

Puerto Rico's Police Department is Key to Post-Maria Recovery

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Abstract

This article examines the importance of effective policing to economic recovery following a large-scale natural disaster, specifically studying the case of Puerto Rico and Hurricane Maria. The research consists of several academic studies as well as data collections and reports from government sources and publications from reputable scientific, public welfare, and news outlets. This study first asserts the economic damage done to Puerto Rico by Hurricane Maria and explores the reasons for the long and incomplete recovery compared to other disasters on the United States mainland. It then moves forward to consider the relationship between crime and economics, finding that economics tend to improve following a decrease in crime. Public support is found to be important to disaster relief, but financial support is determined not to be the most important variable in measuring support. An analysis of two sources compares the requirements for and problems with handling large hurricanes against the capabilities of the Puerto Rico Police Department (PRPD). Based on this analysis, I assert that the PRPD was sorely unprepared to handle Maria and its subsequent issues, including crime, due to eroded social authority and deep internal issues. The article concludes that the successful recovery of the island hinges upon the ability of the PRPD to renew their mission and update their policies, hiring and training processes, and internal workings to ensure accountability and responsibility at all levels, then on their attention turning to community support, public safety, and most importantly, criminal apprehension.

Puerto Rico's Police Department is Key to Post-Maria Recovery

Preventing a disaster of the weather is beyond the scope of law enforcement, but that doesn't mean that law enforcement officers (LEOs) need to be woefully undereducated and unprepared on how to react. Since Hurricane Katrina flooded New Orleans in 2005, natural disasters have been a stressful but under-researched concern of twenty-first century America. Following several massive hurricanes in 2017, it is clearer than ever that law enforcement, government, and public agencies need to be better prepared to handle dangerous weather when it occurs and to meet the needs of the people in the aftermath. Since Katrina, no hurricane has illustrated this concern more dramatically than Hurricane Maria, from which Puerto Rico is still far from healed. Following the hurricane, law enforcement on the island has lost much of its authority and crimes have become a greater problem for the public. The pressing question is how to stabilize society and restore order and prosperity. Crime management and the monopoly on violence must return under the control of the PRPD in order to raise public support and bolster the economy for the island to recover from the destruction of Hurricane Maria.

The main purpose of this article is to develop a greater understanding of the need for better policing strategies in Puerto Rico for the sake of restoring order. To explore this concept, the major research questions were: how is policing related to crime?; how are policing and crime related to economic activity?; what was the effect, and to what extent, of Hurricane Maria on the Puerto Rican economy?; and finally, how could the police department have been better prepared for the hurricane and its resulting economic and criminal stressors?

This research has been carried out through analysis and application of various studies in the fields of criminology, economics, and disaster response and public safety. Also included in analysis are data collected by reputable sources, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation

(FBI) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and online publications of public forums and organizations, such as USA Today and World Vision.

Limitations to the research are lacking and limited data available from Puerto Rico as a result of limited reporting and limited public availability of FBI and Department of Justice (DOJ) information.

Principle conclusions of the research are that the PRPD was woefully unprepared for a natural disaster, particularly not for one of Hurricane Maria's magnitude. This lack of preparedness and a poor history within the department of inadequate training essentially guaranteed that the police force would be weak following the storm. The economic situation is worse than it may at first appear but could improve if there were more public support for Puerto Rican recovery and an efficient attack on criminal activity. Most assume that a stronger economy and greater prosperity reduces the need for crime and thus leads to lower crime rates; the literature indicates that the relationship is the opposite, and that the economy is only able to strengthen when crime decreases for other reasons. The PRPD is hindered from reducing crime by their out-of-date and incomprehensive policies, inadequate training and accountability for officers, and severe lack of public trust. For a successful economic recovery, the police department must first improve their internal issues, then reclaim their legal and social authority to efficiently handle criminal activity.

