

A NEWSLETTER OF THE POLICE EXECUTIVE RESEARCH FORUM

McCain and Obama Campaign Officials Offer Crime-Fighting Programs at PERF Summit PAGE 6



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# Chiefs, Sheriffs and Mayors at PERF Summit Discuss the Damage Caused by a Weak Economy

THE WEAKENING U.S. ECONOMY IS RESULTING IN budget cuts for many police departments as well as new types of crime patterns, according to a PERF survey and the comments made by many chiefs at PERF's 2008 Violent Crime Summit held on October 8 in Washington.

The PERF survey of more than 200 police agencies showed that 39 percent of the responding departments had already experienced a decrease in their operating budgets. The survey was conducted in late July—after the collapse of Bear Stearns and the Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac bailouts, but prior to the news of the economic crisis hitting Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch, AIG, Washington Mutual,

and Wachovia, and the passage in Congress of a \$700-billion financial industry rescue bill.

Thus, at a time when the economic troubles were just beginning to cause a widespread sense of alarm, the survey showed that nearly half of police departments were being affected. Forty-five percent said the downturn had already impacted their ability to reduce crime, and 39 percent said they had been affected by increases in home foreclosures.

At the Summit, chiefs and sheriffs said that while the budget cuts that they have already implemented were relatively small, the outlook for the next fiscal year is much worse. A number of chiefs said they have been asked to prepare budget plans with cuts as high as 30 percent, which would force layoffs of hundreds of police officers. (See sidebars with quotations from chiefs who attended the Summit, pp. 4–5.)

Of course, budget cuts in all types of government agencies could be expected at a time when experts have been warning that the economy may be in greater danger than at any time since the Great Depression. But several chiefs noted that public safety agencies traditionally have been among the last to be cut during economic downturns, so the need to plan for large numbers of police officer layoffs now shows how dire the economic outlook is.

The Summit, the latest in the “Critical Issues in Policing” series supported by Motorola, was attended by 180 police chiefs, mayors, and other officials from around the country. In order to help focus attention on



The PERF Summit was held at the Newseum, Washington, D.C.'s new museum about the history and practice of journalism.

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# Corporate Leadership That Is Making a Difference

THIS MONTH'S *SUBJECT TO DEBATE* DESCRIBES some of the highlights of PERF's latest Violent Crime Summit, held on October 8 at the Newseum here in Washington, D.C. One area of focus was how our damaged national economy is already impacting police and sheriffs' departments across the country. Another focus was on what representatives of the McCain and Obama campaigns told Summit attendees about their candidates' crime-fighting platforms.

Those and other issues, including PERF's latest crime statistics for the first six months of 2008, will be detailed in a forthcoming book about the 2008 Violent Crime Summit. The book will provide a lot of information provided by the 180 chiefs, sheriffs, mayors, and other officials who came to the Summit and shared their news about the programs that are working in their jurisdictions.

As always, I want to thank all of the PERF members who came to the Summit as well as those who completed our July 2008 survey in which we asked for their latest crime information.

The 2008 Violent Crime Summit is the latest in a series of projects in PERF's "Critical Issues in Policing" series, which grew out of a long-term relationship PERF has had with Motorola. The central thrust of the series has been that Motorola could help PERF uncover emerging issues that impact law enforcement.

For example, it was through the Critical Issues series that PERF was able to uncover and document the spikes in violent crime in 2005 and 2006 that otherwise were not being recognized. With support from Motorola, we began surveying our members about their crime statistics, and we detected major increases in violent crime across the nation. PERF released these findings months before the FBI could complete its massive Uniform Crime Reports, and we held the first Violent Crime Summit to give chiefs a forum to discuss the troubling trend of increasing violence. One result of that was a 2006 White House meeting with police chiefs to focus on violent crime.

Next we began surveying our members about the causes of increased violence in their jurisdictions, and what they were doing to turn back the tide of violence. At PERF's second Violent Crime

Summit, chiefs compared notes with each other about their experiences with security cameras, gunshot detection technology, programs that target gang members for intense police attention, and other initiatives.

At the same time, our surveys had identified "hot spots" enforcement as the single type of strategy most often used by police to fight increases in violent crime. So that became the focus of our third Summit, held in the spring of 2008 in Washington.

This summer, as our plans were under way for the fourth Violent Crime Summit, it became apparent that the U.S. economy was undergoing some major upheavals—starting with the Bear Stearns failure and the bailout of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. So we immediately added questions about that to our Violent Crime survey, and the results were startling. In the last week of July, when the survey was conducted, 39 percent of the responding agencies said they had

already experienced a decrease in their budget.

