, rulebooks, and also in something as visible as the uniforms, very similar to those used by the police in Jamaica and other English-speaking Caribbean countries.

Considering the independence process, as well as some resistance from different nationalist sectors, this foreign influence is distinguishable because the Belizean government recently posted a solicitation in which it is looking for a police Commissioner; the candidates do not need to have built a law enforcement career in Belize, and can be from any country belonging to the Commonwealth, mainly because of the similarity in the laws and traditions. This is evidence of the lack of confidence in the existing police structures, and a demand for radical changes, but also serves as recognition of how Belize is involved in the integration of specific cultural and political structures. This new policy contrasts however with a relative stability of the Police Commissioners who since 1975 have been relatively durable in their positions[22].

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Belizean government decided it was time to change the police apparatus. Since then, there have been three major efforts of analysis, and reform planning that have been planted as necessary, but also very difficult to achieve. In the year 2000, the first multi-year plan (2000-2005) was developed in order to make transforming objectives for the police and their modes of operation. In 2006, the second "Police Plan" (2006-2010) appeared and in November 2008 so did a report entitled "Review of the Belize Department" by Harold Crooks, a Jamaican constabulary hired as a consultant.

The second multi-year plan became a continuation of the first, trying to further develop the actions not met in the first plan. According to the authors of the second report, in the first five years a plan was consolidated to make the police more amicable, known in Belize as the "Community Based Policing" establishing 31 neighborhood watch programs and six police citizen committees. It also increased the training for police

[21]Belizean police. In the National Archives of Belize, located in Belmopan, there are a number of funds that could be analyzed and studied conveniently allows the development of this work.

[22]E. A. Willoughby, 1975-1981; H.M. Samuel 1981-86; B.A. Bevans 1986-1991; K.A. Haylock 1991-1993; S.E. Zuñiga 1993-1996; O.H. Brooks 1996-1999; H.G. Williams 1999-2000; J.C Zetina 2000-2005; G. Westby 2005-2009; and finally C. Jeffries 2009- Historical Data in "Palladium Police Digest": 7, Belize, S/f .

officers[23]; an anti-drug unit consisting of 35 elements was established; the legislation to combat firearms trafficking and drug was hardened by creating an information technology unit composed of 9 elements; progress was made in forensic investigation, creating a specialized unit to conduct a more professional work in crime scenes; also, the number of patrol cars increased on the roads, and a legal office to support the corporation was created. Among the aspects that the plan suggested should continue to improve are: the proper maintenance of the patrol vehicles acquired; escalating the trust of the population in order of incrementing the number of witnesses in trials; and expanding the intelligence units to all districts and not just concentrating them in Belize City. The strategies outlined in this second report are specified as follows: increasing the effectiveness of preventive patrols; improving safety on the roads; combating drug traffickers and transnational organized crime; improving investigation procedures in order to identify and secure criminals more effectively; improve morale and welfare of the members of the department and quality of service directed to the public looking to attain the support of the population. The report showed a need to improve training in virtually every strategic line indicated.

Harold Crooks was very critical in his report with the real intention of transformation coming from the police officers who designed and approved the multiyear plans indicated. In his opinion of the 28 targets planted by the first plan, only five were met, while in the second plan it was very difficult to measure the results (Crooks, 2008:17). The plans adopted by the police commissioner seemed very ambitious. In his opinion, a large number of strategies, policies and plans of action were designed but the magnitude of the transformation exceeded the management capacity of most of the high-ranking officers of the institution. It is derived from two consequences: a management culture in which the rhetoric and symbolic manipulation prevailed, and a step back in police management that focused on traditional practices, with low levels of accountability and an increase in practices of corruption (Crooks, 2008:146)[24].

3.2 The Crooks Report: "Review of the Belize Police Department"

Harold Crooks was hired for a consultancy on the Belizean police state. His work held between June 2 and November 30, 2008, consisted of a full analysis of local policing problems. The report is organized into nine sections[25], and numerous sub sections[26];it is reflected in 174 pages and presents 167 specific recommendations. The Belizean Government accepted and turned the report into a foundational document, available on the Police Department website www.belizepolice.bz. The reaction to the document was quite positive. The new government launched the renovation of the Department based on this report, and selected Commissioner Jeffries as the new police chief in order to promote this work[27].

