

DON'T DEFUND THE POLICE, DOUBLE THE POLICE!

The answer to safe cities with police that people can respect is so simple, you'll understand it as soon as I share it. But first...

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Since 1829 when London established the first uniformed police force, they had three key functions: 1. Patrol the streets; 2. Respond to emergencies; and 3. Put down riots. America has forgotten the first part while focusing almost exclusively on the second.

While city councils debate the relative amount of police officers needed, with declarations such as "2.5 cops to 1,000 citizens", three important facts go missing in every discussion:

1. The vast majority of crime and violence goes unreported. Whether it's problems with FBI or BJS collection processes or the fact that a majority of people don't report, all experts agree most crimes go unreported.

While sex crimes investigation units are already overwhelmed with 10-15 new cases per day, the reality is there are another 100-200 cases per day that aren't even getting reported. This means a lot of people are getting hurt, and no one is hearing them.

2. City councils do not base their police budgets on the expected amount of crime. Their reasons have nothing to do with say, reducing crime and violence by 95%. Shouldn't that be the goal?

In one medium-sized, US city, there are only eight officers investigating human sex trafficking. A team of eight cops can barely do one 24-hour surveillance. There should be at least 42 officers in such a unit. If you want to stop sex trafficking, you need a force commiserate with the problem. Cities are not budgeting to solve problems.

3. A patchwork of ever-growing rules, reports, and procedures have been imposed on police officers by city councils and police bureaucrats so much that it reduces their time in the field by 50%. Police have so many procedures imposed on them that a typical day can be cut in half doing things that have nothing to do with policing. If you think you have 800 officers patrolling your streets, you actually only have 400. The rest are doing paperwork.

As part of my training to become a PI, I worked 25 criminal defense cases. In one case, one 19 y.o. male shot another 19 y.o. male in the back of a car, apparently by mistake. My job was to review all the police reports to see if there were any mitigating factors or mistakes. About eight Austin Police Department officers were on the scene at some point and every one of them had written a report. In over 60 pages, I couldn't find a single error. The professionalism was impressive. The benefit of each of those cops writing a thorough report is that both the victim and the accused get the best chance for justice. But the downside is that each of those cops spent 2-3 hours on their reports. That's an incredible amount of manpower writing reports and not policing. For a shoplifting arrest or even a fender bender, the paperwork is similar. If cops are going to spend half of their day on paperwork, we need more cops!



London Police "Bobbie" circa 1890

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All of these factors have created such an imbalance in police vs. amount of crime, that the justice system is overwhelmed. Paperwork alone has already “defunded” the police and essentially led to the problem that people claim needs a solution. All of this has given way to the rise of what I call the “911 COPS”.

THE RISE OF THE “911 COPS”

Two trends changed American policing in the last 20 years that led to the rise of the 911 Cops (officers who specialize in responding to 911 calls). Some of you will think this is what policing is all about. It's not.



1. Police departments moved from walking patrols and two-person cars to one-person cars that only respond to high priority 911 calls. (911 calls are prioritized so that calls such as “shots-fired”, “assault in progress”, or “abducted child” are priority one whereas “drunken driver” or “trespassing” might be priority four). When there aren't enough officers, they can only respond to priority one or priority two calls, which is what's happening in most US cities at this moment.

I work as a Private Investigator in Austin, Texas, and one night I observed a subject leave a bar drunk and get in his car. I called 911 and explained I had just observed a subject drink more than six mojitos in two hours, get in his car, and drive away. I followed him and gave them the car description, the license plate number and even the home address where he was headed.

No police officer ever arrived, despite several 911 calls asking for help. The family of this young man had hired me, because they were afraid he was going to kill someone or himself. Finally, I got a sergeant on the phone who ultimately told me, “I'm sorry Dave, but we are overrun just trying to keep up with priority one calls. I can't send anyone.”

That young man is still getting drunk and driving home from his favorite bar, almost every night.

**“911 COPS”
Officers who specialize in
responding to 911 calls**

Police departments are overwhelmed. They cannot respond to all of the 911 calls, let alone investigate all of the crimes. They have become the “911 Cops.”

2. After 9/11, George Bush moved to make the police part of our response to terrorism and arranged for police departments to get all kinds of new equipment from AR-15 rifles to military-style personnel carriers, ballistic shields, helmets and so forth. Police departments started training for active shooters and other types of terrorist events, resulting in more military-like thinking and more aggressive tactics.

If giving up foot patrols wasn't enough to distance police from the public, this took it to a whole new level. Police started to develop more and more of an “us versus them” mentality. No more chatting with the barber or helping Ms. Jones get her cat out of the tree. Now policing has become responding to dangerous calls with bad people all day long.

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When I was trained on vehicle stops at the Police Academy, they taught us to place our thumb print on the trunk as we approached the driver's side window. Why? In case the driver shoots us and drives away, then the detectives will be able to identify the vehicle used in our murder.

This is what has gone wrong with American policing. Law Enforcement developed a mindset that any citizen could be a threat. They don't feel connected to the community anymore. And they can't, because they're the 911 Cops.

If only there was a simple policing method we could go back to, to keep our cities safe and get people feeling good about cops again...

