

Memorandum

METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

to: The Nashville Public

from: Steve Anderson
Chief of Police

date: January 9, 2017

re: Open Letter to the Citizens of Nashville Regarding MNPD Activities

Over the past few months, the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department (MNPD) has seen unprecedented requests for public information and data concerning our activities--how we assign officers to particular areas of town, the activities of officers in particular areas, our victim reduction initiatives, our proactive crime reduction initiatives, and our community engagement efforts. We have noted that the desire by some who seek this data is to seemingly cast aspersions on the MNPD and our community-based policing strategies. With rare exception for information protected by state law, the MNPD has fully cooperated in releasing data, reports, internal analyses and other information requested by these private groups, student groups, or community groups. The MNPD prides itself on being accountable in all aspects of what we do.

We not only continue to make raw data available to researchers, routinely release data reports and internal analyses, but our weekly Friday Compstat meeting remains open to the public, as it has for more than 15 years. At these meetings, each precinct and major division of the department discusses its activities, responsive and proactive, and our community engagement initiatives, along with other relevant issues.

It is my position that a police department should be responsive to its citizens and community, and make data on its activities publicly available, within the limits of the law, upon request. We will continue to do so.

For those who seek to understand (or even critique) our activities and our data, it is helpful to understand what data is captured by our officers and how that data is used. Knowing this would aid anyone in understanding how we provide police services and report those activities.

First, an often asked question is: How does MNPD assign its officers to particular areas of town?

Quite simply, as with any other service based customer driven profession, our officers are assigned to particular geographical areas based upon need or demand. Essentially, the bulk

of our patrol officers are deployed to where the victims of crime are. In other words, to areas where there is a higher prevalence of crime and higher requests for police services (calls from citizens requesting a police response). Accompanying this document are maps, known as density maps, which provide detail about the volume of calls for service and various criminal offenses. The more intense the shading on the map, the higher the volume of calls for service for the particular offenses indicated. In those areas, where the shading is the most intense, we assign the bulk of our patrol officers.

Next, there is often a follow up question with respect to assignment of our proactive programs: FLEX Teams, Directed Mission 1, Operation Safer Streets and Victim Reduction Initiatives. It may be helpful to understand more about each of these programs.

FLEX Teams are essentially a group of officers and a supervisor assigned to each shift at each precinct for the dedicated use of the Precinct Commander to address precinct-specific criminal activity or proactive crime prevention/deterrence efforts. Each Precinct Commander is empowered, yet fully accountable, for the entire operation of his/her precinct and the policing programs within their respective areas. The FLEX officers supplement regular patrol officers in all activities, yet unlike regular patrol officers who are responding to calls for service, the FLEX officers' primary duty is proactive policing, prevention and deterrence—through the needs identified by each precinct commander and his/her staff at the discretion and identified needs of the particular precinct. These needs are identified by the precinct management on a daily, or sometimes hourly, basis.

Directed Mission 1 recognizes that the 1st mission of the police department is crime prevention and enhancement of community safety and confidence, sworn members normally assigned to support functions supplement uniformed patrol activities one weekend day per month (the program has been in place since 2004). From a group of almost 300 sworn members who work in support functions across the department (detectives and administrative personnel), a group of 30-35 rotating officers and supervisors work selected shifts on weekends to provide proactive crime fighting efforts within selected precinct hot spots. Typical operations provide saturation patrols within areas to address auto thefts/break-ins, burglaries, drug transactions and similar issues. While the hours may vary slightly to address precinct needs, the officers typically work between 3pm and 11pm. DM1 supervisors receive information from the precinct commanders as to where their activities will be the most effective in preventing criminal activity.

Operation Safer Streets, a gang enforcement and neighborhood safety initiative, utilizes a combination of Specialized Investigation Division detectives, who are assigned to investigate crimes of violence and drug trafficking by gangs or affiliates, and uniformed officers from the precincts teamed together to patrol specific areas. Locations for this special enforcement initiative are chosen each week based on requests from precinct commanders and information derived from MNPDP investigative components. There is a deliberate dedication of resources each week based on real-time information.

