

# NYPD Disbands Anticrime Unit as City Leaders Debate \$1 Billion in Cuts to Police

*Ben Chapman, Katie Honan and Jimmy Vielkind*

6-7 minutes

---

A controversial New York Police Department anticrime unit will be disbanded, police officials said Monday, as negotiations over cutting funding to the department have intensified.

NYPD Commissioner Dermot Shea said at a briefing that the department would immediately eliminate the citywide unit, which includes 600 plainclothes officers. The unit has been involved in several high-profile events, including [the death of Eric Garner](#), a black Staten Island man who died in 2014 after an officer placed him in a chokehold.

Officers in the unit will be reassigned to other units, such as the detective bureau and the NYPD's neighborhood-policing program, according to the commissioner.

Mr. Shea said the decision to do away with the unit was part of an effort to reform and modernize the NYPD.

"It's a big move when you look at culturally how we police this city," he said.

Calls for reforms to the NYPD and cuts to its funding have come amid [mass demonstrations in the city and across the country](#) over the police killing of George Floyd and law-enforcement brutality.

Mayor Bill de Blasio said earlier this month that as part of reforms to the NYPD he would shift funding from the department to youth and social services. The Democratic mayor said the amount would be less than \$1 billion. But late Friday New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, a Democrat, and other council leaders issued a statement saying they identified \$1 billion in savings to cull from the NYPD budget.

The police department has an annual budget of \$5.6 billion.

In the wake of George Floyd's death, protesters across the country are calling on officials to defund the police. WSJ's Shelby Holliday examines what the phrase means and how it might work. Photo: Ragan Clark / Associated Press

"Our budget must reflect the reality that policing needs fundamental reform," the statement said.

The city council and the mayor must reach a deal on the city's budget and any cuts to the NYPD by June 30. The debate over cuts comes as preliminary estimates show the city faces a shortfall of up to \$1.3 billion in its \$89.3 billion budget, largely from the coronavirus pandemic's impact on the economy.

The council's plan includes reducing the police departments 36,000 uniformed staff by attrition, slashing overtime and moving some NYPD responsibilities to other city agencies. Details on where to redirect money that would come out of the NYPD

budget are being worked out, a council spokeswoman said.

Mr. de Blasio has said the amount of the cuts would be determined in budget talks over the next two weeks. He has said he opposes the level of cuts the council wants.

“The mayor has said we’re committed to reprioritizing funding and looking for savings, but he does not believe a \$1 billion cut is the way to maintain safety,” his spokeswoman, Freddi Goldstein, said in a statement Monday.

Councilman Joseph Borelli, a Republican who represents Staten Island, said the proposed \$1 billion cut will hurt communities. He also said it wouldn’t address larger issues of systemic racism in the NYPD. “This is what happens when hashtags become policy,” Mr. Borelli said.

The death of Mr. Floyd, a black Minneapolis man who was killed in police custody, has spurred demonstrations around the country. Many protesters have [called for the defunding of local police departments](#).

The Legal Aid Society, which represents criminal defendants, lauded the disbanding of the anticrime unit but said the NYPD needed to go further by reducing its head count and using those savings to invest in communities.

“Anything less is simply window-dressing to distract away from the greater systemic issues that currently roil law enforcement in New York,” the organization said in a statement.

The head of the union representing NYPD officers said eliminating the unit would harm efforts to fight crime.

“Shooting and murders are both climbing steadily upward, but our city leaders have clearly decided that proactive policing isn’t a priority anymore,” Police Benevolent Association President Patrick Lynch said in a statement.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said over the weekend that he doesn’t believe defunding police or passing “one-off” laws restricting certain tactics—such as a ban on tear gas—address underlying strains on police-community relations.

The Democratic governor issued an executive order on Friday directing municipalities to undertake a comprehensive review of their police practices and enact a plan to “promote community engagement to foster trust, fairness, and legitimacy, and to address any racial bias and disproportionate policing of communities of color.”

“Let’s actually seize the moment, and let’s redesign the police department,” Mr. Cuomo said Friday on MSNBC.

Mr. Cuomo also signed bills that would make police disciplinary records available to public inspection, criminalize the use of chokeholds by officers and require courts to publish racial and demographic data relating to low-level offenses.

**Write to** Ben Chapman at [Ben.Chapman@wsj.com](mailto:Ben.Chapman@wsj.com), Katie Honan at [Katie.Honan@wsj.com](mailto:Katie.Honan@wsj.com) and Jimmy Vielkind at [Jimmy.Vielkind@wsj.com](mailto:Jimmy.Vielkind@wsj.com)

**Corrections & Amplifications** An earlier version of this article incorrectly spelled the first name of NYPD Commissioner Dermot Shea as Demot. (Corrected on June 15)

Copyright ©2020 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved. 87990cbe856818d5eddac44c7b1cdeb8