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Cutting Crime and Restoring Order: What America Can Learn from New York's Finest

By William J. Bratton

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New York's Finest

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Edwin Meese III: William J. Bratton is one of the most distinguished law enforcement leaders in the United States today. While serving as Commissioner of Police for New York City from 1994 to 1996, Bill Bratton successfully instituted major management initiatives and the strategic deployment of public safety resources. During this period, the city achieved a phenomenal 36 percent decrease in serious crime, including a 45 percent drop in murder. Commissioner Bratton previously had served as the chief executive of other large law enforcement agencies, including the Boston Police Department and the New York City Transit Police. Widely respected by his professional colleagues, he was elected president of the Police Executive Research Forum, a leading institute of modern police management. Bill Bratton continues his efforts in the private sector as a foremost authority on effective law enforcement and the improvement of public safety.

William J. Bratton: I am an optimist when it comes to the issue of crime in this country. I believe that over the last several years we have begun to find answers to a problem for which many felt there were no answers. We have begun to turn the corner, and American police forces are becoming better at what they do. I think society, in general, understands more significantly what causes crime, what can be done about it, and—most important, from my perspective as a former police official—what police departments can be expected to accomplish.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, I had the privilege of working at Harvard University on an initiative with Edwin Meese, in his former capacity as Attorney General of the United States, and with a group of very distinguished academics, mayors, press people, community activists, and federal officials regarding the issue of the development of the community policing philosophy. The federal government played a very significant role funding that initiative, which literally was the birthplace of what we have come to understand and appreciate as community policing, with all of its manifestations. I want to talk to you today about one of those manifestations: specifically, what has happened within the New York City Police Department and in the city of New York over the last several years regarding crime; what is continuing to happen in that city; and the impact that police strategies have had on the quality of life in the city, and the lessons to be learned from all of this. They are important not only for Washington and for the country, but for countries around the world as well.

To understand fully the impact of what has happened in New York in the last few years, we need to take a walk back through time—to the late 1960s and early 1970s, to the time when I went into the police department in Boston as a young patrolman. To understand the impact of changes in New York City today, we need to have an appreciation of what policing and crime were like in the 1970s and the 1980s, and indeed what they *are* like as we move through the 1990s. But before I begin that walk back through time, you may be wondering: Where *is* New York City today with respect to crime? I will give you the end of the story before I tell you the beginning, so that you can appreciate how important the figures I am about to give you are, why so much attention is being paid to the New York City Police Department, and why its successes over the last few years have begun to generate such optimism in this country and around the world. Something *can* be done about crime.

"Miracle on 42nd Street." By the end of 1996, recorded incidents in New York City of the seven top crimes measured by the Uniform Crime Reports will be down from their 1990 figures by almost 50 percent—a 50 percent decline in America's largest city, over a six-year period of time, in the seven major crime categories of murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, auto theft, larceny, and burglary. In the city's subway system, which I was privileged to lead from 1990 to 1992, crime has gone down dramatically as well. In 1992, this decline provided me with the opportunity to meet then-mayoral candidate Rudolph Giuliani, who asked me to explain to him why crime had gone down so dramatically in the subway system and if this could work in the city as a whole. That conversation ultimately led to my appointment, upon his election as Mayor, to the position of Police Commissioner of New York City. Subway crime has continued to decline, and by the end of this year will be down 80 percent from what it was in 1990.

These percentages sound great, but what do they mean in terms of the actual number of people who have not been victims of crime this year in New York City?

- **Homicides:** In 1990, there were 2,246 homicides in New York City, a figure somewhat inflated because of 85 deaths in one fire. Even if you deduct those 85 deaths from the total, this was an historic all-time high for New York City—2,246 murders in one city, in one year. Yet by the end of 1996, New York City will report fewer than 1,000 homicides for the year—a decline of almost 55 percent.

- **Shooting victims:** In 1990, there were 6,000 shooting victims in New York City. By the end of 1996, there will be about 3,000. Shooting victims are a category that police have tended not to track, but one that we track very closely in New York City because of the many things that are done now to save lives, like quicker police response and improved medical services. To understand changes in the incidence of crime, we need to look at the larger issue of crime—not only at the number of homicide victims, but also at the number of people who may have been homicide victims and were not.

- **Auto thefts:** There were 143,000 auto thefts in New York City in 1990. In 1996, there will be about 65,000.

- **Robberies:** From approximately 85,000 robberies in 1990, it is estimated that the number will fall to the 50,000 range this year.

- **Victims of crimes:** Finally, when 1996 comes to a close, there will be approximately 200,000 fewer victims of crime in New York City than there were in 1990.

To understand the significance of these figures, we need to understand how New York got to the position it held in 1990, and then look at what began to happen in 1990 and accelerated in 1994 to allow New York to be able to claim now, without fear of contradiction,

that it is definitely one of the safest cities in the United States with populations over 100,000 and, among the major cities of the world, one of the safest in the world.

Rethinking the Methods of Conventional Policing

In 1970, when I joined the Boston Police Department, the country had just begun to emerge from the civil rights era—an era of race riots and assassinations, if you will. The Kerner Report had come out on what to do about crime in the United States, and American police forces began to enter a new era—one that has been described as the professional or reform era of policing. This was an era marked by what I describe as the three R's:

- **Reactive policing:** In the 1970s, 1980s, and—unfortunately for many departments in this country—into the 1990s, policing consisted of something I have come to understand as reactive policing. In the 1970s the intention was to emphasize the ability of police to respond quickly to calls for assistance. The emergency number 911 came into being in the early 1970s and spread rapidly across the country, and police departments began to focus their attention on how quickly they responded to those calls.

