

August 25, 2000

## **COMMUNITY AND COOPERATION CAN CONQUER CRIME**

*By Borough President Fernando Ferrer*

Increased homicides need effective measures to get guns and drugs off our streets, not only in The Bronx but also throughout the city. One challenge the new Police Commissioner faces is to initiate an enduring effort to make a difference in this dreadful loss of life but without bad contacts with law-abiding civilians. New York City can and must have both.

It makes sense to employ measures beyond the short-term. Through a strong community-police partnership, the NYPD can realize results that will endure beyond the infusion of a limited-time task force, which moves on to the next community in crisis. Commissioner Kerik has stated that the NYPD and the community need each other. Commissioner Kerik is right: We need each other. Let's make this relationship happen now for the good of the city.

Many wounds still need healing and breeches need repair. The Commissioner needs to forge real relationships with all city communities. How he responds will indicate his interest in seizing this moment and taking steps to bring us back together in common cause. We need to return to and re-invigorate community policing. I've proposed a community-policing initiative to City Hall as a result of meeting with the Mayor. The Department ought to consider it as part of an approach to realize enduring decreases in homicides, other violence and overall crime.

Let us engage the resources of concerned communities in partnership with the NYPD to address crime. We can build on the success of a collaboration with clergy realized in Boston and the key role of Bronx clergy who maintained calm after the Diallo verdict.

We must adequately resource our precincts not just to deter crime but to identify conditions that if left unaddressed lead to crime. The NYPD's expansion, by and large, skipped precincts, Housing Bureau police service areas and Transit Bureau districts. Since 1997, the number of uniformed police officers has risen 3,196 – a gain of almost nine percent (8.57%) -- to 40,484 as the summer began (Updated Overview of New York Police Department Staffing, City Council, August 15).

Meanwhile, uniformed staffing at NYPD central units increased by 3,870 officers, up 25.96% and nearly 700 more officers than added overall. This occurred because the infusion of uniformed police officers failed to impact precincts, PSAs and transit districts, where overall uniformed staffing *fell* by three percent or 674 officers.

New York City needs a strategic plan to make our city safer from gun violence. I've proposed one and City Hall and the City Council ought to embrace it. In addition to needed changes in federal law, we need not wait to deploy cops appropriately to take guns off the street and prevent illegal guns from finding their way here in the first place. With proper training and supervision, this could be done without violating one's rights or worse. Establish gun safety zones around libraries, youth and daycare centers and public buildings, in addition to the zones set around schools. Require reporting on gun safety and enforcement measures. Finally, U.S. Attorneys must prosecute more gun cases and empower Assistant District Attorneys to prosecute gun cases under federal law.

The surge in homicides represents a wakeup-call to City Hall and One Police Plaza that they can never stand pat on crime and violence. When I proposed my gun initiative, there was no murder surge. When I proposed a community police initiative, the murder surge was not publicly known. The bottom line remains: never rest on our laurels; look to improve, never let up on trying to make a difference. New Yorkers expect and deserve nothing less.

(As published in the New York Post, Page 33, Friday, August 25, 2000\*)

(This Op-Ed responded to news story, "Bad Old Days in the Bronx as homicides surge by 50%," and editorial: "Life and Death in The Bronx," August 23; clipping appears on next page.).

# NEW YORK POST

NEW YORK POST, FRIDAY, AUGUST 25, 2000

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## POSTOPINION

### Community and Cooperation Can Conquer Crime

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It makes sense to employ measures beyond the short term. Through a strong community-police partnership, the NYPD can realize results that will endure beyond the infusion of a limited-time task force, which moves on to the next community in crisis. Commissioner Kerik has stated that the NYPD and the community need each other. The commissioner is right: We need each other. Let's make this relationship happen now for the good of the city.

Many wounds still need healing and breaches need repair. The commissioner needs to forge real relationships with all city communities. How he responds will indicate his interest in seizing this moment and taking steps to bring us back together in common cause. We need to return to and re-invigorate community policing. I've proposed a community-policing initiative to City Hall and as a result am meeting with the mayor. The NYPD ought to consider it as part of an approach to realize enduring decreases in homicides, other violence and overall crime.

**↳ The surge in homicides is a wakeup-call to City Hall and One Police Plaza. ↵**

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**FERNANDO FERRER**

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*Fernando Ferrer is the Bronx borough president.*