Literature Review

Previous studies on crime in Puerto Rico post-Hurricane Maria proved to be exhaustive. I reviewed and utilized case studies regarding previous incidents and other natural disasters, including Hurricane Katrina (Rojek and Smith). These general findings support the importance of public support and police organization, while the DOJ's full report on their investigation into

the Puerto Rican police clearly delineate several deep-rooted problems preventing the institution from being an effective force for criminal apprehension or public safety. Other sources provide informational contexts, such as Bram, Martinez, and Steindel's brief article. Still other sources confirm and clarify links between criminal activity and economic activity, such as Harrell et al.'s summary analysis of data collected by the Bureau of Justice Statistics on violent crime as related to impoverished households, and the study by Stacy, Ho, and Pendall on neighborhood-level economics and its relationship to criminal activity within those neighborhoods.

The brief article by Bram, Martinez, and Steindel (2008) summarizes the economy of Puerto Rico over a period of two years. Understanding the functional economy is crucial to understanding the extent to which it was impacted by Hurricane Maria. Some trends may point towards predictions for how the economy has or will rebound from its current downturn as well as the influence of other variables.

"Local Economic Impacts of Natural Disasters" (2011) analyzes how a small economy responds to a devastating natural disaster, which is very closely related to my study of how Puerto Rico's economy responds to Hurricane Maria. Yu finds that the local economy in their study suffers temporarily but is able to recover over time and explains how it manages to do so. Because Puerto Rico is a larger area and their natural disaster was comparatively more damaging, regarding this article as a smaller-scale case study offers insights into how the economy can work to sustain itself in times of low prosperity.

Hurricane Maria left Puerto Rico in a state of economic distress and social chaos for the better part of two years. Following the devastation, Puerto Ricans were left without power, potable water, shelter, health care, and adequate law enforcement services. The complete loss of a safety net for the public destabilized the island and allowed crime and intimidation to rise. The

key to reducing crime, encouraging donations and government funding for reconstruction, and seeing renewed economic growth is to secure public safety through the PRPD.

Stacy, Ho, and Pendall find in their 2017 study that the relationship between crime and economics works in the opposite direction than is usually assumed. In their study, crime rates decrease when there was a higher non-residential neighborhood economy. Their focus on non-residential economics provide an interesting point of discussion on how different economic flows impact the various members of a community. These findings demonstrate the importance of a functioning local economy with respect to criminal activity. I will use their results to critically review and support my hypothesis that more effective policing is vital to economic recovery. Supporting the cycle, Dr. Alan Wiig wrote an article on Camden, New Jersey as a case study in 2018 on the relationship between economy and city safety. The purpose of this article is to critically consider the link between policing methods and economic growth, which is the core of my discussion. As the city of Camden is historically a place of high crime, this article examines how the statistics change for the better when neighborhoods are supported by growing local economies and added urban enhancements such as security measures and new policing methods. The assertions made in this article support the existence of a positive relationship between the economy and crime, as well as providing insight to potential solutions.

A study analyzing the relationship between poverty and crime, performed by Harrell et al. (2014) across a span of four years, results in findings which may support the argument that crime in Puerto Rico has risen in part because of the economic downturn. Harrell et al.'s research remains relevant because it analyzes crime in relation to poverty, which can be applied to the discussion on economy and crime, but which is not reliant on the hurricane having occurred at the time of data collection. This study is particularly useful because most available data from

Puerto Rican crime rates comes from government sources, which is also where Harrell et al. retrieved their data.

Concerning fallout of economic disasters and social response, Lemieux's 2014 study on crime and altruism is applicable because many resources can be found to examine altruistic behaviors, most of which are public knowledge (such as fundraising and disaster relief efforts). Lemieux finds that crime and altruism trend towards an inverse relationship, and that public altruism acts as an inhibitor of property crimes. This research suggests that it would be of interest to analyze the relationship between public support and the reported property crime in Puerto Rico, with an added dimension of government as well as social support. In the application of Lemieux's research to my own, I propose that the Lemieux observed financial altruism which coincided with non-financial social supportiveness, and that these non-financial acts play a large role in determining the effect on property crime.