- **Random patrols:** The principal means of policing city streets in the 1970s and 1980s became random, not targeted, patrol. When officers were not chasing 911 calls, they were expected to randomly patrol their assigned sector and, by the visibility and randomness of their patrol, deter criminals from committing other crimes.

- **Reactive investigation:** Lastly, there was a significant effort to improve the professionalism of our detectives to investigate—but this was reactive investigation.

What do all of these elements have in common? They are all actions taken after the fact. American police forces began to measure their impact, not on what crime they were preventing, but on how they were responding to crime—which was a sea change in terms of how the police were policing American cities and why they were invented in the first place. Sir Robert Peel and the Metropolitan Police in London in the early 1800s had officers in uniform—the British "bobbies"—patrolling their beats and preventing crime by their presence, by their activity. Somehow, in the 1960s and in the increasingly permissive society of the 1970s, we began to excuse police from having any responsibility for the prevention of crime. We began to espouse that there were so many causes of crime that were beyond the control of police: How could we hold the police accountable for preventing crime when so many of the things that we believed caused crime were beyond their control?

Many of these causes have been reported on widely, and they still afflict the city and the country: the breakdown of family values, schools that no longer teach, and an increasingly permissive society that—using Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's famous explanation in his essay in *The Public Interest*—defined social deviancy down. Rather than trying to correct misbehavior or improve standards and norms of behavior, we found it increasingly easier just to excuse it away. We also had a number of societal issues that began having an impact in the 1970s and that now, 25 years later, are having a tremendous impact:

- The de-institutionalization of mental patients from institutions around the country was intended to put people back into the neighborhoods, and into home-care and local care facilities. But the reality was that the cracks in the floorboards of that plan were so immense that hundreds of thousands fell through them and eventually became the homeless populations in our cities in the 1970s and 1980s.

- An increasing use of drugs during that period culminated in the mid-1980s with the explosion of crack cocaine. It has had a devastating effect.

● An increasingly permissive society and our tendency to explain away aberrant behavior rather than to try to correct it has compounded the problem of policing our streets—a problem that many police departments had great difficulty handling in the first place.

In addition, during the 1970s and 1980s, many police departments in major cities began to shrink in size due to budgetary restraints. In the 1970s, the New York City Police Department laid off thousands of police as the city dealt with its budget crisis. In Boston, as Superintendent of the Boston Police in 1980, I had the unenviable responsibility for laying off 25 percent of the police force, closing half of their police facilities, and reducing the overall size of the department from the 2,800 officers when I joined in 1970 to 1,544 in the summer of 1982. Even as society was increasing the number of things that police were expected to deal with—not to solve, not to prevent, but to *deal* with, to respond to—we saw that we were falling farther and farther behind. By the 1980s, American police by and large were excused from controlling behavior in our streets or changing behavior that was aberrant, to the extent that they were also excused from doing anything about the prevention of crime.

I know for a fact, from my experience as a young police officer, as a young sergeant and lieutenant in the Boston Police who was involved in initiating neighborhood policing programs and "team" policing in the Boston area, and ultimately as the Superintendent of the Police, what I was measuring with systems that I designed using the new computers that were coming on board. I was measuring response time—how quickly could we get cars out to the scene, how quickly could we clear calls? And our policing measures were very impersonal. We took police off the streets of America at just the time when the streets of America were beginning to flood with the worst results of the societal conditions—conditions caused increasingly by the breakdown in the social values that have been so important in the past. As society was changing, the local police force, the very institution that had been so important in terms of controlling neighborhood streets, was shrinking and removing its officers from those streets.

The 1970s and 1980s also saw the popular culture celebrate a kind of "Adam-12" or Jack Webb "Badge 714" type of system. Jack Webb, who played the central role in the popular television series "Dragnet," was viewed as the model of American policing—very efficient and very stern-faced. That bleeding victim or that very seriously injured rape victim was never offered a word of comfort, never an arm around the shoulder. Police wanted "just the facts, ma'am, just the facts." They had 28 minutes to solve the crime and had to get going. They did not have time to be concerned about prevention. Similarly, on the television series "Adam-12," the two handsome uniformed L.A. cops spent most of their time solving crime by chasing calls. In the 1970s and '80s, this is largely what policing looked like.

As a police executive in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I managed these organizations. I speak to you today, in 1996, having been on both sides of the equation: the way we policed in the 1970s and '80s, and the way we began to police in New York City in the 1990s. The policing of the 1990s—which many would liken to the policing of the 1940s and '50s, with some significant modifications—is a much better system than the one we used in the 1970s and '80s.

A City Falling Apart. To appreciate the sea change that has occurred in New York City, we should revisit the New York City of 1990. Like many of you, I had been to New York as a tourist during the 1970s and 1980s, but not with any great frequency. My first visit as a 12-year-old in the 1950s was with my parents. I had a love affair with this great city for many, many years from a distance. In 1990, as Superintendent of Police with the Metropolitan Police in Boston, I was asked by David Gunn, then-president of the Transit Authority (who also ran the Metro system here in Washington, D.C., for a while), to come

to New York and see about taking over the position of Transit Police Chief. The transit system was losing hundreds of thousands of riders a year. It is a system that carries 3.5 million riders every day on its subways, and another 1.5 million on its buses; 5 million people a day, 5 million trips a day. But in 1990 it was a system that was ridden with crime and disorder. The impact of societal breakdown was most evident in the city's subway system. I decided to come down to be interviewed.

