



National Summit on Violence in America Major Cities Chiefs Association

**Newseum, Washington, D.C.
August 3, 2015
Finding and Recommendations**

Many cities across the country have experienced a significant increase in violent crime in the last 10 to 12 months. Among other violent crime, it has been reported that there has been a rise in shootings and homicides in New York, Los Angeles, Baltimore, St. Louis, Milwaukee, and other cities after a 20-year downward trend. The Chiefs, along with partners in public safety convened a Summit to discuss public safety in our Nation's cities. The need for a Summit was discovered after Major Cities Chiefs Association Members began to identify trends across the nation, requiring a unified and holistic response. Some statistics that were gathered prior to the Summit regarding spikes in violent crime include:

- Baltimore: Homicides have increased from 105 to 155 during the period of January 1 to early July in 2014 compared to the same time period in 2015.
- St. Louis: Homicide totals have climbed nearly 60 percent, to 93, with robbery rising about 40 percent and aggravated assaults about 18 percent in the first six months of 2015 compared with the previous year. However, there was a decline in rape and arson.
- Los Angeles: While homicides have declined, violent crime overall is up 21 percent and the number of shooting victims is up almost 19 percent through June 27, 2015 compared to the same timeframe last year.
- New York: Homicides increased from 145 to 161 and shootings from 511 to 542 through June 28, 2015 compared to the same timeframe last year. However, the annual level of crimes, including murder, rape, robbery, felony assault, burglary, grand larceny and auto theft was at its lowest since 1993.¹

During the August 3, 2015 Summit on Violence in America at the Newseum in Washington, D.C., police leaders, prosecutors, and mayors shared experiences and best practices to better understand the current landscape of violence in America and consider some of the possible causes for increases in violence. Reaching a better understanding on these issues helped us to identify what we can collectively do to reduce the violence. The session produced the following observations, findings and recommended actions.

¹ Gately, Gary, Why Is Violent Crime Surging in Many Cities?, The Crime Report, July 13, 2015.



A Surge in Violence

The Chiefs and guests discussed the current landscape at the local and national levels, including the recent spikes in violent gun crime, how information is shared with the public and via the media, and reported on the Survey conducted by the Chiefs.

- **Increase in Violence:** Based on a survey conducted by the Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA) in August 2015, there is almost a 19 percent average increase in homicides nationwide. While some cities have not seen major increases in crime, many are reporting increasing levels of gang violence, crime scenes involving multiple weapons, and suspects under the influence of synthetic ‘weaponized’ narcotics and cannabinoids.
- **Increase in Gun Crimes:** Many cities have seen an increase in non-fatal shootings, an increase in the number of distinct firearms used in the commission of a crime, more suspects and victims with prior gun-related arrests, and other gun crimes. This is a result of gun crimes not being fully prosecuted or in sentences that are not fully served. Violent offenders remain on the streets and a danger to the public.
- **Crime Reporting:** Current crime data reports, such as the Uniform Crime Reporting program (UCR), are not timely enough to understand national conditions and evolving trends. Mayors and police chiefs cannot make policy decisions on current or emerging crime rates based on last year’s data.
- **Police Use of Force Data:** Without sound and comprehensive information on police use of force incidents, rumors, myths, social media and television news will fill the knowledge gap. Accurate reporting on these cases is needed to ensure a thorough understanding of these limited numbers of incidents.

Contributing Factors

At the Summit on Violence in America the participants discussed the root causes that were impacting this uptick in violent crime in many large cities. The participants agreed that overall, the causes are a complex set of factors that vary from one city to another.

Suggested contributing factors include:

1. **Prison Population Reduction:** The effort to reduce the prison population may result in violent offenders being released without appropriate supervision. Violent, repeat offenders will offend again. This small portion of the criminal population commits the vast majority of violent crimes. In some cases, a lack of data on a prisoner or lack of resources dedicated to their case may impact public safety:
 - Prisoners being released may actually include violent offenders who are in detention for a non-violent crime.
 - Prisoners may have been released due to a lack of prosecutorial resources, or due to lack of conviction.
 - Some prisoners may be subject to blanket reduction targets that do not take into consideration offender status or history of violence.



- 2. Lack of Support for Released Prisoners:** Offenders who are released from prison often lack the support required to succeed in a life outside of crime. A lack of community and family support, job skills, and education force the offenders back into their previous criminal activities.

