5

Policing Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs – the ‘One Percenters’

Abstract: This chapter reviews the current policing strategies that underpin both tactical and strategic responses to the threat posed by OMCGs in Australia, Canada and the United States. It shows that a whole-of-government approach is necessary in order to reduce the incidence of biker-related crime in our communities. Pivotal to any successful strategy is the ongoing need for timely and accurate intelligence-sharing amongst participating organizations. The chapter highlights the transnational and organized nature of OMCGs and their propensity for violence and the increasing need for national and international cooperation on the part of law enforcement agencies with various levels of government as well as the private sector.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137456298.0007.
Since the emergence of Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMCGs) in the years immediately following World War II (WWII), law enforcement agencies continue to be challenged by the threat these groups pose. Originally perceived by law enforcement as nothing more than groups of drunken brawlers they have more recently been viewed as sophisticated and organized groups of criminals. The Australian Crime Commission (ACC) (2013a, p. 1) noted:

Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMCGs) remain one of the most high profile manifestations of organized crime. They have an active presence in all Australian states and territories. OMCGs have become one of the most identifiable components of Australia's criminal landscape.

This chapter examines the strategies employed by law enforcement agencies in response to the threat posed by OMCGs in Australia, the United States (US) and Canada. The authors contend that a coordinated and collaborative approach is necessary in responding to this form of organized crime. Often referred to as a ‘whole-of-government approach’ (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis, 2007), the strategy incorporates all levels of government and, in some hybrids, extends to include elements of the commerce and finance sectors.

**Uniformed police response**

The policing of OMCGs by law enforcement agencies across Canada, Australia and the US has evolved considerably over the past 60 years. Prior to the establishment of specialized organized crime units and multi-agency joint task forces to investigate biker-related crime, the responsibility of policing OMCGs rested with the uniformed patrol officer. The case study jurisdictions report that the front-line uniformed police officer remains the first point of contact in responding to any crime, incident or event involving an OMCG member or associate (ACC, 2010; CISC, 2011; NGIC, 2013). Either through responding directly to a specific call for police assistance or their extensive engagement with local communities, uniformed officers are actively engaged in the collection of information and intelligence on OMCGs and other organized crime groups. From neighbourhood watch meetings to the cultivation of confidential informants and informers, uniformed police officers serve as the eyes and ears of their organization when it comes to policing OMCGs.