

Testimony of Boston Police Commissioner Michael A. Cox

**Before the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement, and Intelligence and the
Subcommittee on Emergency Management and Technology Joint Hearing
“Protecting the Homeland: An Examination of Federal Efforts to Support State and Local
Law Enforcement”**

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Thank you Chairman Pfluger, Ranking Member Magaziner, Chairman D’Esposito, and Ranking Member Carter for the invitation to testify at this hearing alongside my fellow leaders in law enforcement. The federal government is a critical partner in public safety for local police departments, and I welcome the opportunity to be with you today to share the impact these partnerships are having in the City of Boston.

The Boston Police Department (BPD) has a long history of proactive Community Policing combined with strategic deployment and focused interventions based on real-time analysis of crime data and intelligence. A substantial portion of our analytic capabilities are funded by the federal government through grants that are critical not only to public safety in Boston but to the entire Metro Boston region.

First and foremost, I am a strong proponent of Community Policing and believe that in order to have a truly safe city, we must have the trust of the communities that we serve. Trust is achieved through deliberate and consistent relationship building over time between police and residents in all of our neighborhoods. The community is crucially important to preventing crime and terrorism. Indeed, community members will not report criminal activity or suspicious behavior if they don’t trust the local police department to act appropriately with that information.

BPD prioritizes building relationships with the community and partnering with stakeholders to address issues and solve problems. In addition, BPD partners with mental health and social service programs to connect those at risk with services and supports.

Recently, one way the Department has sought to further strengthen our ongoing efforts to engage directly with the community is by beginning to implement “Community CompStat Meetings” in each of the eleven police districts. The goal of Community CompStat is to take the same sense of empowerment and problem solving from the Department’s internal CompStat meetings out into the community. Rather than incorporating CompStat into any existing community meetings – which tend to focus on a variety of issues – the Department engages at the neighborhood level to address the unique issues facing each specific community. Additionally, these meetings provide

an opportunity to familiarize the public with the good work done by the Department and to provide transparency and accountability through sharing data and analysis.

The Boston Police Department's Intelligence-Led Policing Model complements Community Policing. Intelligence-Led Policing provides commanders with real-time synthesized intelligence and analysis to inform strategic decision making and deployment of resources to focus on the individuals and/or groups that are driving crime (or fear of crime) and violence in the city, while also targeting locations of concern.

The combination of Community Policing and Intelligence-Led Policing is paying dividends in the City of Boston. Overall, serious crimes (*i.e.*, "Part I Offenses" as defined by the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program) have followed a consistent downward trend in recent decades in our city, declining more than 50% since 2005 – which correlates with the establishment of the Boston Regional Intelligence Center that same year. Year to date, Part I Offenses have declined 6% compared to 2022 and are 6% below the five-year average.

Despite the decline in overall serious crimes, firearm violence continues to be a persistent concern in our city. Annual shooting victim totals have fluctuated significantly over the past 10 years, often spiking and dropping every other year. In 2018, 2019 and 2021, the number of total shooting victims were historically low. Following a pattern seen in other major cities, total shooting victims reached a 10-year high in Boston in 2020; however, unlike other major cities, totals decreased 28% in Boston the following year. Last year, in 2022, shooting victim totals declined an additional 8%, the lowest levels experienced since the 1950s.

Violent crime in Boston continues to be largely driven by gang-related retaliatory activity and by the continued availability of out of state firearms. These issues have been exacerbated by increasing recoveries of firearms with aftermarket enhancements, like large capacity magazines and sear switches, and the emergence of privately manufactured firearms (PMFs). BPD officers recovered 695 crime guns from the streets of Boston in 2022, a 9% increase compared to the prior year and a 24% increase compared to 2019. Approximately 10% of crime guns recovered in 2022 had been reported stolen. Of those reported stolen, 33% were reported stolen from Massachusetts, 18% from Maine and 11% from Georgia.

In 2022, BPD conducted several investigations into individuals manufacturing PMFs in Boston. Multiple firearm parts, 3D printers, and ammunition were recovered from these investigations. Privately manufactured firearm recoveries increased 79% from 2021, with a total of 104 recovered in 2022, accounting for 15% of the overall guns recovered in that time period.