 - The Major Cities Chiefs Association has long been on the record in support of evidence-based recidivism reduction programs. In order to be a contributing member of their community, offenders that are re-entering society must have the basic level of skills and education needed to succeed. More information is included in the Recommendations Section.

- 3. Ease of Access to Guns and Ammunition:** Easy access to guns and high-capacity magazines are adding to the carnage associated with this surge in crime. Police agencies surveyed reported a more than 40 percent increase in the number of separate and distinct fire arms involved in shooting incidents. High-capacity magazines are likely to increase the number of ‘collateral’ victims such as bystanders.

- 4. Unsophisticated Gun Background Checks:** The quick turnaround that is allowed in some states has eased access to firearms. Many firearms recovered were purchased in states that allow the release of firearms after three days if a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) background check is not returned, despite there being other circumstances that should prevent purchase but are not captured in databases that are reviewed.

- 5. Lack of Success in the Educational System:** Children in the high poverty areas of our cities have consistently had difficulty succeeding in the public school system.

 - In one major city, the majority of victims and suspects involved in the recent surge of gun violence shared one trait: they had not graduated from high school.

- 6. Synthetic Cannabinoids and Narcotics:** Synthetic cannabinoids pose dangerous and unseen consequences for public safety.

 - In order to stay ahead of the law, manufacturers are constantly changing the chemical formulas to remain legal. These chemicals are untested on human beings and have caused erratic and violent behavior. The drugs have been linked to several violent attacks and murders, deaths in police custody, and have particularly impacted homeless and youth populations in our cities.
 - Synthetic drugs are currently not tested for in drug tests of supervised-release offenders and no field test has been developed for officers on the scene. Thus offenders who face returning to prison are increasingly turning to synthetic narcotics to get high and stay on the streets. Field tests will assist officers in investigating crimes and determining narcotics distribution networks which harm the community.



What Can Be Done: Recommended Actions to Reduce Violent Crime

The Chiefs have committed to doing as much as possible to reduce the violence. Our officers are the first ones on the scene, whether it is racing to stop a crime in-progress or to investigate the scene of a crime that shattered lives within the community. We see firsthand the devastating effects crime is having and we are determined to address it. To combat this crime surge, it will require police to work hand-in-hand with prosecutors, legislators, and most importantly our community - the non-profits, schools, faith-based organizations, training programs and every day citizens committed to creating safe cities and opportunities to leave the life of crime.

In a press release immediately following the Summit, the Chiefs identified Gun Issues, Community Partnerships, Prosecution and Sentencing Reform, and addressing Synthetic Drugs are critical components of any strategy to reduce violent crime in major metropolitan areas.

Below are the recommendations of the Major Cities Chiefs by category.

1. Partnerships

- Police must work with the appropriate governmental and community organizations to help ensure there are adequate re-entry and support programs for offenders released from incarceration or placed in community programs as an alternative.
- In order to form effective strategies, state and local leaders need accurate and timely information about national crime trends. The Department of Justice should establish a database of crime statistics for our nation's cities that is updated and distributed monthly.
- Police must partner with prosecutors to ensure that repeat violent offenders are held accountable for their crimes.

2. Building Communities of Trust

- The most important aspect of policing in America is the trust of our citizens. Police departments need to work to improve relationships of trust with their minority and disenfranchised communities.
 - ✓ This relationship is critical to ensuring that crimes, such as violent crime and homicides, can be prosecuted successfully with witness cooperation.
 - ✓ Community policing provides avenues to encourage community members towards positive alternatives to a criminal lifestyle.
- Police need to work with their community partners to better educate their communities and families about the role they can play to support at-risk individuals and how they can recognize warning signs that might indicate an imminent threat to the community, such as gang initiation attacks.
- Police need to publish crime data that provides a fully detailed description of events. This would include information about whether a suspect is armed, if there was consent for a search, if synthetic drugs are involved, and the circumstances surrounding police custody deaths. This transparency will foster collaboration with our communities.



