

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Metropolitan Police Department



Fiscal Year 2015 Performance Oversight Hearing

Testimony of

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Before the

Committee on the Judiciary
Kenyan McDuffie, Chair

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John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
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Good morning, Chairman McDuffie, members and staff of the Committee, and guests. I appreciate this opportunity to discuss public safety in the District over the past year, and to brief you on the Metropolitan Police Department's major efforts in the coming year. The full text of my statement will be available on the Department's website at www.mpd.dc.gov.

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In looking back on 2015, I am, as always, grateful for the opportunity to lead a police department whose members routinely demonstrate their professionalism, dedication, and courage. The tremendous efforts of the sworn and civilian members of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) have a profound impact on the communities we serve. Our vibrant communities contribute to a city that continues to grow, along with requests for police services. Since 2007, when I became Chief of Police, the District's population has grown by 15 percent. During that time, the city has become much safer overall, with a 21 percent decrease in the most serious violent crimes. This is important context to keep in mind when looking at crime trends in 2015. While assaults with a dangerous weapon and sexual assaults decreased in 2015, along with every other major category of crime - homicides and robberies increased. While the uptick in robberies was small (just under 5%), I saw that the trend in robberies was significant because it generated a loss sense of security not only in our communities, but, because of where and when these robberies were occurring, in particular for residents and visitors that rely solely on public transportation. That is why we immediately devoted resources to not only prevent these robberies but to arrest the small number of individuals that were committing a significant number of these crimes. Although several of these robberies generated an understandable level of concern in the community, it is important to keep in mind that the city is overall much safer. The small increase in robberies in 2015 followed a reduction of almost 800 robberies in 2014, meaning that there were about 600 FEWER robberies in 2015 than in 2013. The year 2012 is considered by many to be a benchmark in safety in the District; as you recall, this is the year we hit a 50-year low in homicides with 88. In fact, violent crime overall is much lower in 2015 than it was in 2012 – this includes 850 FEWER robberies. There were 1,000 fewer robberies last year than in 2007. Needless to say, we want to violent crime to go down every single year. Although that didn't happen last year, we have been successful in addressing emerging trends in the past, and we will turn this uptick around.

For robberies, we have seen a growing trend of individuals or groups committing a series of robberies. To counter this, we have launched a multi-agency Robbery Intervention Task Force that leverages resources we have been developing over the past couple of years in a new way, and adds new links between outside partners. In recent months, MPD has added Criminal Research Specialists (CRS) to the Command Information Center (CIC). The civilian Criminal Research Specialists work with the technicians, detectives, and officers in the CIC to quickly use all of our available tools to analyze incoming information and send out better, actionable information to the field in real time. We are deploying our resources to specifically be able to



respond to daily robbery trends and prevent these sprees from continuing. Both MPD and Prince George's County Police have also embedded resources with the Metro Transit Police so we are able to quickly link activity in public space with crimes or suspects on the Metro. While I don't want to tip off the criminals to our tactics, I'll highlight just a couple of examples of how this is working.

- When a two-year-old child was struck by a bullet a few weeks ago, the work of the CRS team was essential to the quick arrest of three offenders. The analysts provided information to the detectives that enabled them to get these callous shooters off the street, reducing the chance of retaliation and more violence
- In December, I directed MPD's Criminal Interdiction Unit (CIU) – a new unit launched in 2015 – to focus on robberies. Not only have they been able to make many arrests by quickly acting in areas known for robberies and violent crime, but they are also using technology and tactics to interrupt patterns of robberies. They have been effective in addressing social media robberies – when someone arranges to buy or sell something online, only to be held up and robbed. Working together with our detectives their work has also disrupted pattern robberies of commercial establishments, taxi drivers and food delivery services.

Of course, an arrest is just the start of the criminal justice process. It is critical that when police have probable cause to arrest a suspect, resources will be focused on these cases so that all available evidence - video, forensics, and so forth - is properly collected and submitted for analysis, and that the cases are prosecuted. It is encouraging that the U.S. Attorney's Office has papered more than 90 percent of the robbery arrests made since the launch of this effort.

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While we are very concerned about the increase in homicides in 2015, it should come as some reassurance that our arrests for homicide are also up 44 percent. Our detectives and all of our support personnel are committed to getting these dangerous people off the street and bringing closure to families and communities.

The larger context is also important: the District was not alone in this trend, as cities across the country saw a significant jump in homicides. Of the 75 cities reporting in both the U.S. and Canada, 48 cities reported increases in homicides in 2015. As we started to see the increase among major cities this past summer, I convened a meeting in August of major city chiefs to discuss what we were seeing. And while there were some common trends, there were no easy answers. Several of the issues that we have noted here are happening around the country. Several jurisdictions reported an increase in violence associated with the use of synthetic narcotics. Just recently, it appears that local, national, and international efforts to prevent these dangerous substances from taking over our communities are having an impact. Many jurisdictions reported



an increase in the lethality of shootings, as we are seeing guns with higher capacity magazines and crime scenes with significantly more rounds fired, sometimes from multiple guns.

We continue to be concerned by the repeat violent offenders targeting our communities. Of the 84 individuals arrested for homicides committed in 2015, 93 percent had prior arrests in DC alone, and the average number of prior arrests was eight. In fact, 23 individuals involved in 2015 homicides; that is eight victims and 15 suspects had prior arrests had prior murder charges. , The criminal justice system must do a better job of keeping truly dangerous individuals off the street. Some violent offenders are not good candidates for supervision in the community. This is evident in the increasing number of suspects we arrest for homicide, and many other violent crimes, while they are under supervision. The supervision agencies are strong partners for MPD, but they aren't the ones deciding which offenders get released into community placement programs. If these individuals reoffend, we will continue to arrest them. But that comes at the expense of members of our community who are victimized by them. This is, quite simply, unacceptable, and I will not give up in fighting any systemic issues and complacency that allows this to happen.

