



Crime Wave, USA Two Years of Disastrous Results of Soft-on-Crime Policies

The rapid rise in crime—homicides, assaults, carjackings, smash-and-grab robberies and lethal violence against police—has alarmed average Americans, who were already anxious about Covid-19 lockdowns, illegal immigration, inflation, racial and sexual indoctrination in schools, Black Lives Matter riots, and on and on.

Our country appears to be coming apart at the seams. There is an unprecedented shortage of leaders willing to provide social order and protect average citizens. Instead, we have governors and mayors, along with Soros-backed city and county prosecutors, making things worse. They call for “reimagining” the allegedly “systemically racist” criminal justice system, allowing those arrested for violent crimes to be released without bail and avoiding incarceration of all but the most violent convicted criminals.

We have activists still calling for defunding the police. Meanwhile, police officers are retiring in large numbers and recruitments are plummeting across the country. Wealthy and privileged politicians hire private security for protection, while average Americans feel unsafe to walk in their neighborhoods, go to public parks, or drive on the streets which they pay for as taxpayers.

The political left and the mainstream media have responded to the rising crime rate in multiple ways. President Biden insists that the key to crime prevention is gun prevention. According to this view, too many guns on the street are the cause of escalating crime rates.¹

Some progressives go so far as to deny there even is a crime problem. Writing in the left-wing *New Republic* magazine, Alex Shepard warned that talk of the “horrific spate of violence that’s plaguing cities across the country” is creating a “specious” narrative that Democrats want to defund the police. He maintains that those in the media “parroting” Republican talking points have failed to “weave in voices from communities plagued by both corruption and crime

victimization.”² He concludes with the progressive mantra that the real problem is too many guns on the streets, which he intimates is being encouraged by Republicans.

According to FBI data, murders in 2020 hit 21,570 nationwide—nearly 5,000 more than the year before. Progressives unconvincingly attributed the rise in the murder rate to the Covid-19 lockdowns. The *Washington Post* and other mainstream news outlets assured their readers that the homicide rate in 2020 remained below its peak in the 1990s, and most experts expected a decline to follow in 2021.³ As 2021 drew to a close, however, homicide numbers for the year rose another 5 percent in 22 major American cities, breaking the previous year’s records.⁴

As 2022 began, crime appeared to get even worse. In late January, two New York City police officers—Wilbert Mora, 27, and Jason Rivera, 22—were gunned down after responding to a domestic dispute. In Houston, police officer Charles Galloway was killed in a routine traffic stop. A few hours later a Washington, DC officer was shot multiple times. Manhattan residents were terrified by a series of appalling random murders of women in January and February.

A political backlash is inevitable.

The Reality of Crime

The implication that rising crime rates are just a right-wing talking point belies actual figures.

Let’s begin with the fact that *346 law enforcement officers were shot in the line of duty last year. Sixty-three of them died.*⁵ Ambush-style attacks on police officers were up 115 percent nationwide in 2021 (there were 103 such incidents), according to a National Fraternal Order of Police report. Police believe they are under attack. As Nassau County, NY sheriff Bill Leeper told the press, “I have worked in law enforcement for 45 years, and the current level of sheer violence targeted at law enforcement officers around the country is the worst I have seen.” He attributed attacks on

police to the anti-police rhetoric that intensified with the widespread riots in American cities following the death of George Floyd while in police custody in Minneapolis in May 2020.

Just in January this year, at least 30 police and law enforcement officers were shot – up 67 percent from the same time last year, according to a February 1 update from the National Fraternal Order of Police.

The belief that anti-police, defund-the-police rhetoric encourages attacks on police officers is a common sentiment in law enforcement. As James Desmarais, writing in the *Boston Globe*, observed, “Since the death of George Floyd in 2020 and the defund police movement that took root across the country, mayors have reduced police budgets, stopped or postponed police academies, disbanded proactive violent crime units, and have taken other actions that have made it more difficult for police to effectively fight crime.” He added that “Over a year and a half of this has emboldened people to be more confrontational with the police. This results in officers being concerned about something going wrong, and being the next news story.”⁶

Homicides, Traffic Deaths Are Soaring

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control reports that there were 30 percent more homicides nationwide in 2020 than in 2019—the highest annual increase in modern history. The increase for African American victims alone was 36 percent. Monthly figures reveal a surge in homicides starting with the May 2020 death of George Floyd.