We continue to experience problems with firearm arrests for repeat offenders, which we know make up a very small percentage of our overall residents, but account for a large proportion of

violence in our city. In 2022, 564 individuals were arrested on firearms charges; 42% had prior firearm arrests in Boston, with 102 of those arrested having 3 or more prior firearm arrests.

Another major trend we are experiencing in the city is an increase in juvenile offender involvement in firearm violence. Increasing numbers of firearms have been recovered from juvenile offenders in recent years, including 88 juveniles arrested in possession of a firearm in 2022. Firearm arrests of those under 17 increased by more than two-thirds in 2022 compared to 2021 and more than doubled 2020 totals. Juvenile offenders also appear to be escalating from less serious property crime offenses to robbery and firearm violence over increasingly shorter time periods.

The Boston Regional Intelligence Center (BRIC) is responsible for maintaining and preparing these statistics and analysis and drives BPD's Intelligence-Led Policing efforts. The BRIC is the cornerstone of BPD's data and intelligence analysis, information sharing, and counterterrorism efforts, and serves as a critical resource for the Metro Boston region.

The BRIC was established in 2005 to coordinate efforts of the nine cities and towns in the Metro Boston region who receive Boston Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant funding to reduce criminal activity and prevent terrorism. Since its inception, the BRIC has become a hub for public and private stakeholders in and around Boston for the collection and analysis of intelligence information and the investigation of homeland security-related criminal activities.

Within the Boston Police Department, the BRIC plays an important role in aligning Intelligence-Led Policing with Community Policing. For several years, the BRIC has provided information on high risk individuals for intervention and services through the state's Safe and Successful Youth Initiative. The BRIC also develops relationships with the networks of colleges and universities in Boston, as well as hospitals and faith based organizations, for information sharing regarding public safety topics. Recently, the BRIC provided threat briefings to LGBTQIA+ groups and worked with Boston Children's Hospital, Catholic Churches, historically Black Churches, and Jewish community organizations to share information, mitigate threats and complete investigations. The BRIC works to build trust with the community by providing important information to keep individuals informed and safe.

The BRIC's analytical and investigative staff are co-located in a shared workspace within the Boston Police Department. Critical liaison personnel such as representatives from Boston Emergency Medical Services, Boston Fire Department, Department of Homeland Security Office of Intelligence & Analysis (DHS I&A), and Federal Bureau of Investigation's Boston Field Office are also assigned within the BRIC. The BRIC further partners with local law enforcement agencies, other first responders and the private sector operating throughout the Metro Boston region; federal law enforcement and intelligence partners; and other state and major urban area

fusion centers to prioritize, collect, analyze, produce and disseminate actionable intelligence – often in real time.

The importance of information sharing between federal, state and local law enforcement partners cannot be overstated, as this has proven critical to staying ahead of the threat environment. The national network of fusion centers, along with the network of intelligence commanders in major cities and counties, has established a critical foundation for information-sharing about emerging threats to protect our communities. BPD’s participation in the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force has been instrumental for assessing threats and collaborating on terrorism investigations to protect the City of Boston, the Metro Boston region and the nation.

DHS I&A personnel assigned to the BRIC and the region have also proven instrumental in intelligence sharing and risk mitigation. These personnel have provided unique access to valuable resources, including trainings, threat briefings, classified systems, specialized expertise in areas such as cybersecurity and intelligence community reach-back for unique insights regarding threats that may impact our jurisdiction. The DHS Intel Officer assigned to the BRIC has provided cybersecurity expertise that enabled effective intelligence support to several incidents to include ransomware attacks targeting state and local government and critical infrastructure partner IT systems, business email compromises and other financially-motivated cyber crimes. The Intel Officer has also provided situational awareness of nation-state and advanced persistent threat actor campaigns targeting elections and helped us prepare accordingly to the heightened tensions during the early days following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Furthermore, DHS I&A personnel have contributed to joint analytic production on topics and events of concern such as last year’s U.S. Open Golf Championship, Boston Marathon and countless other special events that occur in the Metro Boston region each year.

