



THE POLICE COMMISSIONER
CITY OF NEW YORK

June 29, 2009

Honorable Peter F. Vallone Jr.
Chair, Public Safety Committee
New York City Council
22-45 31st Street
Astoria, New York 11105

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing in response to your request for information regarding the New York City Police Department's stop, question and frisk database.

As you are aware, stop, question and frisk activity has played a major role in the overall reduction of crime in New York City. The use of this procedure by Police Department personnel is directly targeted to public safety needs. For many years, this agency has maintained policies and conducted training in how to conduct a lawful stop, question and frisk. It is our long-standing and unequivocal belief that the NYPD is a model for other law enforcement agencies in this regard. While not mandated by the law, New York City police officers conducting reasonable suspicion stops have been required by Department guidelines to complete a form documenting the stop since 1964. The form, which was last revised in 2002, was developed primarily as a tool for investigators to utilize in the subsequent location and apprehension of criminal suspects. The use of this form has subsequently become a way to document the encounter as well.

Over the past 10 years, the Department has been able to dramatically improve its ability to collect and monitor data related to stop, question and frisk encounters. Prior to this period, records of stops were not electronically recorded but were kept in written logs that were individually maintained in police precincts across the city, making it virtually impossible to access this information or conduct any sort of reliable citywide review of this data. In 1999, in order to address the issue, the Department developed a centralized database where information from each stop, question and frisk report prepared throughout the city could be recorded. Unfortunately, with a single standalone database at Police Headquarters, the ability to access the information and to provide quick and comprehensive analysis proved difficult since information from each report had to be manually entered after being sent to Headquarters. The Department even created a dedicated unit of personnel whose sole purpose was to complete the data entry process. Given the volume of reports generated from an agency of this size, this proved to be a gargantuan effort that was extremely burdensome and time consuming. It took several years of intensive effort, including the utilization of an outside vendor, to work through the backlog of reports and complete the data entry process.

In 2002, the City Council passed a law that required the NYPD to provide detailed statistical information regarding these stops. This led the Department, with the assistance of an outside vendor, to develop a new and more manageable database. This decentralized system, which became fully operational on January 1, 2006, now allows each police precinct to enter its own data from stop, question and frisk reports into the database on a daily basis. This system has also strengthened the Department's ability to focus stop, question and frisk activity in areas experiencing increases in violent criminal activity.

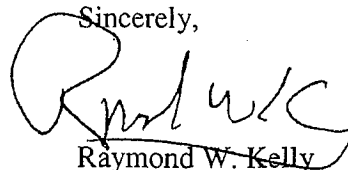
In response to your specific questions regarding this database, the names and addresses of stopped individuals are entered into the database whenever each has been supplied by the person being stopped or if there was a subsequent arrest made or summons issued. It is important to note that many of the stops documented in the database will not have identifiers because the individual stopped refused to identify him or herself or the investigating officer did not ask the stopped individual for this information or did not record it on the form. The database contains every entry made on the stop, question and frisk form, although, again, some information may not have been collected in an individual stop. Besides the stop, question and frisk database, there are no additional databases where this information is entered.

Information contained in the stop, question and frisk database remains there indefinitely, for use in future investigations. Therefore, there are no existing Police Department guidelines that mandate the removal of information once it has been entered into the database. As I previously mentioned, information contained within the stop, question and frisk database is used primarily by Department investigators during the course of a criminal investigation. Information contained in the database is also used for various statistical purposes.

Just as with other computer databases containing sensitive information that are available to Police Department personnel, such as the New York State Department of Motor Vehicle database, any information gathered is strictly for law enforcement purposes only. Furthermore, all database users must have both a login identification and a password in order to gain access to the system.

I hope I have satisfied your request regarding this matter. As always, I appreciate your support of the New York City Police Department.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Raymond W. Kelly". The signature is stylized and written over a horizontal line.

Raymond W. Kelly
Police Commissioner