

Changing the Soul Patrol

The all-black unit of Boston's Tactical Patrol Force, operating out of second floor quarters at Division 2, Dudley Station, was established by Commissioner Edmund McNamara on Nov. 17 as a temporary measure to combat crime and establish better community-police relations in the ghetto. Hailed at its launching as "a truthful and favorable beginning to a reliable working relationship with the police" by NAACP president Jack E. Robinson, the force has not only been successful in reducing crime but it has opened areas of trust inside the community.

Now the 32-man unit has been integrated to include white officers. It is being commanded by newly-promoted Leroy E. Chase. The Soul Patrol's first commander, Deputy Superintendent Herbert Craigwell, has returned to his old job as director of the Bureau of Community Affairs at police headquarters.

All this is to the good. As Deputy Craigwell himself has said, "there should be some white input in this unit. The badge says 'Boston Police,' not black or white police." If the assignment, which is generally considered punishment duty, has reportedly brought considerable overtime pay to its members, it has also created problems for the team which comes on duty at 6 p.m. to find all the patrol cars have been taken for other as-

signments. And some of the members of the "Soul Patrol" argue that their beat, despite its elitist character, interferes with careers elsewhere in the police system.

The biggest danger in integrating the all-black unit is that the highly successful team may once again be subject to harassment, if not domination, by racist elements in the Boston Police Force which is presently 98 percent white, with only 64 blacks in a total of 2742 men.

Significantly, creation of the black unit brought threats of a civil rights suit by the Patrolmen's Association. These threats failed to materialize when it was pointed out that the suit might also bring the all-white hotel, harbor, banking and mounted police squads under review.

The police department as a whole should be integrated because we live in an integrated society. This does not mean haphazardly assigning whites on a drop-in basis to the ghetto area. It means finding white officers who want to serve there and are sensitive to the community problems. And on a broader basis, it means setting up creative methods of recruiting men — and women — to the police force, followed by innovative programs in training and internship to build up a police force that is committed and proud of its service to and with the community.