- Police need to continue to work with the community to publicize the dangers of drugs and gangs, especially with the recent increase in synthetic drugs. These drugs have resulted in thousands of emergency room visits, several murders, and deaths while in police custody.
- In many cities, victims and perpetrators lack educational and social opportunities. The Major Cities Chiefs call on our communities to increase the educational and economic opportunities available to residents. The lack of educational success is a factor of crime. Without the building blocks of employment training and education, our communities cannot hope to have offenders live a life free of crime.
- Police departments need to maintain a highly responsive intelligence and operational awareness system to respond to be able to focus resources on the high-priority areas. But police resources are currently stretched in response to this surge in violence. Homicide detectives, crime stoppers and tip programs are all overburdened.
 - ✓ Major Cities Chiefs encourage departments to temporarily deploy resources to solving homicide backlogs, increasing crime stopper tip funds, and surging into high crime areas/times.
 - ✓ The Chiefs additionally call on our legislative leaders to provide the necessary funds to allow for this surge in police services.

3. Sentencing Practices

- Sentencing reform needs to be part of any discussion on crime. The Major Cities Chiefs have long been on the record in support of prosecuting and applying the full force of the law to repeat criminals, dangerous offenders, and those that target vulnerable populations.
- Laws and rulings that reduce the penalty for crimes or allow for early prisoner release only keep violent criminals in our communities. The Chiefs call on legislators to maintain the prison sentences for violent and repeat career criminal offenders.
- The Chiefs call for additional resources to be dedicated from the federal government and our cities to prosecute gun crimes. Often juries expect 'CSI-style' evidence in order to convict. Juries need to be aware of the level of evidence necessary to determine the perpetrator. Crime labs need to be fully staffed and funded in order to provide that conclusive evidence.
- Prosecutors must dedicate the staff to work on violent gun crimes.
 - Gun violence task forces that imbed prosecutors with detectives could be a successful model.
- The Chiefs call for repeat offenders to be placed into a court that specializes in violent crimes and understands the impact that they have on the community. Judicial expertise is critical to ensuring the right offenders stay behind bars and low-level offenders are afforded the opportunity to participate in sentence reduction programs.
- Major Cities Chiefs is on record recommending that release of offenders into the community must be accompanied by transition services that include treatment and supervision. Reentry services should include job and family counseling.



4. Guns

- Gun violence concerns police just as much as it concerns our communities with the 50 officers that were killed by firearms last year.
- While gun laws alone will not solve the problem, there is a potential value for increasing the link between mental health information and the gun permitting process and not enacting reciprocity of conceal carry permits nationwide.
- The Major Cities Chiefs call for mandatory gun holds until an FBI background check is returned to the seller.
- Major Cities Chiefs call for increased penalties for the use of high-capacity magazines in the commission of a crime.
- Major Cities Chiefs call on universal background checks to close critical loopholes in the system via straw purchasing and non-store purchases.

5. Gangs

- Gang task forces in some cities have seen successful increases in illegal gun seizures and prosecution clearance rates when they have additional resources allocated, including personnel and partner prosecutors, in order to investigate, arrest, and expertly prosecute gang members that commit violent crimes.

6. Drugs

- Support and encourage programs like the National Drug Take-Back Initiative administered by the Drug Enforcement Agency to help reduce the availability of drugs in our communities.
- Test supervised offenders in our communities for synthetic cannabinoids and narcotics.
- The Major Cities Chiefs call on Congress to fund the rapid development of field testing for synthetic narcotics.



Appendix A: Media Coverage

The Major Cities Chiefs Association represents the largest local police agencies in the country, as well as members from Canada and the United Kingdom. Local law enforcement is the front line in the effort to promote public safety, prevent crime, and provide safe communities to the citizens we are sworn to serve.

For more information on these recommendations, the Summit, or other policies, please contact Executive Director Darrel Stephens at stephens@majorcitieschiefs.com

Some additional information regarding the Summit can be found at:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/08/03/us-usa-police-summit-idUSKCN0Q81RB20150803>

http://dcist.com/2015/08/police_chiefs_will_meet_for_a_natio.php

<http://www.newsday.com/news/new-york/violent-crime-spike-in-new-york-city-similar-to-increases-in-cities-nationwide-authorities-say-1.10704013>

http://wamu.org/news/15/08/03/lanier_meets_with_other_cities_police_chiefs_to_discuss_surge_in_violent_crime

<http://time.com/3982668/police-chiefs-murders/>

Major Cities Chiefs does not endorse any of these publications. These are provided for informational purposes only.



Appendix B: Press Release



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Washington, D.C. August 3, 2015

MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS CONVENE TO DISCUSS RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS TO VIOLENT CRIME SURGE

Across the country, cities are safer now than they have been in the past five decades. But after several years of dramatic reductions in violent crime, we are seeing homicides and shootings increase in many of our cities. Chiefs of Police from major cities across the Nation, prosecutors, mayors, and other criminal justice experts gathered today at the Summit on Violence in America, chaired by Major Cities Chiefs Association President Chief J. Thomas Manger and hosted by the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, D.C. , to review this trend and identify violent crime reduction strategies.

