

The Clinton Administration's Law Enforcement Strategy:

Combating Crime with Community Policing and Community Prosecution



Taking Back Our Neighborhoods
One Block at a Time

March 1999

Executive Summary

“We have seen the impact of more police. We've seen the impact of the prevention programs; the penalties; the efforts to get guns out of the hands of criminals. And we've seen greater peace of mind coming, probably more than anything else, from the presence of the police on the street, in the neighborhood, in a preventive, cooperative fashion.”

– President Clinton
January 14, 1999

President Clinton and Attorney General Reno, working with state, local and tribal law enforcement officials and others, have launched an unprecedented effort to help America's communities fight crime. Over the course of the past six years, the Clinton Administration has worked to unite federal, state, tribal and local crime-control efforts, direct new resources into local efforts for crime fighting and crime prevention, and work hand in hand with local law enforcement and local communities. Six years into this strategy, crime has dropped to its lowest level in a quarter of a century.

Community policing has been at the core of this effort and the Administration has worked quickly and effectively to fund community police officers, training, technical assistance and other support for community policing initiatives nationwide. To date, the Administration has paid for more than 92,000 new police officers and expects to meet the goal of funding 100,000 new police officers ahead of schedule and under budget. Community police officers are now at work in communities across the country making America's streets and neighborhoods safer. Police, residents and community leaders in rural and urban areas alike credit community police strategies with success in reducing crime and improving safety on the streets.

The success of community policing is an important milestone in the Administration's deployment of its comprehensive community crime control strategy. Two key steps lie ahead to meet the difficult challenges that crime and violence continue to pose in many communities.

First, the Clinton Administration proposes a 21st Century Policing Initiative to add to community police forces, particularly in high crime areas, and to provide police with new technologies, equipment and information to fight crime on the front lines.

Second, the Administration proposes to increase the number of prosecutors to help implement effective community prosecution strategies that complement the work of community police officers. Community prosecution is already in use in many neighborhoods around the country to strategically stamp out persistent problems that give rise to ongoing crime. Community prosecutors work directly with community groups, strategically attack crime problems in the community and support community law enforcement's zero tolerance policies by prosecuting crimes they might not otherwise prosecute. Now, with funding for up to 1000 new prosecutors each year for five years, communities will be able to use the powerful tool of community prosecution to control and prevent crime.

Tremendous progress has been made in the fight against crime and violence. At the same time, many communities still need additional resources to break the hold of gangs, illegal drug and gun trafficking, and violence. The Clinton Administration has laid the groundwork for a strong and effective community crime control strategy with community policing and strong federal, state, and local partnerships to fight crime. Now, as the goal of a safer America is within reach, it is essential to build on this effective strategy with stronger community policing, effective community prosecution, and continued and reinforced commitment to work with our communities to fight crime.

President Clinton, Attorney General Janet Reno and others have led a historic effort to reduce crime in our nation's communities. With funding for 100,000 new community police officers, tougher punishment for violent offenders, the Brady Act and other laws to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, the Violence Against Women Act, crime prevention programs for our youth, and an unprecedented drive to join the forces of federal, state, and local and tribal law enforcement, the Administration's crime program is proving effective. Crime rates have dropped to their lowest level in 25 years.

A basic building block of the Administration's comprehensive community law enforcement strategy is community policing. In just four and a half years, the Administration has provided more than 11,000 agencies with money for more than 92,000 new police officers and is close to meeting the goal of funding 100,000 new police officers ahead of schedule and under budget. Across the country, an expanded number of community police officers have been working together with block watches, neighborhood patrols, high school guidance counselors, probation and parole officers, religious groups, and local businesses to take back the streets from violent street gangs and drug dealers. Families across America are safer in their homes and neighborhoods.

With a strong community policing structure now in place, the federal government is ready to take two important next steps to advance our community crime control strategy.