I remember flying into New York City and the gantlet I had to run at LaGuardia Airport. There were all these cab drivers and livery drivers; it was sheer chaos, like in a Third World country, with all of them haranguing, "Take my cab, take my cab!" Finally I found a cab, got in, and off we went. I was now in the hands of somebody I did not know, who did not speak a great deal of English, in a cab that literally did not look like it was going to make it, and we were traveling down roads that were by all accounts incredible—riddled with potholes, dirty, with graffiti everywhere, and with abandoned cars, litter, and rubber tires all along the highway from LaGuardia heading into Manhattan. "Welcome to New York."

And as we entered New York and the island of Manhattan through one of the over 15 ways to get onto the island, we encountered the notorious "squeegee pests," phalanxes of them with five, ten, and 15 at the intersection. One wondered if they were going to take the torch out of the Statute of Liberty's hand and replace it with a squeegee. This could be the official symbol of the city there; it had become that bad. This was everybody's first impression of New York: Whether you were a tourist, a visitor, a person on business, or anybody coming to the city strictly by car, people intimidated you into giving them money for what passed as washing the windshield. This was your "Welcome to New York."

I remember going down the "miracle mile," Fifth Avenue. Fifth Avenue is often described as one of the richest shopping areas in the world. Once again, I saw illegal peddlers, beggars, panhandlers, filth, graffiti, and no sign of police. The only police were riding by in police cars that looked as though they were in worse shape than the taxi I was riding in. There just did not seem to be any control, or any pride, or any sense of ownership in the streets of New York.

And then I toured the subway. If I thought the streets were bad, the subways were something else. There are 700 entranceways into the city's 450 or so subway stations. Every one of those entranceways seemed like a walk down into Dante's *Inferno*. They were dirty and grimy. The whole idea of walking below ground can be disheartening to the average person, but especially so when all the turnstiles are disabled. Vandals disabled the turnstiles so that they could stand at the entrance gates with their hands out like the squeegee pests. The only thing they offered you, though, was not to be spit upon or harangued. It was, simply, "Give me your money and I'll let you through this gate."

On every platform, there were encampments of homeless people in cardboard cities. In 1990 it was estimated that 5,000 homeless people were living in the subway system in New York City—a system that killed about 178 of them that year as they fell onto the trains, or were hit by trains, or were murdered in the system. Subways are not for sleeping, and we had to initiate a major campaign to deal with that issue. Then we stepped onto the subway cars, which were remarkably free of graffiti. They were probably the only public entity in New York that was not marked with graffiti because there had been a major campaign in the 1980s to get rid of the graffiti on the cars. But on every car, it seemed, there were aggressive beggars or, once again, homeless people who had taken up residence there. It was not a very encouraging environment.

Because I like a challenge, I accepted the job and went to New York in 1990 as Chief of the Transit Police. Crime had been going up 25 percent a year in the three years previous

to 1990, and ridership had been falling by the hundreds of thousands. Fare evasion was estimated to run about 200,000 to 250,000 occurrences a day. You could not walk in the station without seeing people leaping over or crawling under the few turnstiles that were still working.

A Legacy of the 1960s. What you were seeing in the streets and in the subways was the result of 20 years in which cities, in particular, gave up their streets to the criminals and excused police from policing those streets—phenomenal changes in this country. Disorder had overtaken the quality of life, as witnessed by the so-called signs of crime, as I describe them. These conditions, if left unchecked over time—and we have conclusively shown this to be true in New York City—will lead to more significant crime, more significant disorder, and more significant fear. This issue was eloquently addressed in an important article in the *Atlantic Monthly* in the 1980s, written by James Wilson and George Kelling, scholars who understood the importance of disorder's relationship to crime. In the article, they discussed the "broken windows" syndrome, a term which came out of an experiment conducted in Palo Alto in which the researchers put a car on the street. At first, it was in good shape. Nothing happened to that car. But whenever they broke a window or removed a tire, within a short period of time vandals swarmed around that vehicle and dismantled it.

These signs of social disorder include:

- **The first broken window.** You and I have seen the old factories where every window pane on their thousands of windows is broken. It started, however, with that first broken window. If you don't correct the problem, you cannot check it.

- **Graffiti.** A remarkable article published in the 1970s—I saved it for future reference—in *The New York Times* celebrated the arrival of graffiti in America as a new form of urban art in which the poor and the indigent could express themselves—even though it was on everybody else's property and on city walls and parks. In the 1970s we began to celebrate graffiti, but we did not understand what this celebration would cost, projected over time. We were encouraging a form of disorder and a disrespect for other people's property, something that also engendered fear. When gigantic "murals" are covering every conceivable inch of bridge or conduit, people wonder, "What is going on here? Where are the police? Who's in control?" Graffiti lends itself to increasing a sense of social disorder.