Another important theme is the link between crime and the effectiveness of law enforcement, and thus the response of law enforcement to natural disasters. The efficiency and availability of law enforcement in serving the public is an essential part of their role in crime reduction. Rojek and Smith (2007) analyze the response of law enforcement to the large-scale devastation of Hurricane Katrina, the hurricane in recent history most comparable to Hurricane Maria. This article provides an analysis of police policies for emergency response during Hurricane Katrina, which is compared against the policies in place for Puerto Rican police (as detailed in the investigation published by the Department of Justice). This article finds that implications of the policies and their flaws provides a potential angle on how the department could be improved for the better of Puerto Rican citizens, both in dealing with Maria and in the event of a future hurricane.

“Investigation of the Puerto Rico Police Department” (2011) is a written report compiled by the DOJ on PRPD’s deficiencies as a law enforcement organization. As well as serving to highlight areas in which the police department falls short – such as policies and inadequate training for its officers – it analyzes patterns of misconduct and abuse of power. Crime flourishes in areas where local police fail to uphold the law, as evidenced in countries all over the world. Studying the extent to which the police are unwilling or unable to uphold civil rights and punish criminals helps in theorizing the nature of the relationship between police and crime, and in suggesting means of reinstating order to the island in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. The fact that this was published before the hurricane lends credibility to a theoretical discussion point on their lack of preparedness to handle a natural disaster and how the situation rapidly grew out of hand.

This research is important because of the serious implications that it holds for citizens of Puerto Rico. A 2019 news article by Rosa and Robles reports on the shocking sudden increase of violent crime committed in public places during daylight since Hurricane Maria. It reveals the danger plaguing civilians in Puerto Rico, underscored by the number of LEOs who have quit or left the island entirely because they were overwhelmed or fearful for their safety. This spike of crime emphasizes the importance of my argument on how improving the police department will benefit the community.

Perhaps most importantly, the FBI collects and publishes online an annual record of reported Part I crimes. The Criminal Justice Information Services site does not include an analysis of these reports, frequencies, closure rates, or other related aspects of crime in the United States and its associated territories. This record is the largest source of data for my research. Crime statistics on Puerto Rico are used as a jumping-off point for exploring the impact

that the economic devastation may or may not have had on crime rates, as well as a starting point for considering the flaws in a reporting system based on police organization and compliance.

Literature and research indicate that the key to reestablishing public safety lies in revitalizing the police force in Puerto Rico and enabling them to adequately handle natural disasters and criminal activity. This research should be viewed critically, however, as previous sources analyze: different areas with smaller populations; additional variables related to economic growth; and criminal activity data from geographic areas more regularly and thoroughly reported. Future research should attempt to clarify the importance of the explored variables in terms of their effect on crime.

Discussion

In order to provide a well-rounded argument with due consideration to the critical components, I discuss four main facets of the economy and criminal activity in Puerto Rico. These subsections lead up to the analysis of the PRPD as an agency of law enforcement and their relationship with the criminal and economic scene of Puerto Rico in the post-Hurricane Maria world.

I first discuss the economic impact of Hurricane Maria on Puerto Rico to demonstrate the relevance of the hurricane. Although the hurricane directly worsened conditions for Puerto Ricans, I argue that the economic issues arising in the aftermath would exist regardless of the hurricane and were only brought to the forefront because of the extreme stress that the sudden disaster placed on the island. Next, the discussion moves to explain the connection between economic stressors and criminal activity to relate the topic to the PRPD. Thirdly, public support and disaster relief are considered as an important variable regarding the frequency and severity of criminal activity, taking into account the social situation regarding crime and economic stress.

Lastly, sources concerning law enforcement response and PRPD policies are analyzed to understand how all of these factors converge and what natural disasters mean for LEOs. Most importantly, by the end of the discussion, the argument will connect the post-Maria economy to the necessity of the PRPD to update and integrate policies and internal matters and ingratiate their department to the public.