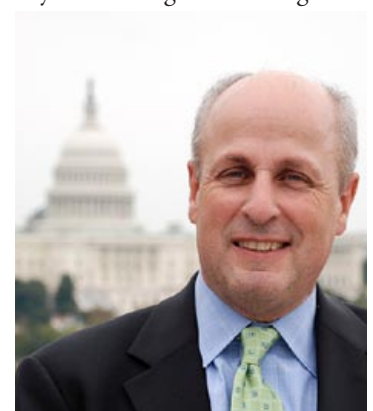
And as you will see from the comments of PERF chiefs on pages 4–5 of this issue, that was only the beginning. Because of the shaky economy, chiefs are being asked to develop plans for budget cuts next year of 10 percent, 20 percent, and more.

These severe budget cuts may be the toughest challenge that police chiefs will be facing next year, and it is good that Motorola and PERF are already working to help chiefs share their collective wisdom about how to handle it.

At a time of tremendous economic uncertainty, Motorola has demonstrated strong corporate leadership in its support of PERF through the Critical Issues in Policing series. PERF is grateful for that leadership and support.



**Motorola Vice President Rick Neal and Corporate Vice President Mark Moon, who have been influential in supporting the Critical Issues in Policing series**



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the economic issue, PERF invited a select group of news media reporters to attend the Summit. Representatives of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the Associated Press, and CNN attended the meeting and interviewed chiefs, resulting in several major stories. Other news outlets, including *USA Today* and the Reuters news service, have also run stories based on information provided by PERF members about the impact of the poor economy on police agencies.

In addition to the information about the economy, the PERF survey produced the following findings:

- **Crime levels appear to remain on an overall downward trend.** Among PERF’s sample of 56 agencies, which has served as an accurate bellwether over the last few years, total crime levels declined in every category during the first six months of 2008, compared to the first six months of 2007. Murders declined 10.5 percent; rapes, 5.5 percent; robberies, 3.3 percent; and aggravated assaults, 4.2 percent.
- **However, crime reductions are by no means universal in 2008.** Crime continues to be a “tale of two cities.” While overall crime totals were down, many agencies reported increases in the first six months of 2008. For example, 31 percent of agencies reported increases in murder; 42 percent reported increases in rape; 43 percent reported increases in robbery; 36 percent reported increases in aggravated assault; 39 percent reported increases in aggravated assault with a firearm; 47 percent reported increases in burglary; 44 percent reported increases in thefts; 24 percent reported increases in motor vehicle theft; and 37 percent reported increases in arson.
- **Furthermore, U.S. crime rates remain unacceptably high** compared to other industrialized countries. For example, on average, every day across the 27 European Union Countries, with a

total population of 497 million, 8 people are murdered. By contrast, 47 people are murdered on an average day in the United States, which has a much smaller population of 305 million.

- When asked whether they had experienced a **particularly violent week or weekend** during 2008, 35 percent of agencies responded in the affirmative. Police agencies said they have undertaken a variety of countermeasures. For example, Chicago police redeployed sworn officers who had been working in administrative positions to neighborhoods experiencing increased violence. Boston flooded violent crime hot spots with increased patrols, warrant sweeps, and increased enforcement.
- When responding police agencies were asked to cite the **top factors that they believe are contributing to violent crime** in their jurisdictions, the top factor, cited by 82 percent of agencies, was gangs, followed by juvenile crime (80 percent); “impulsive violence/disrespect issues” (74 percent); poverty/unemployment (74 percent); and the release of large numbers of offenders from correctional facilities back into the community (69 percent).
- **Immigration was cited as the top priority for new federal legislation.** PERF’s survey asked police executives, “If you were advising the next President on how to help local police with federal policies, aside from financial assistance, what would be the one or two most important issues you would like to see addressed?” The top issue, cited by approximately one-third of the respondents, was addressing illegal immigration and/or securing the nation’s borders. Other responses included: providing help in dealing with gangs; improved communications and information-sharing among law enforcement agencies; greater partnerships among police agencies at all levels and increased assistance from federal agencies; gun control and enforcement, especially restoring a ban on assault weapons; increased federal prosecutions; increased prison capacity; and generally improving the economy. 

