

# American Police Beat



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## Critics miss the big picture

by William J. Bratton

Voices on the right have said that crime in New York City is raging out of control because of a steep decline in street stops.

Voices on the left have said that the NYPD is criminalizing huge numbers of minority citizens with too many stops, summonses and arrests, especially for minor crimes.

Between these two gross exag-

gerations stands the truth. The police department I run is continuing to manage and control crime. Simultaneously, we have cut back hugely on enforcement encounters with citizens.

We are also undertaking a sweeping series of reforms in how the NYPD trains, equips, deploys, manages and motivates police officers.

All of this is part of a new vision

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# Developing skilled officers, not arrest machines

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of policing for the 21st century.

At year's end, murder was up 6 percent in New York City to 352 murders – compared with a 58-year record low of 333 murders in 2014.

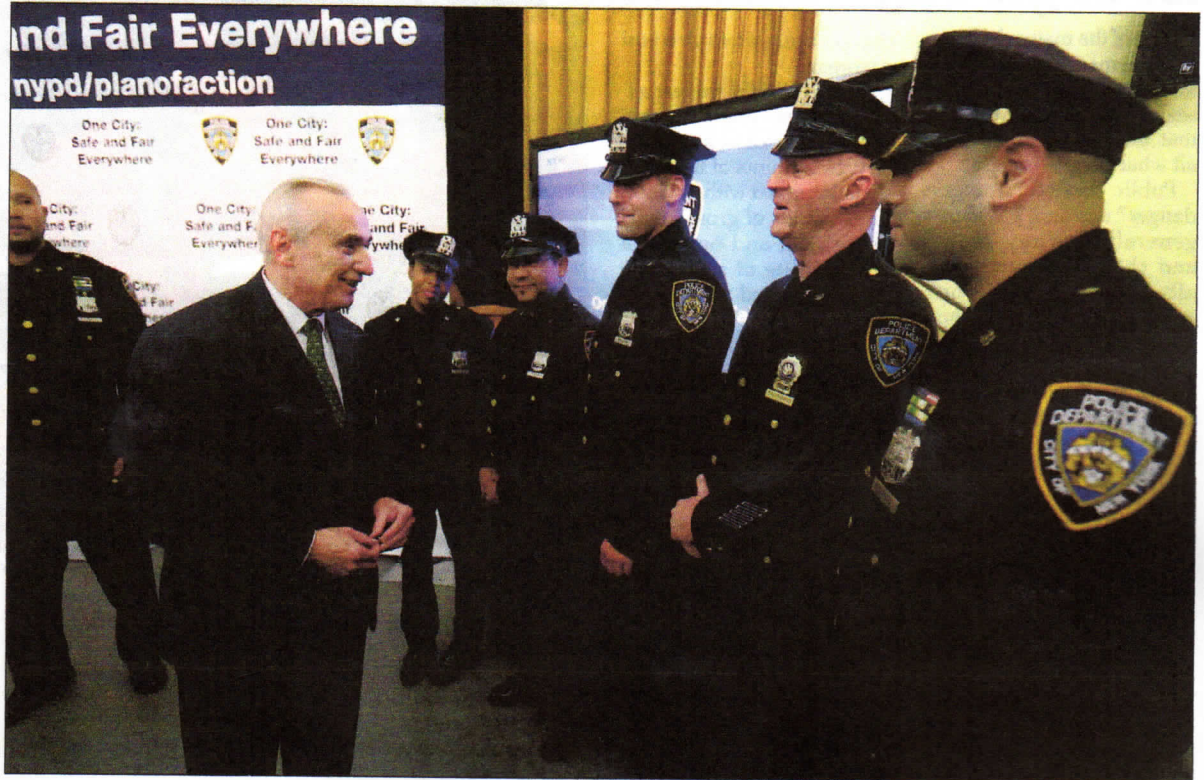
Both murders and shootings had increased by as much as 20 percent in the early months of the year, occasioning a hue and cry about impending disaster.

I said then that the NYPD could manage the problem, and it has.

In fact, we closed the year with 184 fewer murders and 335 fewer shootings than there were in 2010.

The results for Mayor de Blasio's first two years in office: a decline in overall index crime of 5.9 percent; two of the three lowest years since 1958 for murder, including the lowest; the two lowest years since 1965 for robbery; two of the three lowest years since 1960 for auto theft, including the lowest; two of the three lowest years for shootings since 1993, the first year for which those statistics are available.

Any reasonable observer would have to conclude that



NYPD Commissioner Bill Bratton checks in with officers before a recent press conference about changes at the agency.

crime during the de Blasio administration is well in hand. So are enforcement encounters.

In 2015, the NYPD recorded more than a million fewer enforcement encounters compared with the highs

of the previous decade, including 670,000 fewer street stops, 250,000 fewer criminal summonses and 82,000 fewer arrests.

If the New York City Police Department was ever driven by numbers and quo-

tas, today's NYPD is not.

As stops and frisks have declined by more than 96 percent since 2011, the NYPD has redoubled its investigative efforts, launching a variety of intensive investigations into local pockets of

violence.

We believe that this precision policing will prove far more effective than random stops.

Violence reduction task forces are collaborations among specialty detectives, local detectives and local patrol officers to hone in on local violent actors, build cases against them and take them off the streets.

Another example is a new program that places intelligence officers in all patrol commands and uses relentless interrogations of arrested criminals to establish leads and develop warrants to arrest those with illegal firearms.

Field intelligence officers seized 998 guns through targeted investigations in 2015 – more than were seized in the course of 694,000 stops at the height of stop and frisk in 2011.

The newest targeted initiative on guns is a joint venture with both the court system and the prosecutors. Our new Gun Suppression Division comprises nearly 200 police personnel who will develop and enhance gun

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# For the NYPD, skilled officers is the ultimate goal

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cases of all kinds, supported by DNA and other forensic evidence. Now there will effectively be a separate gun court which resolves these cases much more quickly, resulting in swift and sure justice for the people who carry and use illegal guns in New York City.

On another front, police training has been utterly revamped.

A classroom-bound and relatively rote curriculum has been reshaped into a hands-on, interactive program, greatly assisted by our new \$750 million Police Academy.

We have ended the practice of sending rookies straight to high-crime impact zones when they leave the academy.

Instead, we pair new officers with skilled field training officers – veterans who can expose them to the full range of police roles and functions.

We want to develop well-rounded, highly skilled police officers, not arrest machines.

Telephone, radio and computer networks are all being rebuilt. By March 2016, every police officer will be equipped with a smartphone and 2,000 patrol cars with computer tablets.

The patrol cops will all

have access to NYPD's vast databases, some of which were previously accessible only at headquarters.

Training and technology both feed our new Neighborhood Policing Plan, which is the centerpiece of our

reform agenda. Many of the 1,300 new officers will bolster our anti-terrorism units for new and emerging threats.

The NYPD and New York City's many diverse communities are supposed to be

allies, but the way we have done business in the past has often kept us from finding common ground.

*William J. Bratton is the commissioner of the New York City Police Department.*

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