Hurricane Maria's Economic Impact

For a better understanding of the relevance of economic issues and articles, let's take a brief look at the recent history of the Puerto Rican economy. In the 1950s, the island began to see a large-scale population drain towards the mainland United States, followed by a smaller-scale return closer to the 1970s, as well as an overall population increase (Bram, Martinez, & Steindel). Contrary to popular belief, agriculture only makes up a small percentage of the territory's laborers since many chemical and pharmaceutical plants were encouraged in the 1970s to relocate to or open branches in Puerto Rico by Section 936 of the Internal Revenue Code. Bram, Martinez, and Steindel report that in recent decades, the percentage of workers with college degrees has increased and GDP has compared impressively with the United States', given Puerto Rico's smaller size and populace. However, GDP is a misleading indicator of total prosperity. Factories and plants inflate the output, but profits flow back to corporations and shareholders rather than the majority of Puerto Ricans. Actual labor income averages at less than one third of the median US income. A relatively high amount of government involvement for public sectors including health and education place higher tax demands on the island's population, stressing the already low income. Further, Section 936 was repealed over a ten-year period and private corporations and manufacturing plants lost their tax benefits. Many of those presumably relocated off of the island once their tax cuts expired, and by the end of 2006, Puerto

Rico had entered an economic depression which they have been unable to fully escape (Bram, Martinez, & Steindel).

Now, with a working knowledge of the Puerto Rican economy, natural disaster research on small economies can be applied. "Local Economic Impacts of Natural Disasters" uses the 1993 Midwest Flood as a case study. This case study is relevant because there is a lack of research conducted on Puerto Rico itself, yet it is still important to understand how an economy responds to natural disasters and threats to commercial and private resources. The methodology of Yu's study includes categorizing more than 360 midwestern counties into "high-damage" and "low-damage", the vast majority falling into the former, as determined by the dollar amounts of estimated commercial and industrial damage. Like Puerto Rico, most of the counties reported higher poverty and lower income relative to the rest of the United States. Yu finds that agricultural employment in affected areas drops, while non-affected areas see a slight increase. Changes in employment are statistically insignificant over a simulated longitudinal analysis in both high- and low-damage areas. Overall income of affected low-damage areas suffer sharply from the loss of agricultural profit, but the projected income rises slightly over a five- and ten-year period; agricultural income, however, sees long-lasting declines in all counties. Yu concludes with acknowledging that these counties were aided in their economic rebound by financial and capital aid from other counties, states, and the federal government.

Now, although Yu clearly states that agricultural income was at least semi-permanently negatively impacted by flooding, the economic background of Puerto Rico puts that into some perspective. The financial and employment demographics of those affected counties are similar to the high-poverty, low-income background upon which Hurricane Maria entered the scene.

Regarding employment, Yu sees insignificant changes in employment, whereas the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a slight decrease in unemployment in Puerto Rico. In 2016, unemployment hovered within one percentage point of 12%; this percentage has been slowly decreasing to an estimation of 8.8% as of March 2019. Why would unemployment decrease following destruction of agricultural fields and commercial property? The short answer is because labor is needed to clear roads, fix infrastructure, rebuild public and private property, and manage public affairs in the aftermath of so much death and destruction. It is important to note that this downward trend was not immediate, and in fact unemployment rates spiked in the few months immediately following the hurricane. This difference between employment changes can be attributed to the amount of damage done over such a large territory. Even the costliest flooded county in Yu's study reaches damages of only \$71.4 million, compared to the NOAA's \$90 billion estimate of Maria.

Lower unemployment would usually indicate less poverty and a higher standard of living. This, in addition to the fact that data specific to agricultural work in Puerto Rico is unavailable, is why I examine the median income of Puerto Rico as recorded by the United States Census Bureau. They report the 2017 median income as \$20,507 (inflation accounted for), but the income of the last twelve months as \$12,528. Although it is impossible to strictly say what the income will be five or ten years after Maria, this data very clearly contrasts Yu's findings and makes it clear that the damage suffered in the Midwest was not as economically detrimental in the long-term as the damage caused by Maria. The last fact of note is that, according to FEMA, their disaster outreach expenditures alone reached over \$900 million (inflation accounted for) for the Midwest Flood (the positive aid that Yu references), compared to the much lower amounts being supplied to Puerto Rico.