- **Shocking headlines about crime.** Other elements came into play to make New York in 1990 look like a city totally out of control. Two very famous headlines appeared around the time David Dinkins had been elected as Mayor and I came down to New York. In one particular week, 14 or 15 homicides or shootings had occurred. Although they were mostly random in nature, and not against targeted victims, the victims were primarily people who were just walking down the street, even babies in carriages. People who were going about their daily business were shot, killed, and injured in the gunfire on New York City streets as drug dealers fought for turf. It was a continuation of the retreat of policing, of our streets being given up to the criminals; and it provided fertile ground for the crack epidemic of 1985 which quickly took over New York City's streets. In that one terrible week, when it seemed like everything was falling apart, *The New York Post* proclaimed, in a famous headline, "Do Something Dave!" A month later, *Time* magazine published a cover story on "New York City, The Rotten Apple" and talked about the same issues I have talked about here today.

So, in 1990, America's largest city seemed to be falling apart. Crime had been going up, directly fueled by drugs, crack cocaine, and new types of 9mm weaponry in the hands of

drug dealers and, unfortunately, increasingly in the hands of younger and younger individuals—children who had no societal values because none were given to them either in the schools or the homes from which they came. We were losing our streets, and we were losing our homes and our schools as well—the traditional entities that instruct and shape and guide our young people. By tolerating disorder in the streets, we effectively had given up societal control over our city. In some of our poorest neighborhoods, so much of what had helped to shape and guide and control behavior on the streets had fallen apart. New York City was probably the most vivid example of this breakdown in 1990. Fortunately, Mayor David Dinkins had just hired Lee Brown as his new Police Commissioner. Lee Brown had worked with Ed Meese and others in the development of the community policing philosophy and model. There was a developing recognition by American police chiefs, political leaders, government leaders, and academics that something was terribly wrong, and there were attempts to figure out what could be done—more specifically, what the police could do—to contribute to a turnaround. It was quite apparent that the professional reform model of policing was just not cutting it; crime was going up, and disorder in the streets was increasing. The genesis of community policing arose, then, from an idea of what the police should be expected to do. Out of this effort came community policing strategies as they are now practiced throughout the country. Community policing has been embraced by the President, and it has been embraced by America's police leaders as well.

The Rise of Community Policing in the 1990s

I have a simplistic definition of a community policing program: it must have three elements. We talked about the traditional three R's of rapid response, random patrol, and reactive investigation. And we talked about what a failure policing by this model has been. Community policing from my perspective involves three P's, which should be merged with the three R's. These three elements are:

- Partnership;

- Problem solving; and

- Prevention.

First, community policing involves something that American police lost sight of in the 1970s and 1980s—partnership. The police are the most effective when they work in partnership with the community and when they are of the community, not apart from it. Police officers are the most effective when they are responding to citizens' needs and working with citizens on determining priorities, as well as when they are working as part of government. For instance, the police can coordinate their efforts with the Parks Department and the Transportation Department regarding the issues of graffiti and cleanup.

Partnership should exist as well among the local, state, and federal crime-fighting levels on the coordination of resources. No matter how much money government gave us in the 1970s under the L.E.A.A. [Law Enforcement Assistance Administration] program, no matter how many cops we hired, we were trying to do it on our own. We in law enforcement cannot do it on our own. There are just not enough cops in America for us to do it on our own. So the beauty and strength of community policing is the appreciation and understanding that, with partnership, we can immediately strengthen those 700,000 to 800,000 American police by adding 100 million citizens who are willing to work with the police.

And what are they going to work on? Problems. Not 911 calls, the individual incidents, but the problems that generate all those calls, and problems that generate those signs of disorder in our streets. At one point, Lee Brown had advanced an idea that we should look

at crime in a medical sense. I responded to this idea when I heard it described this way: Think of malaria; for years and years the response to malaria was to swat at all those mosquitoes. But we are never going to kill all those mosquitoes. What was generating all of those mosquitoes? Swamps. Not until people went in and drained the swamps did they start dealing effectively with the problem. We have developed an inoculation to help, but draining the swamps is something that is still done to this day to control mosquitoes. Problem identification, and going after the problem, is the second P of community policing. Policing must be more focused on the problems that generate crime, whether it is actual crime or the signs of crime—something we had not been doing well in the 1970s and '80s.

Partnership and problem solving are important, but for what purpose? Prevention—to prevent crime in the first place, and to prevent all those victims. One of the things I feel good about is that during the two and a half years I was Police Commissioner in New York City, by working within the administration and with those 38,000 cops, we saved over 2,500 lives. And we saved several hundreds of thousands of people from becoming victims of serious crimes. This became such a powerful motivation, such a powerful inspiration, because we saw that we could find ways to prevent crime from occurring in the first place.

While community policing has many manifestations, I would argue that any program that does not include these three elements—partnership, problem solving, and a focus on prevention—will not enable police to effect change in their communities effectively. Take a look at New York City in 1994. In 1990, David Dinkins hired Lee Brown. Lee Brown brought the concept of community policing to New York City and told David Dinkins that, to put community policing in and to deal with the crime problems that were already here and growing, the city needed to increase the size of its police forces. At that time there were three forces: transit police, housing police, and the city police. In the Transit Authority, I had about 3,600 cops. And there were about 2,600 in the housing police force, who were responsible for the 600,000 people living in the city's 1,000 housing developments.

