

# **POLICE VEHICULAR PURSUITS**

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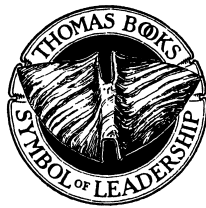
# POLICE VEHICULAR PURSUITS

Constitutionality, Liability and Negligence

*By*

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## PREFACE

This book was written in an effort to fill a gap in the existing body of knowledge in the field of policing and law enforcement. As our nation's roadways continue to grow ever more congested, the myriad of legal and administrative issues inherent in police vehicular pursuits have never been more salient. To date there is no offering that attempts to assemble the many findings of previous research into the area of vehicular pursuit and the resulting liability and negligence that often accompany such operations. Research conducted on police vehicular pursuits has important ramifications for other areas of law enforcement, especially that involving the use of force. Legal rulings resulting from instances of pursuit can impact other areas of law enforcement and serve to heighten the legal risks for most contemporary law enforcement organizations. This is a timely and important topic with few textbook offerings.

W.L.H.



## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Preface</i> .....	v
 <i>Chapter</i>	
1. PUBLIC AND POLICE POLICY .....	3
2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH .....	13
3. LIABILITY AND NEGLIGENCE .....	31
4. STATE TORT LAW .....	55
5. FEDERAL LIABILITY LAW .....	69
6. USE OF FORCE AND VEHICULAR PURSUITS .....	83
7. NATIONAL PURSUIT POLICY, TECHNOLOGICAL PROPOSALS, AND LEGISLATIVE ADVANCEMENTS .....	97
 <i>Index</i> .....	 115





# **POLICE VEHICULAR PURSUITS**



## Chapter 1

### PUBLIC AND POLICE POLICY

In an effort to understand and appreciate the theoretical concepts governing police policy, it is perhaps best to begin with a brief discussion of public policy. The American public envisions many things when the topic of public policy is broached: military activities, social security, welfare, agricultural subsidies, or medical expenditures. Congressional representatives, presidents, governors, administrators, and even lobby groups create policy. Stated more fundamentally, public policy “is the sum of the activities of governments, whether acting directly or through agents, as it has an influence on the lives of citizens” (Peters, 1982, p. 4). Public policy has also been defined as “a course of action intended to accomplish some end” (Hecl, 1972, p. 85). In addition, Eulau and Prewitt maintained that policy is “a standing decision characterized by behavioral consistency and repetitiveness” both by those who create it and those who abide by it (Eulau & Prewitt, 1971, p. 465).

Public policy is cumulative and incremental. It is concerned more with the long-term rather than a short-term guide for behavior. Although much of the popular media attention is directed toward critiquing the federal government and its many and varied policies, it must be understood that in the United States, with a federal system of government, there are a large number of subsidiary governments also creating policy and making decisions. In a perfect political environment every subsidiary government would cooperate with every other to create consistent programs and policies. However, the actions of the many governments existing within the United States are often in conflict with one another.

It is also important to remember that not all government policies are

implemented by government employees, whether at the federal or state level. Many government policies are implemented in the private sector by organizations or by individuals. This must be understood if an excessively narrow definition of public policy is to be avoided. Public policy does not concern only those programs that are directly administered in the public sector.

As this brief introduction to the intricacies of public policy comes to a close it is vital to turn now to the domain of police policy. Police policy is but one facet of public policy. Where public policy is concerned with the provision of many services and programs to society, police policy is concerned primarily with the provisions of law enforcement and order maintenance services. Public policy makes police services possible, while police policy ensures that this provision of services is in accord with the laws and mores of a democratic society.

In a democratic form of government, the state is considered subservient to the citizens. The purpose of government is to provide the citizenry with services and programs if society is to progress economically and technologically. Although the legislative functions of government remain with the citizens, the executive and judicial functions are, by necessity, rendered by special instruments of the government which remain subordinate to the people (Rousseau, 1948).

Thus, policing is far more than simply enforcing the laws of the land. Designed after the English system, American policing is performed by a variety of federal, state, and local agencies falling under civilian control. For the most part, state laws govern the activities of the police within jurisdiction of any particular state. As noted by George Cole and Christopher Smith (2001), state laws entrusted with the creation of sheriff's offices and local police forces emanate from state constitutions and statutes. Police administration as a function of government exists primarily in the abstract as individual agencies generally operate as autonomous units (Cole & Smith, 2001). Therefore, while the United States has a system for policing its society, it does not have a national police system such as those existing in many European and Asian countries. The system of policing in America is "the sum total of the efforts put forth by each of the multitude of agencies" (Kennedy, 1972, p. 7).

Fundamentally, police administration has been defined as "the organization, personnel, practices, and procedures essential to effective performance of the law enforcement and other traditional police

functions by those agencies to which responsibility has been entrusted” (Marx, 1963, p. 7). This definition embraces all of the activities of the federal, state, and local governments related to execution of the police function.

Guidelines and policies for proper police administration are developed by the U.S. Constitution, city charters, state statutes, and local ordinances (Cole & Smith, 2001). While officers and administrators find themselves adhering to a host of Supreme Court decisions and Constitutional provisions, local legislative bodies also develop guidelines and requisites administrators are obliged to follow. In addition, internal policies provide guidelines for officers and administrators alike as to the proper and effective performance of daily duties. To complicate an administrator’s role, modifications of existing policies and guidelines must be continuous as public pressure, political concerns, and court decisions generate new, more contemporary policies, highlighting freedom and liberty of the citizenry.

While the realm of police administration has been defined, the term “policy” is also want of an operational definition. According to Nicolaidis and Donner (1960), “Policy is a rule for action, manifesting or clarifying specific organizational goals, objectives, values, or ideals and often prescribing the obligatory or most desirable ways and means for their accomplishment. Such a rule for action established for the purpose of framing, guiding, or directing organizational activities including decision-making intends to provide relative stability, consistency, uniformity, and continuity in the operations of the organization” (p. 74).

As Pfiffner has noted, the preceding definition implies that policy is both “flexible and stable, and dynamic and static” (1960, p. 127). Policy is developed at all levels of the police organization. The chief alone does not have sole responsibility for forming and approving organizational policy. It is true that broad policies become formalized when approved by the chief, but there are many more interested parties in the primary development of policy than simply the chief. Smaller policies relating to specific functions of police operations may or may not require approval of the chief, depending on the agency. They may be formalized through approval of an appropriate command officer.