These comparisons shed light on the economic plight currently facing Puerto Ricans. The American mainland suffered a natural disaster and their economy was able to stabilize and recover in a relatively short amount of time, with the exception of the farming industry, which has been decreasing in the recent decades as manufacturing and services make up greater proportions of American GDP. This information on the increasingly troubled Puerto Rican economy helps explain the rise in criminal activity addressed at the core of this article.

The main differences between Puerto Rico and the Midwest are the disaster relief aid they have received, their geographic location, their political position, and, of course, the magnitude of their disaster. Firstly, the Midwest, following their much less damaging flood, received significant economic and social aid in a quick and timely manner. Some victims had to last for a whole two weeks without potable water, to which thousands of Puerto Ricans, twenty months after Hurricane Maria and still struggling to find clean water, laugh (Yu). Secondly, the Midwestern region is roughly in the middle of the United States mainland – meaning they are surrounded by potential allies who do not have to travel more than a thousand miles across an ocean to help. Thirdly, the Midwestern Flood affected fully-fledged states as opposed to an unincorporated U.S. territory. It is much more difficult for government actors to justify withholding aid from a state which supposedly has the same federal rights as New York or California than it is for them to distance themselves from tragedy in Puerto Rico. Most notably, although the flood was a disaster, it is not up to par with Hurricane Maria in terms of financial cost or fatality.

We can now understand how and why Puerto Rico clearly suffered such significant economic setbacks from Hurricane Maria. The territory is at a strong disadvantage due to their location, political situation, and the strength of their storm compared to other hurricanes in recent

history. Although unemployment rates are down, so is income – meaning more people are working, but also making less money. There is less money to go around because that money is needed for reconstruction, and less demand for higher-paying jobs because there is no point in hiring doctors without hospitals or lawyers without an effective law enforcement system (which we will look at later). As explained in the article's thesis, the economic distress feeds a cycle of criminal activity which the PRPD is unfit to handle.

Linking Economics and Criminal Activity

As mentioned above, the argument of this paper is that LEOs need to tackle crime before they can expect to see a significant rise in the economy. This section establishes and explains the connection and relationship between the two.

In “Neighborhood-Level Economic Activity and Crime,” the researchers draw some conclusions that seem to hold constant across several different time-lapse analyses. Upon first glance at their data, the study assumes that “increases in economic activity are associated with decreases in total, property, and violent crime” (Stacy, Ho, & Pendall). After their data is analyzed through additional statistical modeling techniques, the authors theorize that “reductions in crime may induce an increase in economic activity” because business locations and their patrons may be influenced by the apparent odds of being victimized (Stacy, Ho, & Pendall).

This study is supported by some other research. Camden, New Jersey, a city with high crime and a poor economy, resorted to surveillance technology and an evolution of policing methods to create a safer atmosphere and drive down crime, reducing homicides and property crime significantly. Consequently, businesses and the government felt more comfortable investing their money into Camden's promising future, which injected money and jobs into the local economy (Wiig). Additionally, the Bureau of Justice Statistics performed a study on

residential poverty and violent crime (excluding homicide) and the results, even after being adjusted to account for the estimated standard error, show that households with more poverty tend to be linked to more cases of violent crime.

The significance of this information for Puerto Rico is that it may be essential to first curb criminal activity and tackle public safety before the economy can fully rebound, as opposed to the somewhat more intuitive notion that supplying more and higher-paying jobs would consequently lower crime. In the case of Camden, investment and economic risk was not undertaken until business owners and potential consumers of goods and services felt secure in the environment (as Stacy, Ho, & Pendall concluded). Although the Bureau of Justice Statistics report may seem to suggest that reducing economic pressure would reduce crime, it is extremely important to be cognizant of the fact that the Puerto Rican economy cannot be magically improved or expanded to suit the needs of the large and impoverished population. Rather, the economy needs boosted in order to provide for more of its people, which first requires investment, cooperation, and, as the Camden experiment proved, public safety – which is the core purpose of the PRPD. This is why the department needs to be reinvented to meet the populace's needs.