The city subsequently passed a very significant piece of legislation—the Safe Street legislation—as a tax initiative to raise money specifically for hiring 7,000 more police, but also to provide funds for programs that would help prevention, programs within the schools, and something that unfortunately oftentimes has been sloughed off as nonessential, "midnight basketball." In New York City we had beacon schools, and we utilized the school buildings after hours as places for kids to go rather than hanging out on street corners. The Safe Street legislation had quite a bit of money initially for these types of issues; the funds were not to be used exclusively by police, but rather to provide a way to look at the bigger picture—the prevention picture, if you will.

By 1994, when the next mayoral election rolled around, the city had witnessed the addition of several thousand police out of the 7,000 promised (many were in the pipeline), and the community policing philosophy had become an integral part of the NYPD. The department was structured around community policing. But the crime situation did not appear to be getting better. Starting in 1990, crime began to go down, and by the end of 1993, crime had gone down over four years something like 9 percent or 11 percent. But it had been going down in only small, incremental ways. Of the police that were promised, only 2,000 to 3,000 had been hired because it takes time to add 7,000 police officers to a force of 38,000. Consequently, the street conditions had not improved significantly, and people were not feeling that anything had changed.

Understanding the Quality-of-Life Issues. One of the flaws, if you will, of the community policing initiative of the early 1990s is that a lot of the quality-of-life issues that I believe were causing so much fear remained visibly unchanged, uninterrupted. Quality-of-life issues in New York City are many, since New York is a very large city—with 8 million

people concentrated in 350 square miles, and covered by 76 police precincts. I would argue that no two police precincts in the city have the same set of problems that are of concern to the people that live in them, at least in terms of crime and fear of crime.

I live in mid-town Manhattan on Central Park South. Central Park is one of the premier addresses in the world. My front yard is Central Park. In my neighborhood, the issues that generate fear and that are raised at police precinct community council meetings are not about rapes or murders; they are about delivery boys on bicycles riding down the elderly as they make deliveries to buildings. People raise issues about aggressive begging. They also raise the issue about something that is also one of my pet concerns—and which I can witness from my front window—and that is public urination in back of the beautiful statue that sits at the front entrance of Central Park, an area that is costing millions to renovate. This statue had become a public urinal. In one of the most beautiful parks in the world, the situation had deteriorated to the extent that nobody was correcting these conditions, conditions that were seen every day by the residents of that neighborhood. It is a neighborhood that has so few murders, so few rapes, and so few burglaries that people were not fearful of these types of crime to which police traditionally respond. Instead, they were fearful of quality-of-life types of transgressions.

Meanwhile, in east New York, the 75th precinct had 140 murders in 1990. People there were concerned about shootings, about randomly being shot down on the street, and about the drug dealing that had been allowed to continue uninterrupted, or seemingly uninterrupted, by the police for many years. The quality-of-life issues were different in each of the city's 76 precincts, yet the police were attempting to deal with them throughout the early 1990s as they had done in the 1970s and '80s, with a monolithic police structure.

The Centralized Bureaucracy. As the New York City Police Commissioner, I was an all-powerful individual. In that organization, everything had to go to the top of the pile to get approval—even the community policing program. The many thousands of extra police and the well-thought-out programs my predecessors attempted to put into place had created a centralized type of community policing in which the precincts were told exactly how many officers they would have in community policing. Within the precincts, the community police officers were separate from the rest of the precinct officers who were still chasing 911 calls and doing random patrols. The entities were not talking to each other. But each precinct was mandated to have 40 or 50 officers and was told how many officers they could have in plain clothes. It was a centralized bureaucracy that was not capable of responding to the many different needs around the city. It was also, from a management perspective, an entity that had become overspecialized—and this is an important element in understanding why New York was not doing a good job in many respects at reducing crime. Although it was containing crime, and it was beginning to reduce it, it was not making the wholesale types of reductions that we saw in 1994 and 1995, and that we are seeing now in 1996.

The one thing we know about the criminal element is that they work 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Those are awful working conditions because they have to work all the time. But New York City's police department, by and large, worked from 9 to 5. Our response units were working 24 hours a day responding to the crimes that occurred, but the gun squad in New York worked Monday to Friday, 9 to 5; the auto theft squad in New York worked Monday to Friday, 10 to 6. In the community policing program, we had authorized thousands of young police officers to make their own hours in response to the neighborhoods' concerns. We gave them flex-time. Interestingly, most of them were still working Monday to Friday, 9 to 5. We were a department that was not where the problems were, so we were not making a great change in crime, and because we were not focused on

the quality-of-life issues, we were making no change in what people were seeing everyday. They still saw police walk by all those conditions on the streets.

Crime and Corruption. I should point out that the factor that drives most of the serious crime in New York City is the use and sale of illegal drugs, though we might argue whether it accounts for 40 percent or 70 percent of the serious crime, because you hear different figures. But New York's real drug problem, which began back in the 1970s, was a problem that most of America's police departments did not experience. It was a problem that compounded New York's difficulty in trying to deal with drugs, particularly when the crack cocaine epidemic exploded in the 1980s. What real problem was this? It was corruption in the police department. In the 1970s, the Knapp Commission reported on its investigations of corruption in the police department. As a result, one of my predecessors, former Police Commissioner Patrick Murphy, was saddled with trying to reduce, remove, or eliminate the systemic corruption that the commission had identified. This corruption reached from the bottom to the top, from the cop on the beat to the police chiefs. It was a systemic corruption that was largely, in today's jargon, somewhat benign in that cops were taking payoffs to look the other way about licensing and premise violations, prostitution, and gaming types of activities—somewhat minor crimes, if you will, in the overall scheme of things. But this corruption had the same overall effect on the public: The police were not trusted. Police had crossed the line from being protectors to being abusers.