Crooks developed a highly critical report in which he analyzed point by point the main problems of the Belize police force. In this section we will only reflect some of the fundamental aspects of it. The issue of training and preparation is one of the most important axis of the report, and stands as one of the most important areas of opportunity that the police must deal with in Belize; another is the promotion and career of the officers[28]. Its main conclusions are as follows:

- The criminal investigation division consists of 96 officers, 54 investigators and 42 for logistical support. They gather their evidence in a rudimentary way and lack of training to do it professionally. Also lacks technicians, organization and strategy.
- Urban violence is escalating, but there is a decline in the cooperation of witnesses by mistrust. This causes that very few criminals insured for murder face the judge, and even less receive imprisonment, thereby, increasing public distrust.

[23]Between 2000 and 2005, 469 were trained in criminal investigation, 500 local training and 242 attended courses abroad in various disciplines. "Police Plan 2006-2010", BPD, Belize 2006.
[24]Map 1 annexed.
[25]Police and research; training, education and culture, leadership and management, engineering, organizational capacity, policing and ethics, narcotics and organized crime units, police and law, public order and social integration, information and communication.
[26]Belize crime prevention and crime control and police operation, quality of police services, social integration of the police use of force, information technology and physical resources, "Community Based Policing" program, health, safety and welfare of officers, recruitment and training, and traffic accident prevention, development and the future of the Police Department.
[27]"Transforming the Belize Police Department into a more efficient and effective law enforcement agency" *Belize Police Department Newsletter*, Vol 1, Issue 1, December, 2009. We have see, however, that the government and people today feel dissatisfied with the dynamics implemented; in mid-2010 the ministry was divided into two, and the Commissioner was being questioned harshly. As of December of last year, there was a shift in the post of Commissioner when Crispin Jeffries took office.
[28]His comments on these aspects shall be reflected on the following sections, which will be centered on specifically on these themes.

- Information received by the division of criminal investigation of other agencies such as Immigration, Customs and Financial Intelligence Unit is limited. There is a lack of quality in the Criminal Intelligence Unit; it is very difficult to conduct intelligence analysis that is useful for the police action. Detectives are poorly trained. The same happens in forensics.
- There is criticism within the population due to lack of results and the growing corruption of the institution. There are many complaints that must be combated urgently. The internal affairs office is very small.
- There is no political follow regarding police chiefs. This leads to aggravation of a gap between the rhetoric of modernization and what is actually moving. There is no effective control or clear political direction.
- There is a leadership style in the traditional institution in the sense of the vertical chain of command. It neglects proactive leadership and effective control over subordinates. It is limited to maintaining domestic stability, rather than adapting to a changing context. Cannot find a proper management of human resources.
- It is important to adopt an agenda of human rights more aggressively at all levels of management, operation, training and education. You have to make a major change in police training, and to seek objectivity in career paths.

3.3 Formation and Political Career

The Belizean Police Department is made up of 1,139 career officers, 161 civilians and 54 volunteer policemen (Crooks, 2008:1)[29].

The career structure is defined as follows:

- Commissioner of Police (COP)
- Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP)
- Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP)
- Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP)
- Superintendent (SUPT)
- Assistant Superintendent (ASP)
- Senior Detective Inspector
- Detective Inspector
- Sergeant
- Corporal
- Constable

The formal police training in Belize, received by the recruits at the Police Academy located in Belmopan lasts six months[30]. Throughout the police officers livelihood, they have to strive personally to gaining skills or attend courses[31], usually offered by foreign cooperation that gives training in specific skills. The lack of training and specialization of the elements is a major problem that both the Policy Plan (2006-2010), and the Crooks report indicated as deficiencies essential for strengthening the police authority structure. The program curriculum consists of recruiting 756 hours (See Table 1).

Crooks (2008:50) says that the Police Academy can capacitate 120 recruits at a time, in a military camp environment, that makes discipline an intricate disciplinary principle. The lack of an auditorium, makes it difficult to concentrate all conscripts at the same time to receive lectures, and can only be organized in groups of 20 to 25 students led by two instructors. Moreover, the Academy has few teaching aids for learning, so it resorts to the traditional lecture, and poses few practical exercises towards the recruits.

At the head of the Academy is a commander who reports to the Director of Education. Crooks recommends hiring a Chief of Academic Studies with a civil profile, and improve collaboration with the University of Belize;

[29]The Department officially recognized in December 2009, 1,261 police elements. Belize Police Department Newsletter, Vol 1, Issue 1, December, 2009. Crooks recommends the necessity to reach 3.000 elements in 2014. According to Crooks (2008:40-41) force structure is divided as follows: 1 COP, 1 DCP, 2 (ACP), 6 (SSP), 14 (SUPT), 16 (ASP), 39 Detectives, 125 Sergeants, Corporals 198 and 740 Constables. Their recommendations are to increase to 5 ACP (policy adopted by the police), eliminate the category of Corporal and increased to 30 the category of Sergeant. He added that too many police officers were on administrative tasks.