FOOT PATROLS

The answer is simple and as old as Rome's City Watch: foot patrols. Properly done, foot patrols are officers that work in a particular neighborhood for 5, 10 or more years. These officers are on the ground and people know them by name. In England, many "Bobbies" spend the last ten years of their service as neighborhood patrol officers who literally stop in for tea with old ladies. They are an integral part of any safe community.



Defunding the police is a child's fantasy of solving this problem. The real answer is to double the police. Let the 911 Cops (very tough, skilled, brave officers) continue to do the 911 calls and go after the worst criminals and deal with the worst emergencies. Meanwhile, create a whole new legion of officers to go back to foot patrol, community interaction, and crime prevention.

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IF I WERE PUT IN CHARGE OF A MEDIUM-SIZED POLICE DEPARTMENT...

If a city council and mayor really wanted a safe city, great police, and happy citizens, and for some reason they gave me the job, I would do the following:

1. **Hire a new generation of officers** to serve as "Safety Officers" or "Foot Officers". I would train them for old-school, traditional foot patrol, and interacting with the public. They would be certified peace officers, able to make arrests if necessary, but that would not be their primary goal.
2. **Organize the overall police department** as follows:
 - 45% "Safety/Foot Officers" focused on crime prevention and community interaction
 - 35% "911 Officers" focused on responding to 911 calls (as all current officers do)
 - 15% Special Crimes units such as robbery, sexual assault, homicide, etc.
 - 5% Administration (Chief, Captains, LT's, etc.)
3. **Manage the entire department for cultural change** – be more sensitive to minorities but continue to enforce the law no matter who is acting violently or harming others.
4. **Supplement special units** with retired cops as either hired part-timers or volunteers (i.e. auxiliary). Special units are often under-staffed, and there are many former detectives with pensions that would love something to do part-time.

A few more things I would do...

1. The military separates officers and enlisted soldiers early on – this allows for the development of great leaders AND great Sergeants. For some reason, cops don't do this. I would create special programs for future leaders, so we can get higher quality decision-making at the leadership level.
2. Personal Safety classes taught by cops at local libraries and community centers – this would bring cops into contact with the public in a very positive way, help to make partnerships with local leaders and give cops and the community a feel-good experience.
3. A substantial auxiliary/reserve corps, especially consisting of retired officers and detectives. There are many benefits to having reserves:
 - A. They can fill in for parades, major events, and crime scene protection.
 - B. They become advocates in the community.
 - C. They bring us expertise we may not be able to get otherwise.

The benefits to this approach are too numerous to list here. For example, having a safety officer who is present will allow people to air many of their worries, concerns, and fears. It will allow them to get advice from an officer. Finally, that safety officer will be vested in his or her neighborhood in a way that 911 Cops simply can't be.

Additionally, when the 911 Officers or special units go in search of a serious bad guy, the safety officers will likely know of them or be able to point these units in the right direction. This is one of many things lost in the move from foot patrol/community officers to 911 Officers.

The 911 Officers will be able to focus better on serious situations, since the safety officers will reduce a lot of potential crimes and other types of disturbances (such as the people who call 911 to complain about the pickles in their hamburgers¹).

On one case, I went to a particularly dangerous neighborhood where drug dealers were standing openly on the street looking for customers. My client was a very large, African-American man who had been accused of aggravated assault with a dangerous weapon against a security guard. He had been in jail for 7 months while his public defender tried to get a plea deal. I was able to prove that this security guard (his accuser) was not licensed (in other words, a fraud), was a 3-time felon including rape, and had often used his security job to commit crimes. Law

¹ Actual 911 call circa 2007

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enforcement could not keep up with the crime in that area and had lost trust with the community. This false security guard was acting as a self-styled "Sheriff" of the neighborhood. I reported him to two agencies, but he's still out there. He sometimes drives around in his "security" car wearing body armor and a pistol belt.

This is the kind of man who rises up when the police are unable to adequately patrol and be a part of any community. And the problem isn't one of police management, it's simply that *there aren't enough police officers on the street.*

HOW TO HAVE A SAFE CITY, GREAT POLICE, AND A HAPPY PUBLIC

Double the police, create a new generation of foot/community officers who focus on crime prevention, bring about cultural change for better minority sensitivity, bring in and train new leaders who can embrace change, and we will create the next generation of policing in America.

If there is a mayor or city council that actually wants a safe city and a respected and even loved police department, give me a call. It's do-able and I will help you.

Dave Amis, a Texas Private Investigator, is one of the few Harvard MBA's to have also worked as a law enforcement officer. He was a Reserve Sheriff's Deputy, a Police Academy Instructor, and a Colorado Ranger (armed S&R). Dave also led a serial predator research lab which resulted in the book, "27 CLOSE CALLS™." Currently, Dave leads investigation and surveillance operations primarily in the areas of white-collar crime. Dave can be reached at 2927@striderpi.com.



Frank McManus contributed to this essay. A retired LAPD Sergeant with 20 years of law enforcement experience, Frank has worked as Police Academy Director, a cold case investigator, and a private security and investigative consultant.