

**Item #88 (2)**

**The attached was provided after  
the item was already adopted  
but the speakers would like this  
to be on record**

**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL  
Regular Meeting  
June 16, 2020**

**SUBMITTED AT THE REQUEST OF  
MAYOR DALE V.C. HOLNESS**

## **The Concerned Local Citizens Program – A Successful Model for Community Security**

This paper was informed from a broad coalition of concerned combat veterans who have a message of hope for our civic leaders, police, and the American people. As a disclaimer first and foremost, the ideas in this paper do not advocate the militarization of police, citizens, or communities. In fact, we are moved to speak out because in many cases, police are using harsher tactics than the US military used on unarmed civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In order to address the current policing crisis among disenfranchised Americans, we require new ideas. One potential solution is a proven community security model used by the US military. When the military's mission in Iraq and Afghanistan transitioned from initial combat operations against Saddam and the Taliban to protection of the local population from insurgents, no program was more successful than a community led neighborhood watch program of paid citizens called the Concerned Local Citizens. This program effectively provided safety for the people, created essential jobs, and garnered community buy-in for the US security mission.

### **Background: Concerned Local Citizens program**

As violence escalated in the Iraq war, a military unit created an alliance between security forces and local disenfranchised community leaders that were previously loyal to Saddam Hussein. The new strategy gave community leaders permission to secure their own neighborhoods against Al Qaeda and other violent extremists. US forces trained and supported 4,500 initial Concerned Local Citizen groups, an event that later became known as the "Awakening". This Concerned Local Citizen program enlisted and paid community leaders and young adult males, nominated by their leaders, to conduct foot patrols, man checkpoints at critical intersections, and respond to and report incidents within their neighborhoods. The initial success of the "Awakening" greatly enhanced the effectiveness of US security forces and in 2007 General David Petraeus, Commanding General of US forces in Iraq, spread and supported the successful grassroots tactic to all field commanders in Iraq and the "Sons of Iraq" movement was born. Within months, Concerned Local Citizen units sprang up in disenfranchised communities across Iraq growing from roughly 14,000 in mid 2007 to 70,000 members in spring of 2008 covering two thirds of Iraq's population centers.

Equally important to the security gains provided, the program also gave much needed jobs to unemployed citizens for an economy ravaged by war. Citizens selected were paid monthly and directly by the US military initially and then later by the government of Iraq. These new jobs gave financial security for Citizens to provide for their families. By 2009, the Concerned Local Citizen's program employed over 100,000 members protecting sections of almost every city in Iraq and violent incidents in most cities were significantly reduced.

For both police and US military forces, Concerned Local Citizens also created a much-needed intermediary group to assist in carrying out security operations in previously hostile communities. US forces took predominantly a supervisory role for these groups, spot checking, and supporting Concerned Local Citizens during emergencies. The program also provided an effective mechanism for the US military to hold community leaders accountable for incidents that did occur. Although rare, members were reduced in pay and sometimes fired or even arrested if involved in wrongdoing.

Since Afghanistan is culturally very different from Iraq, there was no guarantee of transferring the program. Iraq was centralized, with large modern cities, and culturally used to government authority figures. Afghanistan was decentralized with few cities and the Afghan government was poorly funded. Afghans rarely knew anyone outside their villages and typically rejected government involvement in their community and family affairs. Despite these challenges, the same underlying principles existed - the need for safety and economic investment. The fact that the program was

successful in both countries does suggest it can be tailored as a cross-cultural fit to address these root issues.

### **Solution: Community Led Security**

An adapted Concerned Local Citizens program has the potential to be a viable solution to our current crisis in disenfranchised communities that have lost confidence in their police. A program could be designed to establish City or County paid positions for known, well-established community leaders to lead and nominate a cadre of paid citizens for community safety. These citizens would be trained and equipped to enforce laws that are essential to public safety but will rarely escalate into a violent altercation. In most cases, they would respond to emergencies and be responsible for de-escalation of tensions. Here are a few potential ideas and benefits a program like this could create.

#### **Potential Benefits**

##### ***1. Accountability & Community Context***

Concerned Local Citizens can address non-violent issues, while also providing community legitimacy for required police responses to violent crimes. Concerned Local Citizens groups keep police accountable in ways that body cameras are unable to do and may be able to de-escalate tense situations with known community individuals involved without the use of force. Concerned Local Citizens can also provide police valuable context when responding to situations in the community. Conversely, they can attest and provide witness to dangerous situations that police were validated in using proportional force.

##### ***2. Community Investment & Non-Security Services***

Police funded programs and funds for additional personnel that were previously allocated for these communities are recommended to be transferred to pay for the salaries and equipment necessary for Concerned Local Citizens. The Concerned Local Citizen program would create enduring community jobs during a time of unprecedented unemployment and invest much needed resources into these communities. Beyond providing security, each community can utilize their members the way they see fit. Members of the program are required to live in the neighborhoods they serve and could provide non-security related services like wellness checks, senior assistance, and other community requests at the direction of their leadership.

##### ***3. Leadership and Reporting***

We recommend the Concerned Local Citizen community leaders report directly to a newly established City or County leadership position who works under the Mayor and Commissions for resources. The City or County leader would provide the security reporting necessary to analyze trends and requests for specialized capabilities (i.e. forensics). The Concerned Local Citizen leader would also report unwanted influences by external criminal organizations that are trying to victimize people.

##### ***4. Supervision & Emergency Response***

Police are recommended to maintain a community presence to quickly respond to violent criminal acts and other serious crimes Concerned Local Citizens are unequipped to handle. However, policing roles would transition from patrolling in communities, to investigating more serious crimes, conducting operations that require a higher level of tactical proficiency, and emergency response. When emergencies do occur, Police and Concerned Local Citizens will both be required to respond. Due to the strategic placement of Concerned Local Citizens throughout the community at checkpoints and in patrols, it is likely Concerned Local Citizens response time will be quicker than police in the majority of incidents. This provides vital initial assessments and potential for de-escalation prior to police arrival.

## **The Way Ahead**

The goal is to create and sustain a grassroots program with enough credibility, resources, and effectiveness to re-establish community trust and confidence in law enforcement. Eventually, as public trust is regained, it will be vitally important to officially deputize the program and its members as a statutory law enforcement agency in order for the local municipality to sustain progress.

Combat veterans have a unique perspective and authority in understanding how to provide security. We can attest to the efficacy and success of this program in creating vital community buy in and investment. This program is not just a feasible option, but one that combat veterans have witnessed first-hand be successful over many years in far worse conditions and with less resources available.

**Veterans know and trust that American citizens are ready and willing to accept this level of responsibility to protect their communities and heal our nation.**

### Co-Authors

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