[30]Although the ACP Noel Leal pointed out in the interview that the training budget has recently been reduced to four months.

[31]In the past 12 years, says Crooks (2008, 18) high-level officers have been sent to courses abroad, where they were introduced to crime literature, modern leadership and strategic protocols. Crooks insists, however, from a Caribbean perspective, that Belize should lobby with CARICOM to establish a stable cooperation and exchange of officers. Assistance should be increased of courses offered by Canada, the United States and other countries of the Caribbean on police management and implement a program to send senior officers to South Africa and Barbados for an extended period of time, for training in management techniques and leadership.

increase the training period from 6 to 18 months, reducing the introductory course to 4 months and then sending recruits to a 14 months supervised ground training program. In his opinion, the curriculum should change and the recruits should be introduced to the criminal laws, police procedures and some skills that should be reinforced in practice, returning to academy at the end of training for one week to complete the training course. It is important that the possible reform of the curriculum allows the recruits to receive basic knowledge of conflict resolution and use of force, the Constitution and human rights, sociology, crime prevention, psychology, the "Community Based Policing" program and basic history of Belize and the Caribbean (Crooks, 2008: 56).

The academy could be utilized more efficiently and better provided with means, according to the consultant, if it is transformed into an Institute of Education in Criminal Justice where recruits can be trained as prison, immigration and Customs agents, and even provide service for private security companies and other agencies (2008: 62).

For Crooks (2008, 61) it is very worrisome that 68% of police officers have no education beyond elementary school, this includes the higher ranks such as Inspector where only 25% have studies ranging from high school to Postgraduate. You have to change the police dynamics and create a culture of continuous learning that is also recognized in the promotion and advancement policy. It is very important that senior officers continue to explore and understand the comprehensive economic, historical, and sociological dynamics that affect Belizean political and social psyche and individual citizens[32].

In the Jamaican consultant's point of view, it is mandatory to continue training the higher ranks. Preparation should be ongoing, starting with introductory courses, which should be sophisticating the police career as it develops. Crooks points out the importance that, starting with the rank of superintendent, all officers should have college degrees, and recommends that the University of Belize be consulted to support the training of the officers[33].

3.4 Promotion and Advancement Policies

One of the most delicate and possibly most important areas of transformation of the police in Belize is the promotion and advancement of the better trained officers towards advanced ranks. The main criticism is that there have been no clear or transparent criteria for it, and the politicization of promotions has led to significant frustration and distrust in the police in society.

Crooks notes (2008: 25-26) that poor management of the promotion system has created a lack of confidence in the quality of the process. In order to support such a statement he quotes the Minister of National Security who in March 31, 2008 said that police leaders should address the issue of morality; that a just system for fair and objective of promoting had to be put in place, where police officers below the rank of deputy inspector had to prove a written examination, and in which senior officers were eligible based on a number of set requirements. This would eliminate the perception that promotions were unfair, and increase competition among the officers.
Prior to these statements, there was an instruction, approximately from 2003, that stated that no police would be eligible for promotion to any rank, unless it approved written exam supervised by a commissioner[34]. However, Crooks said that taking advantage of a loophole in the law; there have been only three promotion exams since 2000. The evaluation form is very subjective assessment, which has led to the idea that decisions are arbitrary, declining morale and confidence in senior officers. According to Crooks (2008:29), it is necessary to implement a

[32]The senior police officials need to know how the government works; have knowledge of criminal law and human rights for police management, strategic management, criminal justice, community development and leadership. They must be able to relate objectives of policing to democratic governance and national development. They must recognize connections between crime and other social problems in order to face the changes (Crooks, 2008:21).

[33]The Policy Plan 2006-2010 recognizes the specialized training as one of its major shortcomings. In fact almost every one of the objectives set points as commitments to implement a series of courses that strengthen specific areas: training courses in road safety education for police and the general public to be implemented in different districts permanently; train traffic officers in the use of speed radar and alcoholic measurement equipment; improve training of traffic accident investigations, establish a training system for all antidrug unit staff, whether received at home or outside; also intelligence, human trafficking and money laundering courses; establish and train a special operations and terrorism unit; increase training in forensics and the selection of evidence in crime scenes; also in interrogation and building records; train researchers in basic skills, and implement advanced training programs; train staff on issues of domestic violence, kidnapping and research on youth violence. It is also recommended that the commander of the police academy curriculum be reviewed.