In any event, Pat Murphy did a wonderful job in a very short period of time in removing the systemic corruption in that department. But because of this fear of corruption, one way the police in the 1970s and '80s tried to remove the systemic corruption was not authorizing the uniformed police workforce to interact in the drug problems on the street. When the crack cocaine epidemic exploded in 1985, drug dealers were on every street, even on Wall Street; yet the uniformed police in New York City were discouraged from interacting with them. The uniformed cops reported their information to a very heavily supervised Organized Crime Control Bureau, with 2,000 detectives working in squads under sergeants. The problems were so big, however, that this specialized headquarters unit could not possibly solve the drug problem in New York City. Meanwhile, the other 30,000 New York cops were riding on by.

In the 1970s and in the 1980s, we were attempting to deal with crime the way we always had, but the nature of the corruption had changed. The corruption now was much worse, much more insidious—with drug dealers paying off cops not only to look the other way, but at times to protect their shipments. In the 1990s, it had gotten so bad that, by the time of my appointment in 1994, a new anti-corruption commission—the Mollen Commission—had issued a report on the widespread corruption in the NYPD. This commission found pockets of corruption—not systemic corruption throughout the organization, but pockets centered particularly with patrol officers in the city's most crime-ridden, most drug-ridden precincts: the 30th, the 44th, the 48th, the 75th. Wherever you had drugs, you had police corruption in the form of officers who were stealing the drugs and stealing the guns, reselling them, and protecting the drug dealers. Cops themselves had become the criminals. And the organizational structure at this time was such that the department was not policing the problems of the 1990s. They were still policing the problems of the 1970s, and these problems had generated a further pull-back of New York City's police officers from effectively controlling the streets.

In 1993, mayoral candidate Giuliani campaigned on three issues: crime, schools, and the economy. The economy lost 400,000 jobs in the previous four years. The schools had ceased to teach 1.1 million school children who, upon graduation, could not take even the most menial jobs in the private-sector economy because they were just not educated. Based

on an increasing sense as well that, despite more cops being hired, the crime situation was not getting better, New Yorkers by a very slim margin took David Dinkins out of office and put Rudolph Giuliani in.

One of Giuliani's first appointments was to ask me to come back as Commissioner of Police. During the period between 1990 and 1992, while crime had gone down 1 percent to 3 percent in the city as a whole, in the subway system it had gone down 22 percent. We had begun to put in place within the transit system a set of strategies that I would later employ in 1994 as Police Commissioner in New York City. And these strategies were quite simple: They were not only focused on solving the causes of the subway crimes, but they also aggressively attacked those quality-of-life signs of crime. The duality of these two elements, the causes and the signs of crime, was generating fear in New York City, in the subways, and in the streets.

Making Subways Safer. In the subway system, we began by aggressively arresting the fare evaders and ejecting disorderly people from the subway. I had more tools to work with than the city police, so we began strategically to go after what little crime there actually was in the subway system. For a system serving 5 million riders a day with bus and subway passengers, there were only about 60 to 70 reported crimes a day. The chances of being a victim of a crime in the subway system were statistically like the chances of winning the lottery. But what people saw every day—the disorder, the fare evaders, and police who were not doing anything about it—reinforced their fears and, rather than subjecting themselves to the cause of this fear, people were beginning to stay away.

We began to turn this around for the first time in years by having our officers enforce quality-of-life rules in the subway system. And what did we find? We found that one out of every seven people that we arrested for fare evasion was wanted on a warrant, and one out of every 21 was carrying some type of weapon. Crime in the subways was crime of opportunity, committed by people who were not paying the fares but who were carrying a weapon and were wanted on warrants. Chances were good that they were not coming into the subway just to commute back and forth to work: They *were* at work, and you and I were the people they were looking to work on. By arresting them as they came in, and by doing it on a large scale and putting police out in so many different ways, we began to change behaviors. We began to control behavior in the subway system.

We began to change the environment so much that, in 1996, the number of estimated fare evaders on any given day in New York City's subway system is between 30,000 and 40,000, which is down from the 200,000 to 250,000 occurrences in 1990. We changed that behavior. How do I know that we changed it? By looking at the statistics of fare evaders who were arrested this year: Only about one in 100 are wanted on a warrant, and one in many hundreds are actually carrying a weapon. People did not voluntarily start paying the fares and stop carrying their weapons into the system; they did these things because they knew the police were there and the police were going to act on any type of misbehavior.

Making the Streets Safer. When Mayor Giuliani interviewed me for the position of Commissioner of Police, he asked: What could you do in the streets? Could you do the same thing you did in the subways? I told him I believed we could, but it was going to take several things. First, it would require his political will, as Mayor, to focus on the issues of primary concern—the economy, crime, and the schools—and second, to coordinate all the activities of the agencies of government. On the crime issue, this meant that the Parks Department and the Transportation Department would work with other city agencies on the quality-of-life issues that were generating fear. They would aggressively go after graffiti and littering; they would aggressively go after public drinking and all the other things that generated fear. While the police are enforcing these laws, the rest of city government would be

involved in remedying and removing the visible signs. If graffiti was put up on a wall, it would be taken off very quickly. By implementing this partnership to address the signs of crime as well as the crime itself, we began to reduce the fear.