Public Support, Disaster Relief, and Crime

Researcher Frederic Lemieux theorizes that public support for survivors of natural disasters and their communities is inversely related to the quantity of property crimes committed. Lemieux's study in Canada follows a natural disaster of a lesser scale than that of Hurricane Maria, but nevertheless offers some interesting data. In his words, "Support for victims and social altruism generated by mutual aid and solidarity among citizens [...] precipitate a decrease in crime rates during such an event." To evaluate the applicability of this theory, I compare

Hurricane Maria against Hurricane Harvey, a similar storm which occurred less than a month previously.

Public support for Puerto Rico has been objectively lower than support for the hurricane-stricken areas of the American mainland. Hurricane Maria hit the island of Puerto Rico on September 20th, 2017, as a category 5 storm with wind speeds reaching 175 miles per hour. For reference, this rivals 2005's Hurricane Katrina. Maria's death toll soared well above 3,000 and caused an estimated \$94 billion in damages. The American Red Cross raised a scant \$9 million dollars through public donation by October 4th, 2017. In contrast, on August 25th, 2017, Hurricane Harvey made landfall on the south coast of the United States. The category 4 storm inflicted billions of dollars of damage to both public and private property and infrastructure in southeast Texas and sources usually report between 80 and 100 American deaths. Recorded wind speeds were about 40 miles per hour weaker than those of Hurricane Maria. The American Red Cross had collected more than \$350 million for relief and restoration efforts by early October of the same year (USA Today). Although Hurricane Harvey was a more expensive storm, it proved far less lethal and yet received far more public and government support. Federal grants supplied a little over 5% of the funds Puerto Rico requested to cover damages and restore the lives of survivors, which equals barely 14% of a federal aid grant allotted for the three major hurricanes of the season, including Maria, Harvey, and Irma (World Vision).

Political debates on whether or not Puerto Rico deserves more aid from the United States federal government, as well as arguments over where the money should come from, have stalled significantly greater aid from the government and puts the weight of the humanitarian crisis onto the shoulders of the public. High-profile public figures and activists continue to advocate for public donation and raise awareness of the plights of the thousands and thousands of Puerto

Ricans who still lack clean water and adequate shelter, but the fruits of their good intentions and fundraising efforts pale in comparison to the relatively quick restoration of Houston.

Lemieux's findings indicate that crime rates should decrease following disaster as public support increases, particularly property crimes. Data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Report (UCR) indicates that property crime in Puerto Rico decreased by over 11% from 2016 to 2017 data, while the same time period in Texas resulted in a 6% decrease. To an extent, Lemieux's findings are supported. Both Puerto Rico and Texas received large dollar amounts of public support. However, Lemieux's theory of altruistic sentiments would dictate that Texas, which received significantly more financial support, even considered as a proportion relative to the sustained damage, would have the sharper decrease. Nevertheless, the benefits of public support in resolving natural disaster crises are clear: human needs are sooner met, public order is sooner restored, and a community can sooner begin to rebuild. It is obvious that social support is an important dimension of public response which can boast a significant impact on criminal activity.

To address the discrepancy, I propose that the altruism Lemieux observed was complemented by non-financial acts of social support. Solidarity and good will among a community may strengthen bonds and promote empathy for one another. Puerto Ricans lost more lives and were forced to live through more perilous conditions for much longer than survivors of Hurricane Harvey, so non-financial altruism had more of a chance to manifest and discourage criminal activity. A potential thread of research following this notion would be to repeat the methodology of Lemieux's study with attention to community activity alongside financial support.

Though a useful tool for speculation, there are clear problems with making any assertions based off of the UCR. One of the biggest issues with the UCR data is that it does not record crimes committed in months, so it is impossible from this data source to know if the majority of property crimes were committed before or after the hurricanes in the respective territories. Another significant issue is that the crime data of 2018 was not yet available at the time of writing, meaning that the range of time in which any crime trends could present is limited to a few months.