First, President Clinton and Vice President Gore are committed to strengthening the community policing program. Communities need more than a large number of police officers; they need officers with additional training, tools, and technologies to fight crime in the 21st century. The Clinton Administration has proposed a new program, the 21st Century Policing Initiative, to help communities meet this goal.

Second, with thousands of new police officers in our neighborhoods and a new and important role estab-

lished for police in the community, it is time to bring other key crime fighters into this new strategy. The police and the community have made tremendous progress working together. Now it is time to put more prosecutors in the neighborhoods as part of our community crime control strategy. The Clinton Administration has proposed a new program to help communities nationwide hire up to 1000 new prosecutors each year for five years to implement community prosecution strategies.

Stage I: Community Policing

Over the past two decades, forward-looking police chiefs have built on ideas of criminal justice researchers and policy makers, and the chiefs' own experiences, to develop a new approach to fighting crime in American communities. These police chiefs recognized that when police are isolated from the community they serve – operating from the precinct station house or the patrol car – they cannot make adequate gains in the fight against crime. These chiefs came up with a new strategy for law enforcement: community policing. Community policing makes our communities safer by changing the way police do business.

This is how community policing works:

- Community police officers really get to know the community. They know the residents and business people in the community, the bad guys (the drug pushers and users, unlawful users and sellers of firearms, and unlawful sellers and drinkers of alcohol, purse snatchers, car thieves, gang leaders and others creating or looking for trouble), and the good guys (members of block and neighborhood associations, religious leaders, drug and alcohol counselors, school guidance counselors, youth mentors, judges and court personnel, probation and parole officers).
- Community policing officers use the new relationships they develop in the community to stay ahead of crime problems. They walk the beat, meet with neighborhood

watch organizations, handle citizen complaints, enforce laws against prostitution, littering, vandalism, and intoxication and address community concerns about social disorder. Community police officers do not wait until an abandoned home or business becomes a haven for illegal drug, alcohol or firearms sales. Rather, they work with the neighborhood and community groups to either restore the property to some constructive community use or level it to prevent a problem from developing or festering – and the mere presence of the community police officer on the street deters crime.

- Community police help fight the fear of crime. We all know that when residents are afraid to leave their homes, the streets are available to drug dealers, gangs and other criminals. In some ways, fear of crime can undermine a community as badly as crime itself. Community police officers create a sense of security by being proactive and seeking the input of residents. When citizens can communicate their fears to law enforcement, police can proactively address the causes of those fears.

- Community policing enlists residents in the fight against crime. Neighborhood block watches, community groups, teachers, local businesses and residents work with police to identify and solve the problems in their community. With the renewed presence of police and the strong support of the community, violent street gangs and drug dealers can no longer control corners, streets, blocks and parks. The Administration's leadership is making this partnership a reality across the nation.

Laying the Foundation for Community Policing Programs Nationwide

President Clinton came to office committed to bringing community policing, and the neighborhood revitalization that this crime strategy fosters, to communities nationwide. He proposed to fund 100,000 new community police officers around the country and the Administration expects to meet this goal by the end of this fiscal year.

Safer Streets through Community Policing:

There have been six major grant programs for community policing:

- PHSP – Through the Police Hiring Supplement Program, DOJ awarded \$150 million to 250 agencies, demonstrating the need and opportunity to fund 100,000 police officers.
- COPS Phase I – Building on PHSP grant applications, \$200 million was awarded to 392 state, municipal, county, and tribal enforcement agencies to hire more than 2,600 additional officers and deputies.
- COPS AHEAD – Nearly \$290 million in grants were awarded to policing agencies serving communities with more than 50,000 people to hire more than 4,000 additional community policing officers. To get police on the streets faster, this program allowed interested agencies recruit and hire new officers before they received their grants.
- COPS FAST – This program streamlined the grant application process for policing agencies serving populations below 50,000. With a one-page application form, it did away with bureaucratic paperwork and provided over \$404 million in grants to hire more than 6,200 community police officers and deputies.
- COPS UHP – The Universal Hiring Program expands the hiring initiatives to transit, campus, park police, agencies serving other special jurisdictions and communities without a police force. To date, over \$4.2 billion in grants have been awarded under UHP, paying for more than 57,000 community policing officers and deputies in communities across America.
- COPS MORE – This program will cut down on the amount of paperwork and administrative tasks performed by veteran, trained officers so that they can spend more time on the street and in America's neighborhoods. By providing money for new technologies and equipment, such as mobile laptop computers, or to hire civilians in administrative and support jobs, COPS MORE put more officers on the beat. COPS has provided over \$775 million to more than 3,000 agencies for the redeployment of more than 35,000 officers and deputies.

