

## President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing

Written Testimony of Baltimore Police Commissioner Anthony W. Batts

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The conversation taking place in the United States today about law enforcement is a conversation that began two years ago in Baltimore. A comprehensive evaluation of the Baltimore Police Department its relationship with the community was conducted. It became immediately apparent that the culture of the organization was not in alignment with the expectations of the people of Baltimore. Cultural norms in the agency had developed over time that valued statistical data rather than community interaction. A policy of mass arrests rather than focused enforcement was the operating principal behind the crime fight. As a result in a city of a little more than 600,000 people, more than 100,000 people were being arrested a year as a means to reduce violence. This policy served only to widen the divide between the community and the police department.

A little more than two-years ago we set out to right those wrongs. Cultural norms needed to be changed and community values understood. The process started with the commissioning of a study to evaluate the police department and the community's views of the agency. The results of the review were drafted into *the Strategic Plan for Improvement* (as of January, 2014, nearly 60% of the Plan has been implemented) which has been the guiding document for the organization. The review uncovered broken policies, outdated procedures, outmoded technology, and operating norms that put officers at odds with the community they are meant to serve. It was clear that dramatic and dynamic change was needed.

A new bureau headed by a Deputy Police Commissioner, the Professional Standards and Accountability Bureau was created. This bureau was tasked with rooting out corruption, holding officers accountable, and implementing national best practices for polices and training. A new Internal Affairs Chief, a new Professional Development and Training Academy Director, a new Equal Opportunity and Diversity Director, and new Chief of Legal Affairs were all appointed. Most importantly; a use-of-force review structure based on the Las Vegas model was implemented. These were critical infrastructure changes centered on the need to improve the internal systems that would build accountability and transparency, inside and outside the organization. Without these fundamental changes there would be no ability to shift the norms of the organization to reflect the community being served by the Baltimore Police Department.

Equally as important was the creation of a Community Partnership Division, tasked with reaching out to the community and building bridges where previous attempts had failed. This included a 'listening tour' with the Mayor in all nine police districts, as well as reaching out to

the faith-based community. Over the last two-years a number of these forums have offered disenfranchised residents an opportunity to voice their frustrations and be heard by those in a position to effect change. Part of reestablishing trust with the community was dealing with some of the controversial issues that occurred, including two in-custody deaths. Since October of 2012, five Independent Review Boards have been commissioned to evaluate high-profile incidents. These reports have been made available to the public and the recommendations have been incorporated into the *Strategic Plan for Improvement*. Presenting the findings and the needed improvements at community meetings and public forums across the city is part of the way the organization is currently building public trust.

Transparency is and must be at the cornerstone of the Baltimore Police Department's efforts to foster a better level of public trust. This has been accomplished through a number of mediums and methods. The Media Relations Section hosts weekly Twitter Town Halls highlighting various sections and members of the department. I am a regular participant as are the Commanders of districts, and units within the department. The open forum questions allow residents to engage directly with parts of the organization they might not have access. We have seen our Twitter following grow from 28,000 people to 70,000 people during the last two years. All of the organizations Categorical Uses of Force are published on the department's website, accessible to the public. The final reports detailing the use of force and investigative findings are there for anyone to see. This makes Baltimore the only jurisdiction in Maryland to report on use of force in this manner.

Training is being used as a means of inculcating change in the organization. First-of-its-kind training has been developed centered around constitutional policing. This training includes Empathy Training (teaching officers to how to maintain professional distance while remaining empathetic), Bias-Based Policing / Impartial Policing (teaching officers to recognize internal biases and to be persuaded by them), and Emotional Intelligence training (teaching officers to recognize emotional responses to stimuli in themselves and others and how to overcome it). This training is unique in Maryland and is helping to foment a culture of responsive policing based on constitutional values.

The result of the aforementioned changes is beginning to be seen empirically. Over the last two years Discourtesy Complaints are down more than 50%, Excessive Force Complaints are down more than 45%, and lawsuits against the City are down significantly. In a world where statistical movement of 5% is significant the results are dramatic. They also reflect that while the work is challenging, we are developing better relationships with the community.

The work being done in Baltimore started long before the events of Ferguson, and in conjunction with the collaborative review now taking place with the Department of Justice / C.O.P.S. Office, will continue for many more years. The reforms can be empirically measured

but until they are felt in the community they mean very little. A tremendous amount of work remains in order to rebuild broken trust and repair fractures that in some cases are generations deep. The hard work is something that never stops and by necessity will evolve over time. Outreach to the community is ongoing and this year the organization will work to diversify outreach even further. What has been empirically demonstrated is that an organization centered on constitutional policing with a reverence for life, will begin to impact the way in which officers interact with residents. What cannot be seen, but is palpable, is the ongoing need to continue to work with communities and address all off the underlying issues that help to shape the publics' perception of law enforcement.

## Talking Points:

- **Major Reforms**
  - **Strategic Plan nearly 60% implemented**
  - 5 Outside reviews to look at incidents and policies
    - Wasserman Group
    - Anthony Anderson IRB
    - Tyrone West IRB
    - Karen Krueger Report
    - DOJ collaborative reform process
  - Creating of the PSAB
  - New PDTA Director, EODS Director, IID Director
  - Creation of a Community Partnership Division
  
- **Training Biases Out of Policing – Understand the Community You Serve**
  - **National Best Practices**
  - Bias Based Police Training
  - Empathy Training / Emotional Intelligence
  - Impartial Policing
  - Regular Command Training Days
  
- **Reducing Force – Preventing Harm – Treating People with Respect**
  - **Reverence for life**
  - Discourtesy Complaints down almost 50% from 2012
  - Excessive Force Complaints down almost 40% from 2012
  - Notice of Claim down dramatically
  - 300% Increase in Metro Crime Stopper Reporting
  
- **Transparency and Accountability**
  - Tell the public what we can as soon as we can

- PC / District Commanders on Twitter Town Halls
- Listening Tours across the districts
- Open forum press conferences
- Hold people responsible for bad behavior and be accountable to the public
- Implement programs that bring the police department in-line with community expectations
- First and only department in the state to post categorical use of force reporting

### **Core Points**

- Major Reforms
- Training Biases Out of Policing
- Transparency and Accountability
- Reducing Force – Preventing Harm – Treating People with Respect