# PERF Chiefs and a Mayor Speak Out on the Economic Crisis

## PHOENIX CHIEF JACK HARRIS: Facing the Possibility Of Laying Off 250 Officers

“Our housing market was one of the fastest-growing in the country until the downturn in the economy over the last six months to a year, and now a lot of those houses are being foreclosed, and the housing industry in general has been devastated. So we’re not selling the number of new homes that we were selling in the past. Our Police Department operating budget is about half a billion dollars a year, and most of that comes from sales taxes. When the housing industry



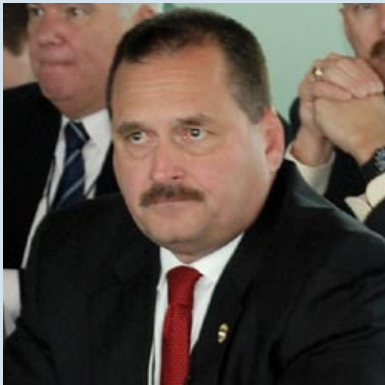
goes south, no one’s buying carpet, appliances, all of the things they buy along with the housing. So the end result has been that in the last six months, most of the [government] departments in Phoenix have been hit with a 10- to 20-percent cut in their operating budgets.

“Because of the support we’ve gotten from the mayor and council, we haven’t had those kinds of dramatic cuts in public safety. But this year, our budget was cut by 3 percent, and we currently have been asked to prepare for what it would look like if we were cut by 15 percent in next few months. After the 3-percent cut that we’ve already had, the next cut will be sworn personnel. A 10-percent cut would mean about 250 sworn positions.”

## FAIRFAX COUNTY, VA. CHIEF DAVID ROHRER: Planned Layoffs of Good Officers Will Hurt Morale

“My story is like Jack [Harris’s], almost the exact same numbers. We have 1,400 sworn officers. Fairfax is facing a \$430-million forecasted budget deficit for next year. I too have already cut 3 percent this year. It’s impacting our ability to do some of the proactive programs. Crime prevention, intervention, education, all the things we like to do to affect the crime rate and bring it down are affected. I too have had to put together a package for my elected officials recommending possible cuts for the 2009 fiscal year, to the tune of 15 percent. For me, that would be 263 police officers I have to lay on the line.

“And it’s not just the impact of losing the officers, but the morale issues that will arise from that—identifying somebody’s position or program as a possible cut. Great people, good officers doing a great job every day, and now, the chief has laid you up on the table as a potential cut.”



## MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD. CHIEF TOM MANGER: Budget Cuts Are Pushing Us In the Wrong Direction

“Montgomery County historically has probably been among the top 10 affluent counties in the nation, but we’ve been experiencing cuts to our budget. Our overtime budget has been affected dramatically, which hurts our ability to affect spikes in crime by sending officers into a particular area with overtime money. I’ve had elected officials come to me and say, ‘What can we do about the spike in crime in this neighborhood?’ And I explain to them, ‘We used to have an overtime detail that worked there on weekends, on Friday and Saturday nights.’ They tell me, ‘Well, do it again.’ And I have to tell them that I’ve lost my overtime money and can’t do it. So then they say, ‘Just go ahead and do it.’ It’s almost like I’ve gotten permission to run over my overtime budget, but that’s still problematic at the end of the fiscal year.

“We lost 11 sworn positions last year. Now that doesn’t sound like a lot, because we’ve got 1,200 cops. But the fact is that Montgomery County has 1.2 police officers per 1,000 population, which is half the national average. So we’re a very lean department, and when we lose 11 people, it hurts. Public safety and police used to [have a special status]; they’d cut everyone else but not public safety. But times are so profoundly bad now that public safety is no longer exempt from being cut. We’re going in the wrong direction.”



## LOS ANGELES CHIEF WILLIAM BRATTON: A Bad Economy Can Result in Tragedy

Chief Bratton told the story of Karthik Rajaram, a Los Angeles man who killed five family members and then himself in early October. In a letter addressed to the police, he said that economic reversals had driven him to despair. Chief Bratton offered his perspective on the incident:

“We had a multiple homicide. The gentleman had been making a very good living, but in the last couple of years, apparently as a result of some emotional issues, he had fallen on hard times, and had moved out of his home into a rental home. He killed himself and five family members with a gun—mother-in-law, wife, and three children. He spoke of financial stresses in suicide notes he left behind—one was a will and testament, another one was a note to law enforcement, and another one was about money for funeral arrangements. One of the children was college age, an honor student, brilliant, and ironically, an economics major. It was a terrible tragedy, and as far as we can tell, it was the most recent two or three weeks [of economic turmoil] that pushed this guy over the edge. I’m afraid that in this time of increasing stress, we’ll be apt to see more of this type of crime.”



## MINNEAPOLIS MAYOR R.T. RYBAK: Foreclosures Can Cause Serious Problems

Many departments that responded to PERF’s survey noted that home foreclosures can result in new crime patterns. In Fort Wayne, Ind. and other locations, police noted that vacant homes are being burglarized for copper pipes. In Santa Ana, Calif., police said that unoccupied houses are attracting transients, gang members, and prostitutes, and are causing a general sense of neighborhood disorder.

Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak cited an incident in his city on September 21 in which a vacant fourplex building was destroyed by an explosion, which utility officials blamed on thieves who broke a gas line. The force of the explosion reportedly was felt a mile away.

“We need to stay focused on this foreclosure issue, because it’s an area where police chiefs and sheriffs can play a significant advocacy role in coming months. We have begun to see significant problems with foreclosures, particularly in high-crime neighborhoods. When a building becomes vacant, we have all sorts of issues, including burglaries that can literally lead to buildings exploding.”



## INDIO, CALIF. CHIEF BRAD RAMOS: A Success Story in Mitigating The Effects of Foreclosure

Chief Ramos said that his city has already taken action to prevent home foreclosures from being the first step in the downfall of a neighborhood. In addition to starting a program that helps homeowners with subprime mortgages to avoid foreclosure, the City of Indio approved an ordinance aimed at preventing foreclosures from causing neighborhood blight.

The ordinance, which took effect last April, requires banks and lenders to inspect homes prior to recording a notice of default. During that inspection, or at any other time a lender discovers that a property has been abandoned, the lender must register the property with the Police Department, which in Indio is responsible for code enforcement. The lender also must hire a local property management company to oversee and maintain the property, and to post a sign with a 24-hour telephone number of a person who can be



contacted in case of an emergency at the property. Following is what Chief Ramos told his colleagues about the program:

“Five percent of our housing stock is in foreclosure; that equates to 1,400 homes. Riverside County had tremendous growth, but then it got hit really hard. These foreclosed homes are in country clubs, at golf courses, and in gated communities as well as our poorer communities.

“We looked at this as the Broken Windows theory. You have streets with house after house in foreclosure. The yards not getting watered, the houses falling into disrepair. So we passed this ordinance and mapped out all of our vacant homes and foreclosed homes through CompStat. It took about six months to get all the banks on board. We’re at 75-percent compliance on the homes that are registered. We have responsible parties who come and board them up, and we’re not having the copper thefts, we’re not having the air conditioning units being stolen, and we’ve been able to reduce the burglaries and other crimes that were occurring.”

# McCain and Obama Campaign Officials Offer Crime-Fighting Programs at PERF Summit

*PERF invited representatives of the McCain and Obama campaigns to the Violent Crime Summit, and asked them to make brief presentations about their candidates' positions on crime and policing issues.*

*Representing the McCain campaign were George J. Terwilliger III, who served in the George H.W. Bush Administration as Deputy Attorney General, the second highest-ranking position in the Justice Department, and Manus Cooney, former Chief Counsel to the Senate Judiciary Committee.*

*Representing the Obama Campaign were Eric Holder, former Deputy Attorney General, and Laurie Robinson, former Assistant Attorney General, both in the Clinton Administration.*

*Following are excerpts from the presentations made by Mr. Holder and Mr. Terwilliger to the PERF members:*

## **ERIC HOLDER, REPRESENTING SEN. BARACK OBAMA:**

Barack Obama and Joe Biden are people who “get it.” Much has been said about Barack Obama’s experience as a community organizer. Because he was a community organizer, he understands that there needs to be a focus on the underlying issues if you really want to get a handle on the crime problem. It’s not a coincidence that we see the greatest amount of violent crime where we see schools that don’t work, where we see the highest levels of unemployment, and as Barack has said, where we see the least involvement of men in the raising of their children, and more specifically, men raising their young boys. If we don’t deal with those underlying issues, we’re never going to really get a handle on the crime problem.

Joe Biden throughout his career has been a leader in the law enforcement arena—the 1994 crime bill, the Violence Against Women Act... He has dedicated a substantial portion of a very long career to law enforcement issues.

So these are men who I think bring unique perspectives and a great amount of experience to the issues that you have been talking about today at this Summit.

I’d like to briefly talk about John McCain and what he’s done with regard to some of these issues. He voted against the 1994 crime bill, which started the COPS program. He opposed the Violence Against Women Act; he opposed drug courts; he opposed the assault weapons ban; he repeatedly opposed restoring funds to the COPS program over the last few years; he voted against funding the JAG [Justice Assistance Grant] and Byrne programs; he voted against renewing the assault weapons ban; he opposed banning armor-piercing ‘cop-killer’ bullets. So I think that these are very relevant things as you try to assess these potential leaders of this nation.

But I think the real issue is: Where do we go from here? I think that in an Obama Administration, one of the things that will be key is to be in partnership with the people in local and state law enforcement. We’re going to listen to what you have to say....