Victim Reduction Initiatives take place in all 8 precincts. As the MNPDP budget permits, funds are provided to staff overtime crime reduction initiatives for the purpose of addressing precinct specific crime issues. Precinct commanders are given broad discretion to use these allocated funds and schedule/staff the assignments. Again, these resources are deployed based on the crime trends being reviewed on a daily basis by the precinct leadership team.

Importantly, the activities of each of these initiatives are fully discussed at each weekly Compstat meeting, which, again, is open to the public to observe and interact with the precinct leadership teams.

Often, the next inquiry is about the traffic enforcement or vehicle stops conducted by the MNPDP. You have likely heard the phrase, “looking beyond the stop.” MNPDP officers do that, and regularly discover firearms, illegal drugs, other evidence of crimes, and wanted felons during vehicle stops. The MNPDP believes vehicle stops are an effective tool in the continuing effort to enhance Nashville’s safety for all citizens, certainly including those who live in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Officers of the MNPDP are encouraged to be proactive and visible, and to make lawful vehicle stops when warranted. On average, 80% or more of vehicle stops result in warnings only. In Nashville, vehicle stops are not about tickets but utilized to enhance safety through warnings AND to better protect the community. There are more officers, including Flex Units, deployed in higher crime areas at the direction of the precinct commanders. Because of the emphasis placed on higher crime areas (those areas with a higher prevalence of victims) more proactive work, including traffic stops, occurs in those areas as officers work to reduce victimization, our primary goal. Again, please see the attached density maps and how vehicle stops overlap with the same geographical areas where the calls for service and crime incidents occur.

A brief summary of traffic stop information from 2015 indicates:

In 2015, there were 358,612 vehicle stops (2016 data is being finalized). In perspective, this translates into approximately 5 vehicle stops per week per MNPDP officer. Given the number of violations you observe on a daily basis, you may question why we are not attempting to make our roadways safer by increasing that number.

From those stops:

- 25,036 arrests were made.
- Evidence was seized in 3,232 of the stops.
- A search of any type only occurred in 3.9% of all stops.
- Most searches (2.52%) during traffic stops occurred with probable cause, were incident to an arrest, a warrant, a lawful inventory, or where evidence was in plain view.
- Where consent was the sole legal basis for the search (*lawful exception to warrant requirement*) it occurred in less than 1.4% of the total 358,612 stops.

The MNPDP has been collecting and analyzing traffic stop data for a number of years and creating an annual report detailing the activities. A Vehicle Stop Data Form (MNPDP Form 252), by policy, is completed for every vehicle stop regardless of whether a citation or warning is issued. This form is the basis for our data collection and analysis. Our vehicle stop analysis reports were created by the professional civilian crime analysts at the MNPDP. They ensure accurate collection, data validation, and create statistically sound analyses and comments to create the annual reports. These reports not only detail the raw data, but provide critical analysis and commentary. The reports also provide details about the statistical methodology used to analyze the data and form the foundation for the commentary. These reports have been created and publicly disseminated for many years.

Understanding all of this, along with the references to Compstat, may lead some to ask more about Compstat and other MNPDP activities.

Compstat (short for COMPuter STATistics) is essentially an organizational management tool used by the MNPDP and many other law enforcement agencies. It was created primarily to provide the framework for a dynamic approach to crime reduction, to address community quality of life issues, and as a guiding tool for personnel and resource management. The elements of COMPSTAT consist of four distinct principles: Accurate and Timely Intelligence, Effective Tactics, Rapid Deployment, and Relentless Follow-up and Assessment.

While there are some who are critical of the Compstat process, it is merely a measure of what is occurring across Nashville and how we are addressing the identified issues. The Compstat process follows the principle of "what gets measured gets managed." I think that any member of the public would be appalled if the management of the MNPDP did not know what was occurring and did not have a plan to address the identified issues.