Key Milestones in the Community Policing Program:

- On July 2, 1993, President Clinton signed the 1993 Supplemental Appropriations Act which provided \$150 million for the Police Hiring Supplement Program. This program made 250 awards to help hire or rehire 2,023 law enforcement officers. The Department of Justice was flooded with requests from police departments interested in participating in the program and could only fund one in ten grant applications. The interest in the program demonstrated the need for a much broader national effort.
- Congress passed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act (“the Crime Act”) in 1994 and authorized \$8.8 billion over six years to fund the 100,000 officers and support community policing nationwide.
- Attorney General Janet Reno created the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) in the Department of Justice. The COPS Office has provided money to over 11,000 communities to hire community police officers, bringing the added power of community policing to many of them for the first time. Community police officers now serve more than 88% of Americans nationwide.
- The Clinton Administration’s pledge to enable the nation’s 19,000 law enforcement agencies to place 100,000 officers on the street has already allowed local police forces to recruit, hire, train and deploy to the streets over 46,000 new officers.
- By the end of FY 1999, the Clinton Administration expects to fund the 100,000th community police officer. These community police officers will have increased the nation's police forces by about 18% from 1994.

Placing Community Police Officers on the Nation’s Streets

The idea of putting 100,000 new community police officers on the street was visionary; the job of doing it has been challenging. The Department of Justice has

met this challenge, reinventing the grant funding process and putting police on the streets as soon as possible. By February 1999, the Department of Justice had provided more than \$5 billion in funding to police departments for community policing.

A Dramatic Impact:

New COPS Officer Funded in America’s Biggest Cities

CITY	NEW POLICE
New York City	6,517
Los Angeles	3,731
Chicago	1,212
Miami	1,184
San Diego	996
Houston	908
Philadelphia	834
District of Columbia	782
Oakland	685

Total Population Served by top 10 cities:
21,565,000, as of March, 1999.

Within weeks of the 1994 Crime Act’s passage, the Department of Justice provided \$200 million in community policing grants to 392 state, municipal, county, and tribal enforcement agencies. These grants paid for more than 2,600 additional officers and deputies for those agencies.

Next, the Department of Justice cut through bureaucracy by having larger communities start recruiting and hiring new officers while their grant applications were being processed. The Department also developed a clear, straightforward one-page application form for smaller communities. To date, these smaller communities have received funding for more than 10,000 community police officers, and have not had to expend resources on bureaucratic paperwork.

Hiring new police was just the first challenge. The Department of Justice has worked closely with police and sheriffs departments across the country to provide

Officers Funded in Select Rural Communities

CITY	NEW POLICE
Mississippi	2,991
Kentucky	1,034
Oklahoma	812
Kansas	668
New Mexico	609
West Virginia	568
Iowa	546
Alaska	239

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the necessary training and technical assistance as they bring on new officers in order to develop effective community police programs. The Department of Justice helps local law enforcement agencies transition into community policing, target specific crimes, work in partnership with their communities, develop community support for new policing strategies, and deploy new strategies to target youth firearms violence, school violence, gangs, domestic violence and neighborhood-specific crime problems.