So what are the specifics? What are the kinds of things that an Obama Administration would try to do? We are going to restore full funding for the COPS Office, and that would include hiring at least 50,000 new officers.... We also want to be flexible with funding for police chiefs and mayors, with the COPS technical assistance and training budget, so you all have the ability to experiment and come up with the unique solutions to the unique problems in your jurisdictions. We’ll fully fund the JAG and Byrne grants as well. We’ll impose tough penalties for witness intimidation; too many prosecutors and police chiefs have told me we have a problem in that area. We’re interested in the whole problem of domestic violence; there are a lot of problems that grow from that. Children who are exposed to violence [are more likely to become violent themselves].



**LEFT: Eric Holder and Laurie Robinson. ABOVE: Manus Cooney and George J. Terwilliger III**

[We'll focus on] strategic data-driven approaches. Let's not guess at what the problems are; let's use computers and come up with data that drive the approach we'll use. The tools we have now are more sophisticated than when we did that in the 1990s....

The one thing I would emphasize is that the two men who are running to be President and Vice President on the Democratic ticket are very concerned about the issues that you have raised. It is in their DNA.

### GEORGE TERWILLIGER, REPRESENTING SEN. JOHN MCCAIN:

I don't believe that every good idea about public safety has come from a Republican administration. But there are differences in approach between these two candidates. The job of law enforcement never gets any easier. Crime rates go up and down; gangs ascend and are suppressed; the bad guys get better weapons and law enforcement has to respond; political support waxes and wanes. And some things remain the same. All too often we've heard that the support that prosecutors and judges need to give to the law enforcement effort is wanting.

The thing that I think you need to understand about John McCain is that he believes in his heart in what you do. He is committed to giving law enforcement the support and priority that the importance of the role you play demands. And as importantly, he has the record to prove that he can do that.

John McCain's position on the COPS program going forward is that it needs to continue, that it's been effective. Senator McCain believes that matching grants and other kinds of law enforcement assistance are critical to the federal role, and there is something about his basic philosophy about federal assistance that fits hand in glove with what you've said this morning. And that is that politicians in Washington should not decide with earmarks what you need to spend federal money on. Rather, you, the people on the front lines, should decide how that money is best spent.


John McCain has also been on top of something of keen interest to the law enforcement community, and that is the ability to communicate effectively, to share information effectively, and to achieve full interoperability. Senator McCain has supported giving law enforcement much more radio spectrum than is even allocated to it now.

Senator McCain believes in the intelligent use of the federal firearms statutes. [He supports] using the statute that provides a mandatory 15 years minimum in jail and up to life for an armed career criminal, to go after the people who our state and local colleagues tell us are the ones we really need to get off the street. That makes so much common sense that we know that has to continue. And he supported an increase in prison terms for assaults on law enforcement officers or their family members.

The other piece of the federal role is providing support on things like gangs. Organized crime goes well beyond the traditional federal interest in La Cosa Nostra. We have to do more to assist state and local law enforcement in dealing with the gang problem. We hear over and over and over again what happens when gang turf wars erupt and how that affects neighborhoods.

Sexual predators are another issue that Senator McCain has made a priority of. The Internet has been a boon to commerce and to access for knowledge. But it has also been a boon to certain types of crime, particularly sexual predators who prey on children. Sen. McCain believes very strongly that there has to be a coordinated, cooperative effort to go after those people.

I don't think there is a choice to be made between public safety and law enforcement and fighting violent crime on one hand and fighting terrorists on the other. We've had seven years without a major terrorist attack in the United States. That is not an accident. There have been a number of terrorist attacks that have been thwarted. Law enforcement agencies at all levels deserve our gratitude for keeping this country as safe as they have. This is no time to let down our guard, though. We have to be able to do both things and we have to find a way not only to fund those efforts, but to coordinate those efforts. Criminal prosecution is one of the tools in the box with which we can fight terrorists. Local and state police are the front line of the fight against terrorism.

I think we all have to ask ourselves, "Who shares my values? Who is going to be there, and who has a record of being there, when the going gets tough?" I look at John McCain and the conclusion that I draw is, "Here's a guy who has been through battle. Here's a guy who has battled his own kind politically for what he believes in." That gives me a lot of comfort. 



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**Upcoming PERF Events**

**PERF Town Hall Meeting**

November 9, 2008  
Westin San Diego  
400 West Broadway  
San Diego, Calif.  
(In conjunction with the IACP Conference  
and Exposition)

**PERF Annual Meeting**

March 26-28, 2009  
Ritz Carlton Washington Hotel  
Washington, D.C.  
(Mention PERF to obtain special meeting  
rate of \$225 when you call 800-241-3333.)

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