



Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing on "Constitutional and Common Sense Steps to Reduce Gun Violence"

March 23, 2021

Submitted for the Record by Bill Bratton, on Behalf of ShotSpotter



Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Grassley, and Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing, and for the opportunity to submit this statement. I am Bill Bratton, former Police Commissioner of the New York Police Department; former Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department; and former Police Commissioner for Boston. I am currently Executive Chairman of Teneo Risk Advisory. I also serve on the Board of Directors of ShotSpotter; on whose behalf I submit this statement. ShotSpotter deploys gunshot detection and location technology for local law enforcement agencies.

The Nature of the Gun Violence Problem

Gun violence in America's cities is a devastating epidemic. It kills and injures residents of the communities we serve, as well as our own officers. More than 65,000 Americans have died in gun-related homicides in the five years through 2018, along with several hundred thousand injured (CDC 2014-2018, The Trace/FiveThirtyEight 2018). Unlike our efforts to battle the coronavirus, in this continuing epidemic, we are *not* consistently using the latest technology to combat the problem and protect our officers. Many communities do *not* view the police as part of the solution. As a result, gun homicides and injuries are growing and there is little confidence that we will successfully address this problem.

In addition to the tragic loss of life for victims and an erosion in the quality of life for survivors, illegal gunfire has tangible costs. The direct cost of gun violence is over \$8 billion per year - from emergency care and other medical expenses to police, court and prison costs (Miller 2015). The economic impact of living under siege is significant as well. Every additional gun homicide is associated with 80 lost jobs and \$9 million in lost revenue for the local economy (Urban Institute 2016).

In addition, there are the intangible costs such as the psychological impact to families and friends of victims who have lost their lives or those who witness these homicides. They suffer trauma, grief and the fear of being unsafe. Children who are exposed to a violent environment are more likely to develop behavioral, emotional, or learning problems similar to PTSD (Duncan 1996). Research shows that it is the exposure to gunfire itself that initially leads youth to carry and use guns, thus reinforcing the inexorable cycle of gun violence as victims become aggressors (Spano 2012).

I know we can do better with respect to gun violence and I know *how* we can do better.

Understanding the Drivers of Gun Violence

By understanding two key, but lesser-known, data points behind the nature of gun crime and how it propagates, we can use precision-policing techniques to directly attack the problem.

Fact #1: The largest impediment to reducing gun violence is that it's become normalized. The more often gunfire is heard, the less likely residents are to report it to the police through 911. In fact, more



than 80% of gunfire goes unreported (Brookings Institute, 2016). In my experience, few police chiefs believe this is true for his or her jurisdiction until it is measured. But as city after city with significant gun crime measures calls for service relative to gunfire, we see only 10-20% of gunshot incidents are called into 911 (ShotSpotter 2019). Why doesn't the community call in gunfire? Potential callers fear retaliation or are resigned to a situation that hasn't or won't change and ask, "why bother?"

Imagine yourself living in a community with constant gunfire and not seeing a police response. People assume police know about the shootings because they are supposed to know about everything. And if they think the police know, but the police don't show, what will they think about their police department? The lack of a consistent police response to unabated gun violence drives its normalization. It breeds distrust and cynicism between the community and law enforcement which then dilutes their collective ability to break that cycle of violence.

Fact #2: Gun violence involves very few perpetrators. Research shows that less than 1% of a city's population can be responsible for 70% or more of the shootings (Engel 2008). This would suggest that an intelligence led, focused intervention strategy involving an engaged community can be successful. If we can use the latest technology and restore the community's trust in police, we can identify and catch these serial shooters who drive most of the gun violence and make a lasting impact.

Technology as the Backbone of the Solution

By integrating proven technology into standard operating practices in local agencies, we can empower law enforcement to reduce gun violence, protect officers and restore public confidence.

One of the key technologies that serves as the foundation of a gun violence reduction program is Acoustic Gunshot Detection. With this technology in place, whenever someone fires a gun, sensors atop buildings identify the sound and triangulate a location. Police are electronically notified of a shooting in progress and its nearest street address. Officers can respond to the crime scene quickly and precisely. That gives them the chance to aid victims, work the crime scene, talk with witnesses and gather evidence. Moreover, gunshot detection alerts result in some gunshot victims being transported more quickly to trauma centers.

More than 100 U.S. cities are using gunshot detection today and there is strong evidence that shell casing recovery rates significantly increase with its use (Urban Institute 2019). When deployed as part of a Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC), these shell casings are entered into NIBIN so investigators can connect multiple shootings to a single gun, solve cases and get shooters off the streets.

With gunshot detection, our officers are also better protected. The technology provides alerts with a map of the block in which the gunshot was detected. Alerts contain critical information about the crime scene they are going to enter. They now know the precise location of the crime, when it happened, the number of rounds fired, if the weapon used was high capacity or automatic, and if there are multiple shooters. They can approach the scene with the proper number of resources and equipment for the severity of the incident. We owe our officers the best we can provide in situational awareness as they put their lives on the line when they approach an active crime scene.

Where gunshot detection is deployed, police are aware of essentially all gunshot incidents. The new normal is that when shootings happen, community members see police consistently responding, rendering aid to victims, apprehending offenders, setting up crime scenes, interviewing witnesses,



collecting evidence and talking with nearby residents. It doesn't take long for community members' perceptions to change and view police treatment of gunfire as more of a priority. This helps to restore confidence in law enforcement and trust that they are there to protect and serve.

As just one of innumerable examples, last week, within hours of acoustic gunshot detection going live on the east side of Detroit, a ShotSpotter alert notified Detroit police of multiple shots fired in a residential backyard. There had been no 911 call. With shell casings recovered on the property leading quickly to a search warrant, the police arrested two people in the house they believe are gang members, one of whom may have been involved in a recent nonfatal shooting that endangered a child. Detroit police recovered a significant number of guns in the house, over 75 shell casings on the property, numerous gun parts, several hundred rounds of ammunition, and a drill press and other equipment for manufacturing ghost guns. This residential gun manufacturing operation was shut down because a concerned community deployed technology that detected the gunfire that enabled Detroit police to make arrests and take guns off the street.

The introduction of gunshot detection can lead to a complete transformation of the gun crime response, investigation process and community involvement, ultimately breaking the cycle of gun violence. More automated alerts lead to comprehensive responses which lead to more evidence collection and witness interviews, which then lead to quicker identification of and interventions with serial shooters with help from the community. All of this ultimately leads to gun crime reductions as cities that use this tool have seen.

Making Gun Violence Reduction a Priority

Lastly, we must collectively make gun violence reduction a priority. We have 1,000 cities in the US that need the technological assistance gunshot detection can provide. Many local police do not have the financial resources to take advantage of this type of tool. I urge this Committee and Congress to have the federal government provide increased financial support specifically dedicated to the use of this technology, in a manner similar to federal support for body armor and body cameras so that communities that need this force multiplier can deploy it. There is a price tag to technology, but the cost will be far less than the social and economic costs we are paying every year fighting a battle that we are losing.

With gunshot detection, we can quickly equip our officers with a tool to better enforce existing laws and stem the tide of illegal gun use. Everyone wants safer communities, and we want to protect our officers; by expanding investments in proven programs, we can make progress toward our shared goals.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William J. Bratton".

William J. Bratton

ShotSpotter, Inc.

7979 Gateway Blvd., Suite #210 Newark, California 94560 +1.510.794.3100 main +1.888.274.6877 toll free www.shotspotter.com