[34]This point was confirmed in an interview by a person who does not want to be quoted. According to his version, promoted examination must be submitted in writing, but every officer must present themselves without any help. They do not know what they have to study, or what the exercise includes.

promotion program, a clear line of career and an improvement in the assessment, implementing training programs such as those suggested in this work[35].

One of the most interesting recommendations in this regard is to resume with enthusiasm a program known as "officer cadets", which has helped to improve the academic standards of the police. In most cases with their own efforts, and other times assisted by the government, the officers have attended the University. According to Crooks, rather than establishing intermittent recruitment for the position of "cadet police officer", there should be space so that three candidates undertake a police management course lasting 12 months. This would help, combined with the college, to raise professional standards, and create "fast track" vocations for qualified elements. In this sense, Crooks also suggests promotion policies for staff with five years of service, with a college degree, or attesting to a review (Crooks, 2008: 60-61)[36].

4 International aid: American and Mexican Cooperation for the Formation and Acquisition of Equipment

As we have seen, the institutional weakness, and lack of professionalism and training of members of its police force has hindered the establishment of regular courses for professional development. Like a fish biting its tail, it's really hard to get out of that situation.

At the same time, however, Belize has gained strategic importance in the hemispheric context, which has allowed it to receive the attention of powerful neighbors, notably the U.S. and Mexico, which have been increasing their investments in material support, such as human resource training to develop joint work as partners and have also enabled staff to develop the agreed tasks.

Between 1996 and 2012, the United States programmed handing over to Belize $30,765,303 million in technical assistance and training. The support began in 2005 and has been kept constant to date, since the former aid was almost marginal support[37] (See Table 2).

Belize is part of a U.S. comprehensive strategy for the Caribbean and Central America. Between 2007 and 2012 the American overall budget for support of Central America has been of about 314 million dollars, while for the Caribbean region 276 million (part of which would support Belize). Alongside these regional funds, there are those allocated to each country. In this context, it can be perceived that the political-strategic importance of Belize to the United States is equivalent to that of its major neighbors in the region[38].

From 2007 to 2009 461 police and military men were trained by U.S. specialists. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly which courses they received, but it is possible to reference the program that funded the assistance, which can deduce by the type of staff attending the courses in question. In other words, 143 Belizeans were trained under the program "Non Security Assistance-Unified Command", 82 with the International Military Education Training an (IMET), 73 under the "Global Peace Operations Initiative", 61 under "Section 1004. Counter-Drug Assistance", 33 with the Foreign Military Financing, 23 in" Service Academies ", 20 by the "Foreign Military Financing", 16 were sent to the "Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies" (CHDS), and 10 to the "Counter-terrorism Fellowship Program[39]". What can be inferred is that most of them were military or police training pertaining to the fight against drugs, others were trained to operate equipment shipped over, and to a lesser extent staff were trained in matters of defense policy, and several officers were sent to the various police academies and military schools in the United States[40].

[35]Over 90% of those promoted in 2007 did not take an exam, nor did they have any special skills to justify their promotion (Crooks, 2008:29). With regard to moral issues such as wages or compensation for risky services, life insurance and health care are issues to be analyzed. Much of the police force is stationed in places far from their homes, and the institution does not count with a mean of transport to take them to their homes. Personally I have on several occasions given cops who are begging on the road transport. If you take the regular bus journey it can take three to four hours. This also affects the morale of the members, as I have seen in the conversations I had with these officers.

[36]The Police Plan 2006-2010 established generating five annual scholarships within its policies to permit officers receive higher education studies.

[37]Just the Facts. Military and Police Aid, All programs, entire region. 1996-2012.

[38]Belize received $22,279,685 USD; Haiti 111,832,101; Jamaica 19,518, 219; Bahamas 43,348,482; Trinidad and Tobago 13,757,987; Dominican Republic 31,172, 551; Honduras 45,207,108; El Salvador 44,876,589; Nicaragua 37,153, 084; Guatemala 54,736,198; Panama 37,852,330; Costa Rica 9,685,889. Just the Facts. Military and Police Aid, all programs, entire Region 2007-2012.