To learn more about Compstat, visit [Compstat - Its Origins, Evolution, and Future in Law Enforcement Agencies](#)

The MNPDP holds its Compstat meetings every Friday (except holidays) at 8:00 a.m. at the [North Police Precinct](#) and, for more than a decade, these meetings have been open to the public to observe.

Compstat reports, which detail virtually all MNPDP activities and the Motor Vehicle Stop Data Collection Analysis reports are available online at:

<http://www.nashville.gov/Police-Department/Chief-of-Police/Strategic-Development/Crime-Analysis/Reports.aspx>

Recognizing that not all people will want to review the more than 600 Compstat reports, most in excess of 120 pages, the 8 years of Motor Vehicle Stop Data Collection and Analysis, or attend the regular Friday Compstat meetings, the same professional civilian crime analysis staff was asked to create a compilation of data that seeks to answer the most frequent questions in a more concise user-friendly format. In seeking to expand upon the data currently offered at the MNPDP website, we have compiled a "community snapshot" type report which provides data in a concise format for busy Nashvillians to understand. This report, by zip code, provides answers to basic questions, including:

- [Who lives here?](#)
(according to US Census data analysis)
- [Who is stopped for traffic offenses here?](#)
(using data from the MNPDP Traffic Stop reports)
- [Who is stopped for traffic offenses and receives citations here?](#)
(using data from the MNPDP Traffic Stop reports)
- [Who are drivers involved in crashes here?](#)
(from State of TN data)
- [Who is a victim of a violent crime here \(murder, rape, robbery, assault, etc.\)?](#)
(using data from incident reports)
- [Who is a victim of a property crime here \(burglary, auto theft, theft, etc.\)?](#)
(using data from incident reports)
- [Who is a crime suspect here?](#)
(using victims' descriptions of suspects)

- [Who is arrested here-for any violation of state law?](#)
(using arrest data)

The accompanying report is a candid, and to some, unsettling, snapshot/picture of what is occurring within each zip code. A conversation about this picture must occur, not only within the police department at our meetings, but within public settings, including community groups, faith based groups, and amongst neighbors if we, as a city, are to improve our public safety.

Please remember that while this may be an MNPDP report or summary of the reported data, the information that is used to compile these reports comes directly from the victims of the crime, the information on a driver license, or the US Census Bureau. And, in reading this, we hope that you will take note that we do not create the data—we merely report the data that has been given to us by the victims of criminal activity.

While the data in these reports (the full Compstat reports or the data summary in the "community snapshot" which details the numbers of violent crime that occur in certain areas, the number of actual victims of particular violent crime, the frequency of a particular crime, or who is committing the majority of the crime in your area) may be shocking or unsettling to those who have not been the victim of a crime or know anyone who has, rest assured that the MNPDP strives daily to prevent crime and arrest those who seek to violate the law or victimize our fellow citizens.

The MNPDP recognizes that the effectiveness of a law enforcement agency and its members depends upon community respect and confidence. It remains a primary goal of our department to provide fair, efficient service to all our citizens consistent with our established mission statement, policies, procedures, rules, regulations, ethical codes, and administrative or executive orders as established by the MNPDP or Metropolitan Government. Unfortunately, the delivery of law enforcement services is often accompanied by criticism. Frankly, informed constructive critique and evaluation is welcomed. Uninformed criticism or inflammatory commentary is not only obstructive but often seeks to divide the community or discourage citizen participation in addressing mutual goals such as reducing or preventing crime. It decreases opportunities for community intervention efforts for at risk populations, and inhibits cooperation by witnesses of crimes from cooperating with police.

It is within this uninformed criticism or inflammatory commentary that the positive aspects of the role of the MNPDP within the community are often ignored or minimized. Rarely if ever, outside of our Compstat meetings, is it acknowledged that the MNPDP has some 600 established community groups and conducts more than 2,000 community meetings or events annually. Our faith-based engagement activities, recognized during a visit by US Attorney General Eric Holder, and other programs across the department, do not receive a great deal of attention.