Even after the huge increase in homicides from 2019 to 2020, further increases in homicides occurred in major U.S. cities in 2021 compared with 2020 (nationwide figures are not yet available). Last year in Philadelphia alone, the homicide rate increased 13 percent from 2020. What this means in actual numbers is that 562 people were killed—a 13% increase from 2020 and the highest total in the city’s history.

Homicides last year rose 5% compared with 2020 (following a 44 percent increase from 2019 to 2020) in 22 major cities analyzed by the Council on Criminal Justice, a Guggenheim Foundation-funded think tank. Most of these increased homicides resulted from shootings.⁷ By the end of 2021, 12 cities had broken records for the number of homicides: Portland, Indianapolis, Toledo, St. Paul, Rochester, Tucson, Louisville, Philadelphia, Columbus, Baton Rouge, Albuquerque, Austin and Baton Rouge.⁸

A rising tide of lawlessness and accompanying decline in law enforcement has led to a *dramatic increase in traffic fatalities* as well. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that 12 percent more people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes in the first nine months of 2021 compared to

the same period in 2020. This increase led to the highest number of fatalities (31,720) in the first nine months of any year since 2006.

On top of this, a surge of “smash and grab” crimes plagues American cities, as mobs of thieves enter high-priced clothing and jewelry stores to steal thousands of dollars of merchandise. These smash-and-grab operations have drawn national attention. In late November, at least 18 people broke into an upscale Nordstrom department store in Los Angeles and left with stolen merchandise. This was followed by a rash of similar incidents in the San Francisco Bay area. In Hayward, a band of hammer-wielding thugs entered the Southland Mall to smash cases at a jewelry store before fleeing with stolen watches, necklaces, rings and other items. A mob of about 80 people entered a Nordstrom’s store in Walnut Creek on the same weekend. In downtown San Francisco smash-and-grab mobs targeted Louis Vuitton, Burberry, Bloomingdales, Walgreens and cannabis dispensaries.

Meanwhile the Chicago suburbs were being hit as a Louis Vuitton store was raided by a mob that fled with over \$100,000 worth of handbags and other merchandise.⁹ Numerous large-scale thefts of parcels from freight trains in Los Angeles scandalized the public in January.

Why the sudden spike in “smash and grab” crimes? Well, it is not a response to the Covid-19 lockdown. “This has nothing to do with the pandemic,” emphasizes Pete Eliadis, a former law enforcement officer and founder of the security company Intelligence Consulting Partners. He pointed out that the central district in San Francisco has seen larceny and theft incidents go up almost 88 percent from 2020. Overall crime in the city rose almost 52 percent. Eliadis said a major problem in Los Angeles and San Francisco is that few arrests for break-ins are made because masked thieves are hard to identify on security cameras, and when caught, thieves usually experience few consequences. He added that both Los Angeles and San Francisco lack enforcement resources and these thieves are put on a “back burner.”

‘No Political Will to Arrest’

Moreover, *the defund-the-police movement has sapped officers’ morale.* Eliadis explained, “There’s no political will to arrest people in this climate. Should a police officer waste time getting into an altercation when the person is not going to jail because it’s overcrowded and a prosecutor is not going to prosecute that cause because it’s not high on the priority list?”¹⁰

Good question. California law enforcement officers understand that in 2014 the state’s voters approved Proposition 47, which sought to alleviate prison overcrowding

by reducing penalties for some crimes. The threshold for a felony theft was raised from \$500 to \$950. Prosecutors often choose to consider misdemeanors too insignificant to prosecute. Organized crime rings set up smash-and-grab operations, paying low-level criminals to steal goods for them. These crimes are costly. In Illinois, Attorney General Kwame Raoul estimated that these crime rings were costing retailers nationwide \$45 billion a year. These criminal rings were engaged not only in theft, but also in drug and human trafficking and other serious crimes.