At a time when there is growing consensus about the need to modernize the criminal justice system, we cannot forget that our communities need to be protected from violent offenders. We have come together to help identify ways to interrupt this violent trend, and ensure that our cities continue to thrive. Among these recommendations are:

Guns: In many cases of recent gun violence, police have responded to crime scenes that involve multiple shooters, multiple victims, and firearms that have high-capacity magazines. On average, homicides have increased

19% this year and 62% of cities surveyed report shootings with multiple firearms. Many gun crimes occur in areas that have social, economic, and educational challenges that affect the whole neighborhood. Investigating and prosecuting violent gun crime needs to be a priority through funding, staffing, and sentencing. The Chiefs called for stronger gun laws that allow for enhanced penalties for gun crimes and use of high-capacity magazines, which are more likely to hit and kill bystanders.

Community Partnerships: The Chiefs recognized the need for a whole community approach to reducing violent crime, synthetic drug use, and gang affiliation. For example, cooperation between the police, prosecutors, and community organizations will be essential to increasing the percentage of cooperating witnesses to increase the clearance rate of homicide prosecutions. "Homicide has become a means for conflict resolution among the criminally involved" noted one presenter, and witnesses often fear retaliation for cooperation. The Chiefs also reiterated the call for new National Criminal Justice Commission to examine criminal justice and policing in America today.

Prosecution and Sentencing Reform: Sentencing reform is a critical aspect of addressing crime in our Nation's cities. Alternatives to incarceration that reduce recidivism and provide support and training enable many low-level offenders to become productive members of their community. However, any reforms must keep repeat violent offenders, especially those who use firearms in the commission of a crime, remain behind bars. This small number of offenders pose the greatest danger to our communities.



Synthetic Drugs: The Chiefs call for the development of accurate field tests and drug screening that identifies these substances. Synthetic drugs, especially ‘weaponized’ marijuana have been linked to erratic, dangerous behavior and testing for these drugs should be required for supervised parolees.

Host Chief Lanier and Chief Manger, President of the Major Cities Chiefs Association stated, “The uptick in violent crime affects every American. It is essential we implement comprehensive solutions in partnership with our community that take guns, drugs, and violent offenders off our streets.”



Appendix C: Summit Agenda

Major Cities Chiefs Association National Summit on Violence in America Monday, August 3, 2015

- 8:00-8:30 **Registration**
Coffee and Breakfast Pastries
- 8:30-9:00 **Welcome and Introductions**
Chief Tom Manger – MCCA President, Montgomery County Dept of Police
Chief Cathy Lanier – Metropolitan Police Department Washington DC
- 9:00-9:45 **Violent Crime in America Today**
Dr. Richard Rosenfeld – University of Missouri---St. Louis
- 9:45-10:00 **MCCA Survey Report**
- 10:00-10:15 **Break**
- 10:15-11:15 **Violent Crime in Our Urban Centers**
Participants will have the opportunity to provide their perspectives on violence in their communities and react to the information presented by Dr. Rosenfeld and the MCCA survey.
- 11:15-12:00 **Prosecutor’s Perspective on Violence**
Prosecutors in attendance will discuss the challenges of dealing with violence in their communities.
- 12:00-1:00 **Working Lunch – Mayor’s Perspective**
During lunch we will hear the perspectives of Mayors the problem and potential solutions.
- 1:00-2:45 **Responding to the Violence**
This will be a discussion of the initiatives that cities are taking to respond to the violence and other ideas that we believe might make a difference. This session will identify potential solutions or steps that can be taken to reduce the violence.
- 2:45-3:00 **Break**
- 3:00-3:30 **Summit Recommendations**
Based on the discussion above prioritize and refine the top three to five Summit recommendations.
- 3:30-4:00 **Prepare Speakers for the Press Event**
- 4:00 **Press Event on 7th Floor**