Decentralizing the Bureaucracy. In the New York City Police Department, we did several things. First, I decentralized. I gave away many of my powers not—as my predecessors wanted—to the cop on the beat, but rather to the precinct commander. I did not want to give more power to the cops on the beat. They were, on the average, only 22 years of age. Most of them never held a job before becoming New York City police officers, and had only high school or GED qualification. These kids, after six months of training, were not prepared to solve the problems of New York City; sorry, but it just was not going to work that way. However, my precinct commanders typically had an average of 15 years of service, and they were some of the best and the brightest on the police force. All of them were college educated; all were very sophisticated; and they were at the appropriate level in the organization to which power should be decentralized.

Establishing Managerial Accountability. My form of community policing, therefore, versus former Police Commissioners Lee Brown's and Ray Kelly's, put less emphasis on the cop on the beat and much more emphasis on the precinct commanders, the same precinct commanders who met with community councils and with neighborhood groups. They were empowered to decide how many plain clothes officers to assign, how many to put in community policing, on bicycle patrols, and in robbery squads. They were empowered to assign officers as they saw fit—in uniform or in plain clothes—to focus on the priorities of that neighborhood. If it was a 75th precinct, they would focus on the shootings and the drug dealings. If the problem was the bicycle messengers on the sidewalks of Manhattan, they would go after that. Whatever was generating the fear in their precinct, they were empowered to address it by prioritizing their responses. We decentralized the organization, and I eliminated a few levels in the organization of the force and in the hierarchy as well.

Second, we put into place a system called COMPSTAT (for computer statistics) to manage our 38,000 police officers and a 44,000-person organization. When I began running the NYPD in 1994, the crime statistics were gathered only twice a year for the sole purpose of submitting the statistics to the FBI for their semiannual and annual reports. The NYPD did not use crime statistics to manage the routine assignment of resources. At first, they told us we could not get crime stats on a daily or weekly basis—there were just too many of them. Finally, with a lot of prodding, pushing, kicking, and replacement of personnel and the naysayers, we developed a system so that I could get crime statistics every day and, more important, every week to share with the rest of the department. It was timely, accurate intelligence. Imagine trying to run a business without timely, accurate information on where your customers are and where your markets are; it is not an efficient or profitable way to operate.

Using the Private-Sector Model. We began to run the NYPD as a private profit-oriented business. What was the profit I wanted? Crime reduction. I wanted to beat my competitors—the criminals—who were out there working seven days a week, 24 hours a day. I wanted to serve my customers, the public, better; and the profit I wanted to deliver to them was reduced crime. All of my franchises—my 76 precincts—were measured, not on how many calls they responded to, but on how much crime was reduced. And every one of the 76 precincts in New York City saw a double-digit decline in crime, so the results were not just happening in the war-torn neighborhoods. Crime reductions were happening throughout the city by our empowering the precincts to act. We were running the police department as a business, and we developed the COMPSTAT process to facilitate it.

The city of New York is divided into eight geographical areas, or boroughs. We call them patrol boroughs, and each one has 8 to 10 precincts. Once a month from 7:00 to 10:00 in the morning, we would have a borough come down with its precinct commanders and detective squad commanders to meet with all the headquarters specialized units, all the super chiefs in the departments, myself as Police Commissioner, probation, parole, and District Attorney representatives, crime analysis representatives, and representatives from each of the other seven boroughs. For three hours we would work on the issue of crime in that borough: Why is it up? Why is it down? What's happening? We utilized computerized statistics. Using very large computerized pin maps to show where the crime is occurring, we would ask ourselves: What are we doing about it? Where are we making arrests? Where are the parolees living? Large amounts of information were reduced to the simplest form by such computer analysis.

Sharing Information. Another major element of what we did in this new process at NYPD was inclusion, not exclusion. The NYPD had been run as an exclusive organization; it would exclude people from information. We approached it from the other direction—inclusion: Give everybody as much information as they need and want. The sharing went on in that room from 7:00 to 10:00 in the morning; everybody was sharing information. If an issue was raised, such as why someone could not make an arrest, and the answer came out that it was because the District Attorney would not give them the complaints, I could confront the District Attorney's representatives who were right there. Instead of spending three or four days trying to track the D.A. down, I could get answers directly from someone right there in the room. And if that representative did not have the answer, then I would call the D.A. Intimacy, the sharing of information in as wide a range as possible, inclusion, and COMPSTAT were important to this process.

It is my belief that the COMPSTAT process can be utilized effectively by any police department, in this country and abroad. The COMPSTAT process is made up of four very simple elements:

- **Timely, accurate intelligence.** What good is crime statistics information for preventing crime when it is gathered only twice a year?

- **Rapid response.** Using the COMPSTAT process, we could identify a trend developing with only two or three incidences, instead of waiting for 40 or 50 over six months. Sharing this information so that everybody is aware of a problem and works together on providing resources very quickly to address that problem allows us to rapidly respond to where the crime is happening—using plain clothes, uniforms, specialized units, or whatever is required.

- **Effective tactics.** We were able to ask ourselves: What works? The answer could be plain clothes, uniforms, or coordinated activity with the Feds or the D.A.