Finally, through COPS MORE, the Department of Justice has paid to move 17,000 additional officers from administrative tasks to the street. By paying for new equipment, such as mobile laptop computers, and for civilians to do administrative and support tasks, this innovative program is a fast and efficient way to put experienced officers into their communities where they are needed most.

Community Policing: A Record of Success

There is already tremendous support across the country for the Administration's community policing initiative. The Department of Justice is working with

communities to help identify what works, what does not work, and to help strengthen community policing programs across the country. Ongoing evaluation of this initiative has shown that communities are now changing the way they approach their crime problems. Already, police, public officials and community residents credit the program with helping to reduce crime and rebuild communities in cities, counties and towns across the United States:

High Praise for Community Policing

"I have to believe our drop in crime [49 percent since 1992] is almost totally due to neighborhood policing."

– Chief Thomas Windham, Fort Worth, Texas.

"We reduced our crime over 22%. It is my true feeling that we could not have accomplished that without our community policing effort and COPS FAST Program."

– Police Director Thomas R. Maltese, North Brunswick, New Jersey.

"The combination of uniform and civilian personnel has lowered crime 48%."

– Chief Rick L. Brown, Meredosia, Illinois.

"I credit neighborhood, community and problem-solving policing strategies for the positive impact on Miami and crime in this area. These strategies . . . are largely responsible for our success."

– Chief Donald Warshaw, Miami Florida.

"There used to be shootings here every day, and you couldn't go outside because of the gunfights . . . The residents would be too frightened. Not now."

– Minerva Armenta, 23-year resident of Orange County, California.

Stage II: The 21st Century Policing Initiative and Community Prosecution Programs

The Clinton Administration has laid a strong foundation for a community crime control strategy through community policing. With the groundwork laid, the Administration is prepared to strengthen the community policing program, build prosecutorial resources and deploy effective community prosecution strategies.

The 21st Century Policing Initiative

With substantial new funding for community police, the Administration has proposed a 21st Century Policing Initiative to strengthen community police forces and provide police with new technologies, equipment and strategies to control crime in the 21st Century.

- Over the next five years, the proposed 21st Century Policing Initiative will fund 30,000 to 50,000 new community police to target high crime areas.
- The 21st Century Policing Initiative makes critical improvements in radio technologies so that federal, state, tribal and local law enforcement agencies can communicate on the same frequencies. This will also enhance their use of a newly developed system that allows officers using hand-held units to enter and receive data and images electronically right at the scene of a crime.
- The 21st Century Policing Initiative includes funding to give police access to technology and the information networks to identify suspects, locate fugitives, track illegal gang activity, and solve crimes. These essential crime-fighting technologies include crime mapping and forecasting technologies, improved laboratory techniques, such as DNA analysis, and upgraded criminal history records and identification record systems.
- The 21st Century Policing Initiative includes essential resources to enhance the safety of law enforcement officers. Police officers risk their lives on the line every day to protect our communities. The Initiative continues

Funding the 21st Century Policing Initiative:

The President's budget contains \$350 million to help state, tribal and local law enforcement agencies tap into new technologies that will allow them to fight crime more effectively. The program has three elements:

- \$100 million to fund a Crime Analysis Program for research, technical assistance, and evaluation, including the very useful crime analysis tool called computerized crime mapping, allowing officers to pinpoint times and places where crime "hot spots" can be attacked.
- \$125 million to improve police communications:
 - making state and local public safety wireless communications systems compatible with federal law enforcement radio systems;
 - building a nationwide network of criminal justice information systems, giving state and local authorities immediate access to information needed to help them on the job;
 - deploying a computerized system so that officers can enter data electronically at the scene of a crime, accident, or traffic stop, and receive responses without returning to their vehicles.
- \$125 million to bring the tools of 21st Century technology to investigate and prevent crime:
 - eliminating the backlog of 1 million convicted offender DNA sample backlog at state and local crime labs;
 - improving equipment to dramatically reduce the time and cost of performing DNA analysis;
 - improving the general forensic sciences capabilities of state and local crime labs;
 - upgrading criminal history, criminal justice and identification record systems.

a vital program that provides bulletproof vests to state, local and tribal governments for use by law enforcement officers.