Additionally, the BRIC and the Boston Police Department work closely with several DHS component federal agencies to fulfill our public safety responsibilities. These agencies include: United States Coast Guard, United States Secret Service, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, Customs and Border Protection, Homeland Security Investigations, Transportation Security Administration, Science and Technology Directorate, Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office, and Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Federal investment in local law enforcement through grants is crucial to crime prevention and terrorism prevention throughout the country.

One significant investment that the City of Boston has made, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office (CWMD), regional law enforcement agencies and first responder agencies, is actively participating in the Securing the Cities (STC) program. The goal of STC-Boston is to build local

capacity to find and intercept radiological or nuclear material before it can be used in a terrorist attack. This program augments local resources with federal funding with the goal of detecting, deterring and defending against terror attacks that use radioactive material. Working with public safety agencies throughout the Metro Boston region, STC-Boston will help build an enduring radiological detection network that integrates with other counter-terrorism initiatives already in place, such as the Boston Urban Area Security Initiative, Massachusetts State Police, Massport Police Department, Massport Fire Dept and several other State and local first responder partners.

Since joining the STC Program in 2020, Boston has received a total of \$4,450,000 in funding. The most recent grant will provide the Metro Boston region with additional funding to provide equipment, training and support in the detection and interdiction of illicit radioactive material.

A second critical source of federal funding is provided through UASI grants. These resources are indispensable to the City of Boston's capability to prepare, prevent, respond to and recover from an act of terrorism in all of its forms. The investments received to date are utilized daily, whether it be personnel, equipment, software, or expertise gleaned through training, exercise or networking events. UASI funding has allowed the BRIC to increase its human capital and technology capabilities to identify and mitigate both domestic and international threats to Boston's communities. The expertise and analysis provided by the BRIC is utilized to inform decision making by BPD and the Metro Boston region's public safety agencies each and every day.

Perhaps most notable, UASI provided resources to purchase tactical equipment and training that literally saved the lives of police officers in BPD's Special Operations Division. For example, in November 2021, an armed barricaded subject, who had threatened the lives of family members, shot several BPD officers through a door. These officers sustained serious, but thankfully not life-threatening, injuries. Ballistic shields, ballistic vests, ballistic helmets and an under-door camera system purchased with UASI funding protected the officers and ultimately saved their lives. This is just one example of how these capabilities protect BPD personnel and allow officers to respond safely and effectively to the dangers presented by the current threat landscape.

Historically, Metro Boston has ranked within the 15 highest risk UASI regions. For UASI 2023, Boston's risk ranking increased from #12 to #11, yet the region is eligible to receive \$200,000 less in the total allocation compared to last year. This decrease in funding is problematic because the Boston region has maximized its annual expenditure and has remained largely in a capability sustainment mode, despite increasing expectations for homeland security-related responsibilities. I and my counterparts are concerned that this may be indicative of the beginning of a trend of declining homeland security funding, while homeland security demands are rapidly increasing.

The terrorism threat landscape has grown substantially broader through various forms of violent extremism. Additionally, national security threats from nation-state actors and their proxies managing aggressive campaigns to sow seeds of discord in our communities through mis/dis/mal information, cyber attacks, and counterintelligence threats require more from our intelligence professionals, investigators and front-line officers to protect our communities. These are issues that our nation's first responders have not traditionally dealt with and, as a result, we require more training, more personnel, more embedded analytical experts and more technical capabilities to mitigate these threats.

A significant way that Congress could assist law enforcement would be to increase funding across the Homeland Security Grant Program – to include UASI – and consider broadening its applicability beyond just “terrorism” to include other threats traditionally mitigated by the U.S. Department of Defense and Intelligence Community.

Federal investments in the UASI and STC grant programs are vital to local efforts to prevent and mitigate potential threats, as are the assignment of DHS I&A personnel to fusion centers. Without these important resources cities and towns are vulnerable to individuals and groups intent on inflicting harm. I encourage Congress to continue to invest in these important programs.

I want to thank the Committee again for the opportunity to share what we are doing in Boston. I believe our model of Community Policing combined with Intelligence-Led Policing is working as evidenced by the data. This successful model would not be possible without the significant and important federal investments that have been made in the Boston Police Department by the Department of Homeland Security. Federal partnerships with, and investments in, local and state police departments are vital to the safety and security of the United States.