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PBA, Local 237 Say HA Needs More Cops, Fast

JAMES HARNEY

The leaders of the unions representing Police Officers and Housing Authority employees teamed up last week to deliver an urgent message to the de Blasio administration: NYCHA developments need more cops, and soon.

The 23,000-member Patrolmen's Benevolent Association and Teamsters Local 237, which represents about 8,000 Housing Authority workers, called on Mayor de Blasio to boost police staffing citywide and, in particular, return the NYPD Housing Bureau to the staffing levels it had before it was merged with the Police Department 21 years ago.

Claim Short-Staffing

The move is part of a new collaborative effort between the two unions to improve public safety in NYCHA developments.

In a joint letter to the Mayor, PBA President Patrick Lynch and Local

237 President Gregory Floyd wrote that the number of police officers dedicated to patrolling NYCHA developments has fallen to just over 1,990, from a high of more than 2,800 under the former Housing Authority Police Department, which was consolidated into the NYPD in 1995.

“That strength is further diminished as Housing police officers are pulled away from their regular duties to make up for police staffing shortages elsewhere in the city,” the letter stated. “As a result, there are too few police officers to provide the level of continuous police presence needed to both deter criminal activity and to engage in the type of collaborative, community-oriented policing needed to bring lasting improvements to the public-safety environment.”

The union leaders noted that the decrease in Housing police staffing has formed part of an overall decline in NYPD headcount of more than 6,000 since its pre-9/11 peak.

Point Finger At Mayor

Citing U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara’s recent statement that NYCHA has an obligation to provide residents with housing that is “decent, safe, sanitary, and in good repair,” Mr. Lynch and Mr. Floyd told the Mayor in their letter “it is clear to us that the already unacceptable crime and public-safety conditions in our NYCHA developments have only further deteriorated since your administration took office.”

They further stated that “while serious ‘index’ crimes have increased by only .22 percent as of May 15, NYCHA developments had seen a year-to-date increase of 8.9 percent in index crimes, including an 8.8 percent increase in murders, a 14.7 increase in felony assaults and a 22.1 percent increase in burglaries. These trends must not be allowed to continue.”



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Mr. Lynch and Mr. Floyd concluded by saying “It is imperative that additional hiring is authorized soon as possible in order to meet the city’s obligations to the residents of NYCHA developments, which are still the best example of affordable housing for nearly 600,000 New Yorkers.”

Mayor’s Response

Through a spokeswoman, Mr. de Blasio responded:

“The Mayor’s steadfast commitment to keeping all our communities safe, including NYCHA developments, is clear through his

investment in 1,300 new NYPD officers. Over the past two years, NYCHA has invested millions on improved lighting, CCTV cameras and other critical safety improvements—and in the 15 high-crime NYCHA developments where we launched the Mayor’s Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety, violent crime dropped 11 percent.

“The Authority has partnered closely with the NYPD and others to address the systemic neighborhood public safety challenges,” the statement added, “including enhanced communications on permanent exclusion and the launch of a collaborative Public Safety Advisory Committee to advise on improving community safety.”

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