



Shea: More NYPD cops to work weekends amid ongoing surge of shootings



NYPD Commissioner Dermot Shea said Monday that a surge in violence across the city spurred him to boost the number of cops working weekends. Credit: Charles Eckert

By Anthony M. DeStefano

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Thousands of NYPD cops will work weekends due to the surge in violence and budget restrictions as shootings continue to bloody city streets at a rate not seen in four years.

In an interview on NY1, Police Commissioner Dermot Shea expressed frustration at the continued carnage and said the scheduling changes he ordered Friday — affecting all officers from the rank of captain and below — will give NYPD brass the flexibility to move cops to where they are needed most.

Shea's order allows for some patrol commanders to give weekends off to about one-third of the cops. In justifying the schedule changes, the order, which takes affect Monday, referenced demands placed on the NYPD by violence, budget cuts and protests.

"This is something we had to do, it gives a little bit of flexibility," said Shea, adding "I am starting to feel like a business struggling to survive. We are doing what we can with the resources we have."

Shea was alluding to the recent \$1 billion trim his department's budget took as a result of the movement to defund the police. The cuts have crippled Shea's overtime budget and forced cancellation of the July police academy class.

Since June, shootings have soared in the city. This past weekend resulted in 46 shooting victims — including eight homicides — in 35 separate incidents. For the week ending Sunday, the city recorded 79 victims in 59 shootings, increases of 276% and 228% respectively over the same period in 2019.

In 2020 so far, shooting victims total 1,174, an increase of 95% over last year. Shootings have hit 955, an 87% spike over 2019, according to police

statistics. Shootings last topped 1,100 victims in 2016. Homicides are now at 280, a 35% increase compared to a year ago, the data showed.

The shootings have occurred mainly in Brooklyn and the Bronx, with clusters in northern Manhattan and Queens. Police officials said shooting victims have been mostly Black, with some Hispanic.

As shootings started to take a toll, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced programs to engage community leaders and clergy to become active, even sponsoring basketball games. But those activities appeared to have done little to slow the violence, with some weekend shootings occurring at basketball courts.

Richard Aborn, head of the Citizen's Crime Commission, said now is the time for the NYPD to have more resources, not less.

"We have to have cops on the street," Aborn said. "We have to make sure there is sufficient overtime ... that is absolutely what we need."

Aborn said that a summer of cop bashing has gone on long enough and in some cases too far.

"We have to examine things like the diaphragm bill and see if it went too far," said Aborn, referring to a City Council measure that subjects officers to potential prosecution if they kneel or sit on a suspect in a way that constricts the diaphragm.

Critics of the measure have said it is unconstitutional and deters cops from taking proactive action.

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