Equally important as acknowledging flaws of the UCR is to contextualize the data. The UCR can only draw from crimes reported by law enforcement, and an issue discussed later is the lack of adequate policing in Puerto Rico both before and after the hurricane. It is entirely feasible that the reason for the large decrease in property crime is not because of altruistic sentiment, but rather because of fewer LEOs being willing or able to report crimes. Also a consideration is the amount of property that was damaged, destroyed, and lost entirely in the hurricane and its subsequent floods, which left many people without their belongings with very limited ability to locate or retrieve any missing items.

Effective Policing and Public Safety

A cornerstone of a lawful society is an institutional authority to enforce the laws. When LEOs are unwilling or unable to perform their duties, crime is allowed to continue unfettered as individuals and illicit organizations seek to gain social control alongside profit and/or capital. The effectiveness of the PRPD is already heavily criticized by the DOJ. Puerto Rico's high and increasing violent crime rates contrast the lowering numbers within the mainland states. Although no convictions have been made in the territory for hate crimes, a review by the DOJ notes their likely existence and firmly recommends that the PRPD increase their collaborative

work with other agencies and thoroughly investigate potential hate crimes. In the report on the investigation into the PRPD, the DOJ reports the arrest of more than 1,700 officers over the span of five years. As Rosa and Robles note, problems are exacerbated by the shortage of officers on the island now that the hurricane has passed. Many fled the island after Maria, and some of those that stayed are too afraid of being targets of violent crime to effectively do their jobs. After Hurricane Maria, the PRPD had virtually no chance of successfully handling public safety or criminal threats. The question becomes, what are the flaws within the police department that allowed them to lose their government-granted monopoly on violence and resulted in insufficient response to the hurricane?

Puerto Rico's Hurricane Maria is rivalled in recent history by Hurricane Katrina, a category 5 hurricane which devastated Louisiana and Florida in 2005. We can look to an analysis of police response during Hurricane Katrina to compare the abilities of the American police departments to those of the police in Puerto Rico. The main purpose of this analysis, conducted in 2007 by Rojek and Smith, is to fill a knowledge gap of how law enforcement can effectively respond to rare disaster scenarios.

Rojek and Smith emphasize that, because enforcement agencies so rarely have opportunities to directly learn how to react to natural disasters, "it becomes imperative that the lessons learned from organizations with first-hand experiences are diffused through various communication mediums to other organizations." While reasonable in theory, this is problematic in that the lack of shared information bases between national enforcement agencies prevents all information from being disseminated equally. Puerto Rico, especially, suffers from being geographically distant from other American agencies and being deprived of the privilege of statehood. Their claim to information and cooperation between departments is lessened by their

unequal standing and they are infrequently considered by other organizations in the United States. Before disaster even occurs, they are already at a significant informational disadvantage.

Other findings of this study say that the lack of pre-disaster planning and irregular training of LEOs is detrimental to disaster readiness and public safety in the event of a natural disaster. The majority of local police agencies affected by Katrina failed to prepare adequate supplies of emergency resources, such as clean water, fuel for vehicles, and hardware for essential operations, such as batteries and chainsaws for dealing with fallen trees. Those that did plan ahead and stock provisions only secured enough resources for a few days, when disaster relief services and donated resources from other jurisdictions took closer to a week to arrive. Further, the lack of effective policies and training in place left officers uncertain of how to proceed, improvising in the field to respond to the most urgent needs of the civilians. Their actions, while admirable, were uncoordinated and strategically ineffective.

Knowing that effective policies, preparedness, and training are essential to an effective hurricane response, it is made clear by the DOJ that Puerto Rico's police department fails on each front. The DOJ found in their investigation that the PRPD's policies are largely out of date and incomprehensive, as well as frequently inconsistent with current knowledge on legal standards of policing. The policies and guides are not disseminated evenly to officers, and further are open to interpretation at the discretion of individual LEOs. Puerto Rico's geographic distance from the mainland presented a serious challenge to the logistics of evacuation and severely limited their ability to receive supplies and aid from other areas both before and after Maria's landfall. The gathering of provisions is more difficult on the island, which lacks the mainland's ease of access and funds for technology and resources. Even more than a year after the hurricane, estimates suggest that tens of thousands of survivors are still without clean water. Finally,

regarding training, recruited officers are neither screened nor given adequate training before entering service. The investigative report declares that in-service training is virtually nonexistent, which places both officers and civilians at risk in the event of a threat to public safety.