Within our volunteer chaplain and youth violence intervention programs, a group of chaplains have partnered with the precincts to expand opportunities for at-risk youth by offering tutoring during the school year as well as mentoring opportunities and ACT/SAT prep programs.

Within the MNPDP group of more than fifty (50) volunteer chaplains, four of these ministers are available 24/7/365 to respond to incidents of teenage and young adult violence in a proactive effort to prevent disputes from escalating by offering counseling to at-risk youth and their

families. They most often follow up the next day and in ensuing weeks maintaining that contact.

The Strengthening Families Program (SFP) is a nationally and internationally recognized parenting and family strengthening program for high-risk and general population families. The MNPDP Strengthening Families Program is held over a nine week period, with 4 separate sessions held each calendar year for intensive training and skill development for 10 to 15 families. The MNPDP SFP has partnered with Family and Children's Services in order to give the families access to licensed therapists if needed.

Across the department, we host summer camps for area youth. Also throughout the year, the precincts provide "night out" programs for young people and their families. Our Fraternal Order of Police program has provided a dedicated summer camp for at-risk youth since 1959 and hosts approximately 300 kids a year. The MNPDP is engaged in working to intervene in the lives of young people through cultivating positive relationships. The more who join us, the better we can, together, serve Nashville.

The citizens of Nashville have every right to not only be fully informed about MNPDP activities, but also to have pride in the quality of men and women employed by this police department. Our 1,447 sworn members are some of the best trained law enforcement professionals in the nation. The MNPDP recruit training program is almost twice the state mandated minimum. Each officer also receives annual training that also exceeds state standards and includes innovative topics such as implicit bias recognition and appreciation of Nashville's civil rights history. Our 328 professional support staff members, who serve as the faces at our public records counter, Crime Scene Technicians, Information Technology experts, Crime Lab scientists, among other areas, perform their jobs with the same dedicated commitment.

The MNPDP remains proud of its efforts in both broad areas of traditional law enforcement and crime prevention/community engagement. It remains our hope that through transparency/accountability and cooperation, the MNPDP will continue to maintain broad community support and confidence.

Finally, recognizing that there has been recent discussion concerning disparities, I will leave you with this thought. A researcher can use data to illustrate that there are disparities. It is not possible for researchers to utilize that data to illustrate why the disparity exists or that the disparity is unjustified, without valid reason or unfair.

As examples, the African American population in Nashville represents:

- 76% of the homicide victims.
- 40% of the street robbery victims.
- 27% of the bank robbery victims.
- 29% of the market robbery victims.
- 57% of the total aggravated assault victims.
- 82% of the gunshot injury victims.
- 50% of the total violent crime victims.
- 58% of the homicide suspects*
- 76% of the street robbery suspects*
- 88% of the bank robbery suspects*
- 84% of the market robbery suspects*

- 60% of the total aggravated assault suspects*
- 65% of the gunshot injury suspects*
- 66% of the total violent crime suspects*

*As identified/described to the MNPD by victims and witnesses

This data is based on reports we receive from the public on a daily basis. That there are disparities is readily apparent. However, this data, or analysis of it, will not reveal the cause or reason for these disparities. That is a larger social issue we, all of Nashville, must work together to understand and remedy.

I suggest to you that any disparities in the work of the men and women of the MNPD are a direct result of the challenges we must confront on behalf of the Nashville Public each and every day.

Frankly, we have been somewhat reluctant to publish parts of this information. However, finding it necessary to provide a complete picture and explanation of the issues being brought before you, we now consider it necessary and appropriate.

Again, for there to be any meaningful improvement in the above picture there must be candid, maybe painful, conversations across all of Nashville. It has been said that these will be difficult conversations to have. I suggest to you that these are conversations that will merely be difficult to start. Once started, we have the talent, dedication and resources here in Nashville to make a meaningful difference. Many of Nashville's children are growing up with no hope and no vision of the opportunities available. This is feeding the criminal activity in Nashville. Working together to support Mayor Barry's Youth Violence Initiative and the forthcoming "Opportunity Now" program to address the needs of these children is one of the many ways we must work together to change circumstances for our future generations.