- The 21st Century Policing Initiative extends partnerships among law enforcement agencies, community organizations and government agencies. With new funding, community partners can work together to tackle juvenile crime, seniors can be recruited to help police, neighborhood residents can learn problem-solving skills, and police can work with corrections officials to oversee the reentry of ex-offenders into the community.

Community Prosecutors and Community Prosecution

With a stronger and more effective police force in place in communities nationwide, President Clinton now proposes to increase the number of and enhance the role of the prosecutors in our community crime-fighting efforts. He has proposed a new program to help communities nationwide hire as many as 1000 prosecutors each year for five years and to build on community policing programs with an effective prosecution strategy: community prosecution.

Community prosecution is being used in many communities across the country to systematically combat crime. In neighborhoods from Boston to Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. to Indianapolis, prosecutors are recognizing the importance of fighting crime through stronger ties to the community. While prosecutors have traditionally focused on the essential task of convicting more serious offenders after they have committed crimes, community prosecutors add to that core responsibility by working with the community to proactively stamp out problems and stop new crime before it starts. They look beyond the individual criminal case and the individual defendant to see what they can do to break the cycle of crime, get the menacing gang off the street corner, shut down the crack house, and sever the chain of illegal gun trafficking.

Community prosecution is strategic prosecution. The typical prosecutor's office makes thousands of decisions each year on which cases to drop, investigate further, plea bargain, or take to the jury. Most offices are overwhelmed with massive case loads, and they have precious little time to get the information they need from the community. The addition of a community prosecutor to an office creates a two-way flow of information that typically has two results: better community assistance in convicting the worst offenders, and more prosecutions of cases involving "low level" crimes that were previously dismissed. These prosecutions have a sustained impact on community safety.

Now, with new prosecutors, district attorney offices will be able to both continue to prosecute serious crimes and use the powerful strategy of community prosecution to control and prevent crime.

This is how community prosecution works:

- Community prosecutors learn how the community operates. Community prosecutors work directly with civic associations, neighborhood watch groups, business groups and religious leaders to identify community public safety needs and ways that the prosecutor's office can address these needs. The close ties that the prosecutor develops with the community help in preventing and prosecuting crime. For example, when an offense is committed, a community prosecutor will already know who is in the gangs, how the drug and gun traffickers have divided up their territories and who is in conflict with whom. The community can also act as an "early warning system" to alert prosecutors to new community-wide problems before they overwhelm the police and justice system.
- Community prosecutors use all legal tools to attack crime problems in the community. Community prosecutors use civil nuisance actions to rid neighborhoods of drug-dealing or prostitution on private property and take control of abandoned buildings. They obtain stay-away orders to deal with chronic offenders and drug dealers, and civil injunctions against gangs. These seemingly low-level actions have a powerful effect in preventing crime.
- Community prosecutors adopt zero tolerance policies. Community prosecutors enforce quality of life laws to improve overall safety in a community and to back up community policing strategies that emphasize zero tolerance for criminal offenses. With a community prosecution strategy and new prosecutorial resources, district attorneys can enforce low-level ordinance violations that might not have been prosecuted in the past. This makes the community more livable for residents, businesses, schools and places of worship, and sends the "not here" message to would-be criminals.

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- Community prosecutors leverage the work of the prosecutor's office. Creating a community-oriented group within a prosecutor's office leads to a more strategic approach to crime-fighting. These additional prosecutors help the entire office to prepare better cases through contacts in the community. It gives them the ability to contact more witnesses and conduct victim impact statements. All prosecutors can then systematically attack the roots of local crime problems.