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The safety of residents of and visitors to the District is the Department's top priority, but as always, I am focused on the future, and how we can continue to be a model for major city policing. This is perhaps more important now than ever as the nation continues to focus on the role of policing in developing vibrant, safe, and equitable communities.

The deployment of body-worn cameras (BWCs) is one example of a forward-thinking effort to strengthen both the Department and our relationship with the community. The use of body-worn cameras will benefit members of the community and the Department by improving police services and increasing accountability for individual interactions. This project has been in the works for three years, as I first directed my team to begin researching and developing a program in the spring of 2013. In October 2014, MPD launched Phase I of the body-worn camera program, focusing on the selection of the best camera model for the members of the MPD. Phase II of the body-worn camera program was launched on June 29, 2015, with 400 of the selected model camera distributed to the Fifth and Seventh Police Districts, 200 per district. This deployment was designed by a team of national researchers who are analyzing the impact of body-worn cameras on such issues as citizen complaints and use of force. The lessons and findings of this evaluation will benefit District residents, MPD, and law enforcement agencies and communities that are also considering the use of these cameras. While we have been working for three years, the major push begins this spring with the deployment of more than 2,000 cameras to seven police districts and three substations in 2016.



While we are getting to the final stages of the BWC launch, we are moving forward on other fronts. Over the past 18 months, the law enforcement profession has come under more scrutiny than any time in perhaps decades. Several high profile use of force incidents around the country have had a profound impact on both the communities we serve, as well as police officers, from the rank and file up to the leaders. Over the past year, Michael Bromwich, on behalf of the Office of the DC Auditor, reviewed MPD policy, training, and records on use of force. His findings were very positive. His report noted:

- “We have seen no evidence that the excessive use of force has reemerged as a problem within MPD.”
- “MPD has reduced its use of the most serious types of force, including firearms, even during periods of increased crime in the District of Columbia.”; and
- “MPD’s Command Staff remains committed to limiting and managing use of force – and to fair and constitutional policing.”

Nevertheless, his report also acknowledged that use of force policies and norms must continue to be reviewed and to evolve. This aligns with our efforts over the past year with the Police Executive Research Forum and police leaders around the country to examine long-held principles of use of force and the standards and trainings that have arisen from them. We have looked to other countries and their practices, in part to challenge our own assumptions. Over the next year and into the future, to meet evolving policing and community needs, MPD will re-engineer its use of force policy and associated trainings, standard operating procedures, and investigations. These changes will help to protect the safety of both the public and police officers, while aligning policies and trainings with evolving legal standards for use of force.

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What is essential to the success of these and other efforts is maintaining an appropriately staffed police department. As we have been discussing with the Council for years, the hiring boom of 1989-1991 and the resulting retirement bubble have left the Department in a situation where many more members are eligible to retire than we are able to responsibly hire while maintaining critical standards. By the end of Fiscal Year 2016, half of the Department’s command staff, two-fifths of our captains, one-quarter of all lieutenants, and one-fifth of the sergeants and detectives will be eligible to retire.

I want to thank you and the other council members who supported passing as emergencies two legislative provisions that we proposed to help us to retain our current command staff and attract new but experienced members. One will allow command staff to earn a small amount of compensatory time – up to 80 hours a year, a benefit that was apparently inadvertently repealed by the Council in 2001. The other provision will allow experienced military and law enforcement officers to use their years of experience in lieu of education requirements. While MPD has some of the highest officer recruitment standards of any police department, lowering the number of years of active military or other law enforcement service required for new recruits will increase



the number of eligible recruits while still maintaining the current qualification and eligibility standards. We are preparing to launch an “Experienced Officer Training Program”, which will be an approximately 11-week program at the Police Academy for recruits with law enforcement experience in other jurisdictions. With the passage of this bill yesterday, we will launch a recruitment effort that we hope will result in our being able to put 50 additional officers on the street by the end of 2016.

This is just one of the many ways that MPD is working to recruit and retain our members. One of our most exciting efforts will be the launch of Academy of Public Safety to open at Anacostia High School in August 2016 in partnership with the Washington, DC, Police Foundation. The Academy will prepare students for career opportunities in law enforcement, offering a rigorous core academic curriculum complemented by a series of law enforcement electives, mentoring by cadets in the MPD Cadet program, and paid summer internships in the law enforcement field. Upon successful completion of the academy course requirements and graduation, students can become MPD Cadets. Police cadets are recent District high school graduates who are employed by MPD in civilian positions. Working about 20 hours a week, the cadets rotate through a variety of assignments – helping the MPD fulfill our mission, while providing the cadets with valuable exposure and experience within the Department. In addition to paying the cadets for their work, MPD covers their tuition at the University of the District of Columbia. Cadets convert to career police status upon completion of their Associate Degree program and enter recruit training to become a sworn officer. The new Academy will expand the pool of talented recruit officers from DC who are available to MPD in the coming years, so it is an important investment in the Department’s future. More importantly, even more District youth will benefit from access to employment opportunities, secondary education, and a career in public service. Mayor Bowser is committed to broadening these pathways to the middle class for District residents.

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In closing, I would like to thank the sworn members and civilian staff of MPD for their hard work and professionalism during the past year. I am also grateful for our many partners who work with us to help keep our neighborhoods safe, and for the remarkable residents of the District who inspire our work every day. I look forward to another year of working together and continued progress.