[39]Just the Facts. Military and Police Trainees from Belize, 2007-2012 (This table needs to update the information from 2010). On the website of the U.S. Embassy in Belize are several news reports about the delivery of weapons, and some courses received by police or military. In the same, way police publications that have been referenced in this work are also information on some of these courses.

[40]Through the news reports and interviews we can deduce that Coast Guard officers are being trained in a special way by the US.

In the case of Mexican cooperation, especially in areas of training or capacitating, it is much harder to track, but it is existent. Belizean police go to train regularly to Mexico, especially in Chetumal, and there are existing programs in both the Federal Police and the Attorney General's Office (PGR) who also travel to Belize to train police officers on site. Through the Seventh Program of Technical and Scientific Cooperation Mexico-Belize 2010-2012, four courses on security were scheduled, of which recently between 9 and May 13, 2011, the PGR gave the first, "Training in Forensic Ballistics". In 2010, the Mexican federal police trained 132 Belizean policemen, teaching the following courses: "Scene of the Crime and Preservation of Evidence" (10-14 May); "Reconstruction of Road Accidents" (17-21 May); "Interviews and Interrogations" (June 7-11); "Safety and Survival Tactics" (2-6 August) and; "Analysis and Police Intelligence" (11-15 October)[41].

5 Conclusions

The Belizean government has perfectly identified the weaknesses of the police system, both regarding the organization and structure, as well as the politicization that exists in the career pattern, as in the deficiency of a training system virtually nonexistent.

Efforts have been made planning and analysis interesting. The two multi-year policing plan, despite its poor results are major advances in the sense that clearly identify system weaknesses and provides a range of strategies to address them. The report Crooks is an excellent analysis of the state police department, which has also been accepted by both the political class, as career police themselves, despite the harsh criticism that makes the system operation. Clearly indicates the need to establish a permanent model of police training, and raising the cultural level and professional career elements, also in capital letters is highlighted the importance of establishing clear guidelines for development and promotion to senior ranks hierarchical structure.

The government of Prime Minister Barrow, who took office in mid-2008, has been receptive to the demands and criticisms of society, concerned about crime rates and the perception of corruption in the police force. No doubt have been receptive to the pressures on an international context in which Belize has an important role as a bridge between the strategic Caribbean, Central and North America. For this reason it has made important political utmost confidence of the Prime Minister Perdomo and Singh as the head of this policy and strategies have changed, when they have been overtaken by circumstances. In 2009, police drove the transformation supporting the report's recommendations Crooks, and changing to the Commissioner of Police. In 2010 they divided the Ministry of National Security in two, trying to achieve greater efficiency in management and political control of the different departments, introducing also the RESTORE program, which aims to improve security by promoting education and aspects of society social. In 2011 after the failure of all these efforts, the lack of progress and commit to change again the police commissioner, seeking an experienced replaces the Commonwealth countries to try to transform, which so far have not been modified.

We'll have to see how this new strategy evolves, but it is difficult to see positive results if there is no real political will to change, and if resources are invested in the right direction. It is important to professionalize the police Belize, and establish, as in most countries of the region, an institutionalization of professional education of police personnel.

[41] Data offered by the Mexican Embassy in Belize.

Map 1. Distribution of the police station in Belize

Source: Crooks, 2008.

Table1. Recruit Training Syllabus

Topic		**Hours**		**Percentages**
Police Procedures	137		18.12%	
Law		126		16.66%
Physical Exercise	87		11.50%	
Orientation Topics	65		8.59%	
Attachment (BZECTY)	42		5.55%	
Scenes of Crime	37		4.89%	
Study Revision	35		4.62%	
Public Order		33		4.30%
Drill		32		4.23%
Graduation Preparation	32		4.23%	
Exam/ Revision	30		3.96%	
Test		22		2.91%
Road Run		15		1.98%
Inspection		15		1.98%
Fatigue	15		1.98%	
Sports		12		1.58%
Human Dignity & Conflict Resolution		9		1.19%
Constitutional Rights		4		0.55%
Self Defense		3		0.40%
Sociology/ Psychology	3		0.40%	
Crime Prevention	2		0.28%	
Total		**756**		**100%**

Source: Crooks (2008:53-54).

Table 2. Military and Police Aid, All programs, entire region 1996-2012

2005	1, 516,156
2006	1, 014, 205
2007	2, 777,070
2008	5, 873,580
2009	3, 492,905
2010	3, 283, 810
2011	3, 425, 810
2012	3, 425, 810

Source: Just de Facts. Military and Police Aid, All programs, entire region 1996-2012. In American dollars.