Worth noting is that shoplifting has become an epidemic in the U.S., now reaching 200 million individual cases annually. That's 550,000 incidents every day, 23,000 every hour. Some 27 million shoplifters are involved.¹¹

Left-Wing Prosecutors to Blame

Crime statistics belie the left-wing narrative that all is well in American cities. The left maintains that if there is a slight rise in crime rates, the real blame should be placed on guns, not on far-left prosecutors such as George Gascón in Los Angeles, Chesa Boudin in San Francisco, Kim Foxx in Chicago, Larry Krasner in Philadelphia, Kim Gardner in St. Louis and others. Jeffrey Butts, the director of the Research and Evaluation Center at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, told the press, "The argument about woke prosecutors is entirely ideological and devoid of evidence." He continued, "There is no correlation between the quality and tone of prosecution and the violent crime surge we've seen in the last two years all over the country. The key to stemming violent crime is to stop the flow of firearms from states with more permissive firearm laws."¹² This is a pipe dream.

An example of the horrible results of soft-on-crime policies is the daytime murder of Brianna Kupfer, a 24-year-old graduate student working in a luxury furniture store in Los Angeles. She was stabbed to death, not shot. The murder suspect illustrates an all-too-common failure of criminal justice system to put repeat offenders behind bars. His history is one of escalating crime. In October 1998 he was arrested for taking \$400 in cash from a Target Store in South Carolina. Five years later he was arrested for threatening residents and staff at a homeless shelter in Charleston. A month later he was arrested for resisting arrest at the College of Charleston.

Thus the suspect already had a long rap sheet when Charleston police charged him in 2019 with firing a flare gun at a vehicle occupied by a man and his daughter. Smith admitted in a phone call that he fired the flare. He was released on \$50,000 bail. He was living homeless in Los Angeles when he walked into the upscale furniture store in Los Angeles to take the life of a young woman known for kindness toward others.¹³

In his first week in office in January, the newly elected Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg directed his staff not to ask for pretrial detention for crimes such as robbery, burglary, kidnapping, carjacking and witness tampering. After a string of horrifying murders, including that of a young Chinese-American woman stabbed to death by a stalker who apparently followed her into her apartment complex in Manhattan, Bragg hastily "clarified" his policies in an effort to reassure the public.¹⁴ The alleged murderer was free on "supervised release" after earlier crimes, including a 2021 violent attack on a stranger in a subway, for which he was treated leniently. *Not coincidentally in light of such lax policies, New York's City's murder rate rose 53 percent in two years, from 2019 to 2021.*

Far from Manhattan, Houston is experiencing a crime wave amid a failure of prosecutors to prosecute and judges to judge. When Houston D.A. Kim Ogg announced that city and county judges and magistrates had slated thousands of cases for dismissal, sheriffs were outraged. Eric Batton, executive director of the Harris County Deputies Organization, expressed the fed-up attitude of cops on the street when he called a news conference to declare, "Harris County is being razed by murders, rapists, robbers, and thieves." Without mincing words, he added, "There's nothing more frustrating for law enforcement officers to go out there and do their job and do it with the utmost responsibility, but when it's turned around on us and we have a part of the system that refuses to work, it's discouraging."¹⁵ Houston, the largest city in Texas, experienced 473 homicides in 2021, a 20 percent jump from the previous year.

Recall Campaigns in Progress

The left-wing funder-in-chief George Soros understands that the key to "criminal justice reform" (meaning, essentially, far less incarceration of black criminals) is electing progressive prosecutors. Soros's Open Society Foundations through their political action committee have poured millions into district and county prosecutors' races in the last few years. (See *Mindszenty Report*, November 2019 for details.) Sometimes the money went directly to fund the candidate, but often it went through the back door in what is called "dark money," which does not need to be reported.