Appendix D: Participants

Robert Alder – Commander, Metropolitan Police Department, Washington D.C.
Anita Alvarez – State’s Attorney, Cook County, IL
Santiago Aroca – Assistant State Attorney, Miami-Dade State Attorney’s Office
Liz Avore – Legal Director, Everytown
Gerard Bailey – Deputy Superintendent, Boston Police Department
Bill Bratton – Commissioner, New York City Police Department
Mike Bray – Deputy Chief, Sacramento Police Department
Matthew Bromeland – Special Assistant, Metropolitan Police Department
Jim Brown – Director of Washington Office, St. Louis Mayor’s Office
Nelson Bunn – Director of Policy and Government Affairs, National District Attorneys Association
Charlie Cato – First Assistant Chief of Police, Dallas Police Department
Toney Chaplin – Commander, San Francisco Police Department
Kay Chopard Cohen – Executive Director, National District Attorneys Association
Adam Cook – MCCA Support, Lafayette Group
Marc Coopwood – Captain, Sacramento Police Department
Kevin Davis – Interim Police Commissioner, Baltimore Police Department
Ronald L. Davis – Director, USDOJ/COPS
William Dean – Deputy Chief, Virginia Beach Police Department
Sam Dotson – Chief of Police, St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department
Edward Flynn – Chief of Police, Milwaukee Police Department
Jennifer Greene – Policy Advisor, Cook County State’s Attorney, IL
Gilberto Guerrero, Jr. – Assistant United States Attorney, U.S. Attorney’s Office District of Columbia
Michael Harrison – Superintendent of Police, New Orleans Police Department
Gail Hoffman – Consultant, National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence
Paul L. Howard, Jr. – District Attorney, Fulton County DA’s Office
Scott Hulse – Senior Counsel to the Deputy Attorney General, DOJ
Melissa Hyatt – Lieutenant Colonel, Baltimore Police Department
Michelle D. Jackson – Assistant United States Attorney, United States Attorney’s Office for DC
James Johnson – Chief of Police, Baltimore County Police Department
Jennifer M. Joyce – Circuit Attorney, City of St. Louis
Morgan Kane – Inspector, Metropolitan Police Department, Washington, DC
Dan Kirk – First Assistant State’s Attorney, Cook County, IL
Cathy Lanier – Chief of Police, Metropolitan Police Department, Washington, DC
Janet Lauritsen – Professor of Criminology, University of Missouri-St. Louis
Timothy Lee – SSA, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms/HQ/NIBIN, DOJ
Robert Luman – Commander, Long Beach Police Department
Robert Luna – Chief of Police, Long Beach Police Department
Cassandra Mahar – Staff Assistant, Metropolitan Police Department
Tom Manger – Chief of Police, Montgomery County Police Department
Garry McCarthy – Superintendent, Chicago Police Department
Charles McClelland – Chief of Police, Houston Police Department



Darryl McSwain – Assistant Chief, Montgomery County Police
Winifred Melesh – Joint Intelligence Analyst, Prince George's County Police Department
Christopher Murtha – Operations Commander, Prince George's County Police Department
LaTisha Neely – Senior Police Officer, Houston Police Department
Peter Newsham – Assistant Chief, Metropolitan Police Department, Washington, DC
Delma Noel-Pratt – Miami-Dade Police Department
Blake Norton – Vice President/COO, Police Foundation
Kelly O'Meara – Director, Metropolitan Police Department, Washington, DC
James O'Neill – Chief, New York City Police Department
Dean Palmere – Deputy Commissioner, Baltimore Police Department
James Patterson – Lieutenant, Atlanta Police Department
Charles H. Ramsey – Police Commissioner, Philadelphia Police Department
Richard Rosenfeld – Doctor, University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL)
Richard Ross – First Deputy Commissioner, Philadelphia Police Department
Dermot Shea – Deputy Commissioner, New York Police Department
Cornelia Sigworth – Associate Deputy Director, Bureau of Justice Assistance
Francis Slay – Mayor, City of St. Louis
Peter Sloy – Deputy Chief, Toronto Police Service
Jinney Smith – Associate Director, Maryland Data Analysis Center
Ed Somers – Chief of Staff, U.S. Conference of Mayors
Henry P. Stawinski III – Deputy Chief, Bureau of Patrol, Prince George's County Police Department
Darrel W. Stephens – Executive Director, Major Cities Chiefs Association
George Turner – Chief, Atlanta Police Department
Eric Ward – Chief of Police, Tampa Police Department
Laura DeKoven Waxman – Director of Public Safety, U.S. Conference of Mayors
Bill Weaver – Major, Oklahoma City Police Department
Patricia Williams – Associate Director, Major Cities Chiefs Association