
Government of the District of Columbia



Metropolitan Police Department

Testimony of
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***Public Oversight Hearing on
the Performance of the
Metropolitan Police Department***

Kenyan R. McDuffie, Chair
Committee on the Judiciary
Council of the District of Columbia

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Council Chamber
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 2004

Good morning, Chairman McDuffie, members and staff of the Committee, and guests. I appreciate this opportunity to update you on the Metropolitan Police Department's many accomplishments over the past year. The full text of my statement will be available on the Department's website at www.mpd.cdc.gov.

I am very pleased to be able to report that overall, District residents were significantly safer in 2014. Violent crime decreased another 9 percent last year. When it comes to making our city safer, our accomplishments over the past seven years have been quite remarkable. We have been successful in driving the serious violent crime down 25 percent. I have focused the entire police department and all of our partners on reducing violent crime, and that focus is making a difference. This past year, the reduction in violent crime was driven by an 18 percent reduction in robbery, the most frequent serious crime of violence. And this reduction was felt citywide, with every single police district experiencing fewer robberies.

The Department's innovative Nightlife Unit has had a substantial impact on robberies and other violent crimes in the Districts. In 2013, MPD conducted a comprehensive economic development analysis on recent and planned developments throughout the city. The analysis identified several entertainment areas that required a different type of police deployment to address the public safety concerns of congested entertainment areas. As a result, on October 1, 2013, MPD established the Nightlife Unit and deployed 90 officers in the H Street NE Corridor, Adams Morgan, Columbia Heights, Dupont Circle, and U Street NW Corridor. Other neighborhoods benefited indirectly from this unit as well, because having a dedicated unit allows patrol officers to stay in neighborhoods instead of being deployed to address the high volume of incidents and calls in the entertainment areas. All Nightlife officers received targeted training on deescalating incidents in the entertainment areas. The unit provided high visibility patrols on foot, bicycle, and Segways during the nightlife hours and worked with nightclubs and liquor-licensed establishments to provide a safe environment. Based on the first year of operation, all five nightlife areas experienced significant reductions in violent crimes, including a decrease in robberies of at least 40 percent in each area.

One take away from the success of the Nightlife Unit is that the visible presence of officers can help reduce specific types of crime. When there are areas and times for which we know there is a concentration of certain crimes, police presence can be a very effective deterrent. This is a better alternative than employing zero tolerance or arrest based strategies. As Chief, I have strongly argued against zero tolerance or hot spots policing. I am committed to a strategy that focuses on less crime and less arrests. This requires police officers to establish effective relationships in our community and does not involve making needless arrests for minor offenses, and this strategy is working. Both adult and juvenile arrests are down 2014 – juvenile arrests by a substantial 6 percent. In fact, overall arrests have declined 22% since 2009. On the other hand, the strong population growth in the city, along with the thriving nighttime and weekend entertainment continue to drive an increase in calls for service. The calls for service have increased each of the past two years, a total of 35,000 more calls since 2012.

My top priority continues to be reducing violent crime in the city. In my first few years as the Chief of Police, we made incredible strides, with a 53 percent reduction in homicide between 2008 and 2012. During that same time period, juvenile victims of homicide dropped 85 percent and juveniles arrested for murder dropped 63 percent. However, we seem to have hit a plateau in

homicides, hovering around 100 for the past two years. While we have seen a sustained reduction in gun violence, family violence has been challenging. In fact, an analysis of 2014 homicides shows where we have been effective and where we need to focus going forward. .

A few changes in homicides indicate that our police strategies – including our focus on firearms and our deployments – are working. Throughout the 2000s, about four out of five homicides have been committed with an illegal gun. In 2014, only 69 percent were committed with a gun. The proportion of homicides taking place indoors – away from police on the street --- increased from just 5 percent in 2012 to 15 percent in 2014. This tells me that the way we deploy officers on the street is helping to keep them safer. So with this good news, what is driving homicides? A significant increase in fatal family violence, including intimate partner violence, child abuse and neglect, is driving homicides. Over the past three years:

- Domestic violence homicides increased from nine in 2012, to 12 (2013), to 19 in 2014.
- The number of domestic homicides taking place indoors quadrupled, from four in 2012 to 16 in 2014.
- Tragically, last year’s victims included three infants¹ and a three-year-old child.

This increase in family violence illustrates what is often talked about but difficult to address: the roots of violence are often in families fractured by extreme stress, including histories of violence. In order for the District to address a chain of violence that sometimes stretches through generations, we – and by that I mean more than just police – need to get at those roots. MPD is working to do its part by creating a multi-faceted, family-focused approach to youth in an effort to build strong families and prevent juvenile crime. Crime involving youth, both as victim or offender, is a complex and challenging problem that requires a comprehensive approach from law enforcement, courts, city service agencies, and the community. As a first step, MPD has moved the two units responsible for interacting and engaging youth and families, Youth Investigations Division and School Security Division, under one command. Later in 2015, the Department will also move the Domestic Violence Unit under this single command to create a robust Family Division. This will allow the Department to craft a cohesive strategy, engaging all of our vital partners, to refocus our efforts and improve the District’s engagement of youth and families and families in crisis.