Community prosecution programs are taking hold throughout the country:

- In Washington, D.C., the United States Attorney created a community prosecution unit in the busy Fifth Police District. Two community prosecutors review cases and warrants filed by Fifth District police officers. They work with the police to identify patterns of crime, meet regularly with community groups, and they use every civil and criminal law at their disposal to deal with problems identified by the community. Working with them, about 15 other prosecutors are assigned to handle criminal cases in just the Fifth District neighborhoods. These prosecutors prosecute all the cases in their assigned neighborhood districts – from misdemeanors to homicides. The result is that cases are

prioritized by how they fit into the Fifth District "big picture" rather than using seriousness of the crime as the sole criterion.

- In Portland, Oregon, the District Attorney has assigned a "Neighborhood DA" to each of several neighborhoods. The Neighborhood DAs work closely with neighborhood groups to solve problems identified by the community. They organize citizen patrols, draft trespass ordinances to keep charged drug dealers away from a neighborhood pending trial, train landlords to identify and screen out drug dealers, work with housing inspectors to target properties used for drug dealing, and enlist the aid of government agencies to clean up crime-ridden areas. They coordinate these actions with the District Attorney's own tough prosecution strategy to maximize the impact on crime.
- In Lowell, Massachusetts, a community prosecutor in the juvenile division convenes weekly meetings with the principal of the local high school, juvenile probation and parole officers, and the police gang unit. He also maintains contact with the juvenile drug treatment and education program leaders and with juvenile offenders. As a result, because the community is sharing information and keeping tabs on them, juvenile offenders have done a better job sticking to the terms of their probation and, when they do not, probation revocation is now much more likely.
- In Indianapolis, Indiana, assistant district attorneys were placed in four police districts to work with citizens' groups and police officers on drug markets, domestic violence, and disorder crimes. As a result, community groups are now helping to identify crime "hot-spots" and observing key cases as they move through the judicial process, police investigations are more thorough, and the central office is making more informed decisions about who to charge with crimes. The program is so popular with citizens that it has been expanded to serve the entire county.

Giving prosecutors a strategic edge:

The President's budget contains \$200 million for additional community prosecutors and other prosecution activities. These prosecutors will:

- engage directly with residents and community leaders to prioritize community needs;
- coordinate the work of other prosecutors in the office to fight crime strategically;
- cultivate relationships and trust in the community that result in better witnesses, stronger evidence and more convictions;
- enlist the community to work together with the prosecutors so that criminals cannot "slip through the cracks;" and
- use tactics that will prevent crime and reduce local residents' fear of crime.

This community prosecution strategy is not new. In an earlier day, prosecutors practiced just this way – in the community. But exploding crime rates and ballooning caseloads have forced prosecutors to spend their time in court, not in the community. Often, all a district attorney needs to become more strategic and therefore more effective is a small amount of money to free up the time of existing prosecutors or to hire a few more prosecutors. With resources to hire new prosecutors, communities can again benefit from this law enforcement strategy.

Community policing and other efforts have brought crime down and also have given prosecutors overwhelming caseloads. Now is the time to provide district attorney's offices around the country with resources and staff to achieve the strategic benefits of community-oriented prosecution. With new prosecutors who can back up the work of community police and target crime at its core, prosecutors can both prosecute their cases and help break the cycles of crime and violence.

Conclusion

Crime rates overall have dropped to a 25-year low; property crime is significantly lower; violent crimes declined 20 percent in the last six years. The murder rate is at its lowest level nationwide in 30 years. But the Clinton Administration is not prepared to claim victory and turn to other matters. Now is the time to press ahead, and make greater gains in the fight against crime and violence.

Communities are still badly in need of resources to break the hold of gangs, illegal drug and gun trafficking and violence on our streets. With stronger police agencies and an expansion in community prosecution resources, the promise of safety and security will become a reality to more and more residents, neighborhoods, towns, and cities in America. The goal of a safer America is within reach.