- **Relentless follow-up.** People in that meeting knew they were coming back the next month, and that next month we were going to talk about the same issues that were raised this month. The issues don't go away. We weren't discussing something that happened one time and then could be put on the shelf. In the COMPSTAT process, everyone knew they were coming back to explain why crime is up or why it is down. Over the last two years, every precinct commander in the police department has been replaced. Many of them have been promoted up because they were doing such a good job, but many others were moved out because they were not doing a good job. They were not moved out because they were not reducing crime. They were moved out because they didn't understand the problems in their community and they were not

responding to these problems effectively; after several tries, if they still were not responding, they were replaced.

Timely, accurate intelligence is a very important element in this process. Let me give you an analogy. In World War II, Germany was getting ready to invade the British Isles. They had forced the British to flee Dunkirk. The British had only 450 Spitfires scattered around all of England to protect its cities. The Germans had thousands of bombers that they were flying over English cities every day. However, the British had one thing that the Germans didn't have: They had radar. As German bombers began coming out of bases in Europe and headed toward Britain, the radar allowed the British to vector where those bombers were heading while they were still over the English Channel. Using that information, the British were able to mobilize the 450 Spitfires and vector them right onto the German bombers. Timely, accurate information, rapid response, effective tactics. Despite very few resources, they knew where the enemy was. That's what won the Battle of Britain.

Getting Results. Similarly, in New York City, we now know where the enemy is, up to the minute; we know where the problems are, and we go after them. That COMPSTAT meeting room is a high-pressure environment, with 200 to 250 police officials and others looking at crime. It is show time. In one of our meetings, Jack Maple, my principal crime strategist, asked the commander of one of the east New York precincts to put on the map all of the drug complaints in that precinct; and up they went. The whole map was covered with complaints, but there were clusters, the hot spots. Then he asked the commander to mark where his drug units were making arrests last month. Those went up right off the bat. Interestingly, the complaints were on one side of the map; the drug arrests were on the other side. You would think they would overlap each other. This process graphically showed what was going on under the old system, where police were rated "effective" by the number of arrests they were making, not by the problems they were solving. They were rated on the incidents they responded to, not on the problems they were solving.

When we asked the drug unit commander why his officers were making arrests on that side of the precinct and not over where the complaints were, he responded that the complaints were coming from the public housing developments. When asked why they were not making arrests there if the drug complaints came from there, he responded that it was hard to make arrests there. Can you imagine what it is like to live there if the police will not even go there to make arrests? That was the mentality running the NYPD, and I guarantee it is still running many major police departments. Cops are still being measured on their arrests, not on their solutions to problems.

In New York, the major turnaround came because we began to focus—unlike professional reform policing of the 1970s and 1980s—on the three P's of partnership, problem solving, and prevention. I would also argue that the principal reason (and there are many) that crime is down in New York City is that there is the political will to utilize the police in different ways. But it is also due to the strategies we are employing, with the focus on problem solving rather than incidence response. Specifically, we are getting better at understanding the importance of the quality of life, of changing behavior at the street level and controlling behavior, and thus preventing crime farther down the line.

We have seen time and time again that when those 38,000 cops interrupt somebody drinking on the street, or a gang of kids drinking on a corner, pat them down, and find a gun or a knife, they have prevented what would have happened two or three hours later when someone who was drunk pulled out the gun or knife. Usually this would have ended with another murder victim, but we prevented the crime before it happened. New York City police are now all about prevention, and we are doing it lawfully.

This is not to say that there have not been any circumstances—and I will be very truthful about this—causing complaints against police officers in New York City. But when I match the 9,000 or so complaints against the 38,000 cops who are making 300,000 arrests and issuing several million summonses, and against the millions upon millions of street encounters by police who are encouraged to get out there and take back the streets, I think that 9,000 complaints is a fair exchange—if in fact the police are being supervised, if they are being trained, and if they are being encouraged to do all that they do with one underlying principle, the issue of respect. Police have to do their work in such a way that they do not lose the respect of their communities. In a very celebrated case recently in New York City, a police officer did not treat residents with respect. That one incident has reversed so much of the good hard work of the police in that neighborhood because, once again, the police are not being trusted, and it is all due to the action, the aberrant behavior, of a single officer. One incident like that can be used against any other police officer in New York City. All your good work can get washed away when you do not police communities with respect.

We have come a long way in New York City. We have come a long way in this country as well. Many communities are now embracing community policing. The Heritage Foundation has also come out with 21 recommendations.[1] A lot of people are coming up with ideas, and the good news is that many of those ideas are good. In New York City, an old adage says that "If you can make it in New York, you can make it anywhere." This applies to community policing. What arguably was once America's most dangerous, most crime-ridden city is now being pointed to—and rightfully so—as one of America's safest cities. If we can make it happen in New York City, with many of the difficulties we faced in New York, then I would argue that hope and optimism should be out there for everybody else.

I believe that as a profession we found better ways of policing in New York City, and a lot of our success lies under the umbrella of community policing and the philosophy it espouses. You and I—you as the public and I in my former capacity as a member of the police force—can work together to deal with the problems that you and I identify. And we will work from the basic premise that it is much better to prevent a crime than to solve it after the fact.

1   Edwin Meese III and Robert E. Moffit, "Getting Backup: Twenty-One Steps Public Officials Can Take to Support Their Local Police," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 1089, August 21, 1996