Serious campaigns have been launched to recall the prosecutors Gascón in Los Angeles and Boudin in San Francisco, with wealthy Democrats joining the recall efforts. However, many jurisdictions such as Manhattan have no procedure to recall a prosecutor before the end of his term. Voters will have to bide their time.

The intrepid social critic Heather Mac Donald observes that 73 police officers¹⁶ were intentionally killed in 2021 – the highest number since 1995 (not counting the 9/11 terrorist

attacks) and a 56 percent increase over 2020. “Historically black males have made up over 40 percent of cop-killers nationwide, though black males are 6 percent of the population,” she notes.¹⁷ Meanwhile, *only 4 “unarmed” black civilians were killed by police in 2021*, according to the *Washington Post* database. She concludes, “A police officer is about 400 times as likely to be killed by a black suspect as an unarmed black is to be killed by a police officer.”¹⁸

Lessons to Be Learned

An overwhelming majority of registered voters are calling for additional funding for the police. They are demanding the end to soft-on-crime policies, whether it is a soft bail position or soft prosecution policy. A February national poll of registered voters by Politico Morning Consult found that a majority (69 percent) believed that increased funding for police departments would lead to a decline in the incidence of violent crime in the U.S.¹⁹

Progressives are quickly trying to backtrack on demands to defund the police. Expect an outraged electorate to demand a full-blown course correction.

¹ Naomi Lim, “As Crime Gets Worse, Biden Takes a Big Risk,” *Washington Examiner*, June 23, 2021; and <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/02/03/president-biden-announces-more-actions-to-reduce-gun-crime-and-calls-on-congress-to-fund-community-policing-and-community-violence-intervention/>.

² <https://newrepublic.com/article/162837/media-aiding-gop-violent-crime-message>.

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/01/21/homicide-rates-have-soared-nationwide-mayors-see-chance-turnaround-2022/>.

⁴ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/homicides-2021-increase-council-on-criminal-justice/>.

⁵ <https://www.actionnewsjax.com/news/local/violence-against-law-enforcement-rise-according-national-fraternal-order-police-report/NC6RFX5YD5G7VD52YCE3AVGVDI/>. For a full report on attacks on police, see <https://files.fop.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/report-20220103-shot-killed-monthly-report.pdf>.

⁶ <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/01/31/metro/with-violent-crime-rise-defunding-police-cries-are-subsiding/>.

⁷ <https://counciloncj.org/crime-trends-yearend-2021-update/>.

⁸ Bill Hutchinson, “‘It’s just Crazy’: 12 Major Cities Hit All-Time Homicide Records,” *ABC News*, December 8, 2021.

⁹ https://www.realclearpolitics.com/2021/11/24/why_cities_are_facing_spree_of_smash_grab_crimes_5573.69.html.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ <https://comparecamp.com/shoplifting-statistics/>.

¹² <https://www.foxnews.com/us/rogue-prosecutors-driving-u-s-violent-crime-surge-expert-says>.

¹³ https://www.postandcourier.com/news/1a-stabbing-suspect-in-custody-was-free-on-bail-from-charleston-county-case/article_46ba9c24-79f9-11ec-b807-0791b58e545f.html.

¹⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/01/05/manhattan-district-attorney-bragg/>; <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-crime/ny-woman-killed-apartment-suspect-barricades-himself-20220113-grewdwmpxna2dl666c6p3gquye-story.html>.

¹⁵ <https://www.foxnews.com/us/houston-judges-dismissal-cases>.

¹⁶ This number exceeds the 63 police officers shot to death in 2021, noted earlier in this essay, because it includes intentional killings by all causes.

¹⁷ Heather Mac Donald, *Wall Street Journal*, February 2, 2022.

¹⁸ Heather Mac Donald, *New York Post*, December 29, 2021.

¹⁹ <https://www.theblaze.com/news/poll-increased-police-funding-decreased-crime>.

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