Rojek and Smith's study finds that the first priority of law enforcement following Hurricane Katrina was almost universally search and rescue. A close second was the prevention of property crimes. It is common knowledge among LEOs that looters take advantage of the confusion and chaos of the communities to steal property and goods. Shocking and extensive devastation of Puerto Rico gave potential thieves an easy holiday for stealing property which was left unprotected or moved by flooding. The PRPD's complete lack of preparedness and strategy in the face of the hurricane guaranteed their disorganization and ineffectiveness in handling crime following the storm, and so the PRPD's faults clearly contributed to criminal activity.

Before they can operate as a functional police department, the PRPD needs to undergo some internal changes, including the rewriting of policy and emergency response guidelines, the implementation of regular educational and training exercises, and the addition of a system of greater accountability. The department also needs to be more selective in their hiring process to reduce the odds of future corruption and abuse of power. Once the PRPD is able to serve the public in their intended capacity, they need to prioritize crime management and reclaim their government-granted monopoly on violence. In doing so, they will send a message to organized and violent criminals that the police department takes crime seriously and will handle it in accordance with the proper legal statutes. They may simultaneously regain their position of authority in their society and earn the respect and trust of their citizens.

When crime is effectively managed and even prevented, and more responsible policing methods are introduced, the community will be a safer place for LEOs, civilians, tourists,

business, and governments to live and invest. The good will and publicity brought by the return of order may earn greater public awareness and support, and an organized police force would be a powerful platform on which to share existing problems and request financial aid. As crime decreases, quality of life increases, and more industry and spending are attracted to the island, Puerto Rico will finally be able to recover from the hurricane and advance their economic standing in the world.

Conclusion

Citizens living in Puerto Rico are still suffering from Hurricane Maria, even almost two years later. Maria caused massive infrastructural and property damage which jeopardized millions of Puerto Ricans' access to water, shelter, health care, safety, justice, education, and income. The economic devastation Maria wrought has not fixed itself in the short-term and the current statistics do not suggest an upturn. The poor economic reality threatens the livelihood of those who live on the island and the plausibility of a full restoration of damaged and inefficient infrastructure, worsened by the lack of public support and disaster relief aid and the inability of the police department to provide adequate services to the people.

A review of the facts at hand suggest that tackling crime is the most important step to take for the sake of promoting the economy. Wiig's assessment of Camden's revitalization proved that responsible policing is important in securing public support and economic growth. The DOJ and Rojek and Smith both point out glaring inadequacies within the PRPD that continually set them back as a law enforcement organization. Harrell et al. find that crime is supported, and even encouraged, by the poor status of the economy and high levels of poverty; according to Bram, Martinez, and Steindel and the US Census Bureau, poverty levels are high in Puerto Rico and worsened by both low demand for high-paying jobs and the strain of recovering

from a hugely damaging natural disaster. Yet, as already discussed, poverty levels and the economy are unlikely to significantly improve without a significant reduction of crime.

In order to protect the public, the PRPD needs assistance from the United States to revitalize their department. If the police can institute a more consistent and cohesive mission, policy book, and administration, then they can work towards serving their communities more effectively, with greater cooperation and stricter accountability. Securing public safety protects the citizens in the present while encouraging donation, support, and government funding for rebuilding in the near future, which will provide more opportunity for economic growth and community involvement.

The conclusions of this research should be of interest to everyone, especially those who live near coastlines or are professionally engaged with law enforcement. Although this research article focuses on the steps needed to help Puerto Rico, the conclusions drawn on the importance of policing and public and economic support are applicable to the United States mainland as well. The NOAA reports that, as a consequence of rising sea levels and rising global climates, hurricanes could become both more frequent and more destructive. Three of the five most costly hurricanes to impact the United States have been in the last two years alone. The lives lost and damage done during more recent hurricanes are a testament to the need to improve our ability to withstand dangerous weather, starting with effective policing and including, but not limited to, external response and economic safeguards.

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