The participation of other government agencies and their partners in the community is critical to this effort. Mayor Muriel Bowser strongly supports a strategy to better coordinate the various levels at which the District can have a positive impact on families and youth. In particular, the child and infant abuse cases all too tragically show that some of our families are in critical need of more support and intervention services. The Mayor also recognizes that other government agencies and their community partners will be needed to address long term issues impacting sustained violence, including mental health treatment, homelessness, substance abuse, and improved supervision for individuals already in the criminal justice system. In 2014, three out of 10 victims and known offenders were in the community and under the supervision of court agencies either while pending trial or post-conviction.

¹ Two of the three infant homicides happened in 2013 but were ruled homicides by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in 2014.

When I became Chief, I said that I believed the District should and *could* have fewer than 100 homicides a year. Many people were shocked that I would declare such an aggressive goal. At the time, after more than four decades of homicide totals well over 100, reaching almost 500, it did seem like a bold statement. But we did make it down to 88 homicides in 2012, and I believe the District can get even lower. But police alone can't make it happen; we must all be working together to reach that goal.

One of the ways that MPD is working to prevent future violence is through our proactive engagement of youth and young adults through many programs. This includes our Youth Creating Change (YCC) program launched in 2014. Thirty youth from some of the District's neighborhoods facing the greatest challenges with persistent violence participate in the three month program. The program helps young adults aged 15-19 to develop skills and abilities in the areas of leadership, teamwork and community development. MPD's Junior Cadet Program, which is sponsored by the DC Police Foundation, works with 125 students at five participating elementary schools,² on a 40-week program that includes lessons on safety, civics, history, life skills development, and academic achievement.

Another program, the Junior Police Academy provides students with an opportunity to learn more about how a police department operates. Participants also learn about other careers in criminal justice, politics, and law, as well as practical lessons in applying for college and financial aid. These are just a few of the many youth programs that MPD sponsors.

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In addition to a change in youth and family strategy, I am also launching a new strategy related to drugs and major crimes. As I initially discussed in a hearing before the Council last October, law enforcement must recognize and respond to the major shifts that have taken place in the criminal drug industry, as well as in the attitudes about effective government response to substance use and abuse. Since that discussion, I have been working with some of the Department's best cops and outside agency partners to develop a strategy that will change how we approach investigations of major narcotics, and how patrol officers handle drug complaints. From the law and order perspective, the new strategy will not only address the street level drug trade, but also target the growing sophistication of the violent criminal enterprises that are often associated with illegal drugs, goods, and guns. But perhaps the most critical component of this new strategy is how the community will be engaged. Whereas community engagement has historically been seen as an activity for patrol officers and not specialized units, law enforcement needs to make sure that, to the extent possible, all of its operations are undertaken with the support of the community. As Chief, that has been one of my top priorities for patrol, and it has been very successful. But we need to recognize that the operations of specialized units can have even more of an impact on the perceptions of a community and respond accordingly.

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Now for the not so good news. By the end of 2015, 61% of our Assistant Chiefs, Commanders, and Inspectors will be eligible to retire. More than one-third of lieutenants and detectives, and

² The participating elementary schools are Henley, Seaton, Friendship Blow-Pierce, Payne, and Harriet Tubman.

almost one-third of sergeants, will also be eligible to retire. This is as a result of the “retirement bubble” on which I have been briefing the Council about as long as I have been Chief. In 1989, MPD began a massive hiring effort that culminated in approximately 1,500 members being hired in less than two years. Since sworn members hired at that time are eligible for retirement once they have served 25 years and reached 50 years of age, we have now reached the long anticipated “retirement bubble.” As a result, the Department is now in the position where more officers will be leaving each year than it can responsibly hire while maintaining high standards. In Fiscal Year 2014³, 309 members separated from the Department, of which 163 were retirements. In FY15, 400 members or more may separate⁴ from the Department, about double the average from FY2000 through 2013.

Although there is little doubt that we will need to make some tough choices as the number of police officers decreases, there are some ways we can try to reduce the impact. Technology, of course, is a key mechanism for improving efficiency department-wide. For instance, although not frequently discussed, one of the benefits of the deployment of body worn cameras is that with fewer complaints related to police service, officials will be able to spend less time conducting internal investigations and more time supervising and improving performance.

One of the best ways to deal with the pending shortage of officers is by reassigning functions that don’t require police authority. Some options include changing how the city handles security alarms and expanding the mission and hours of civilian regulatory inspectors. In fact, hiring more civilians is absolutely necessary to address this shortage. In MPD and other agencies, civilians can do many of the jobs that officers are doing. However, whenever funding is cut or frozen, civilian salaries and positions have historically been the first to go. But a commitment to civilianization would allow us to return officers to operational functions far faster than the Department can recruit, hire, and train officers. The long term costs to the city are lower as well. In combination, all of these actions would help the Department and the city to tackle this challenge.

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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 immensely grateful to our many partners who work with us to help keep our neighborhoods safe and the remarkable residents of the District who inspire our work every day. I look forward to another year of working together and continued progress.

³ Although most data referenced here is tracked on a calendar year basis, staffing is tracked on the Fiscal Year (October 1st – September 30th) to align with budgeting and hiring cycles.

⁴ This is not all retirements. Attrition or separations include retirement, resignation, termination, disability, and death. Over the past 15 years, about one-third of separations have been retirements. In addition, not everyone eligible to retire does so.