

Terrorism And Protests Are Roughly The Same Thing, A New Special Unit Will Handle Both: NYPD Commissioner

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from the *pipe-bomb-or-placard?-better-safe-than-sorry*. dept

The NYPD has created yet another special unit to handle the myriad problems that arise from being terrorists' occasional target. [The SRG \(Strategic Response Group\) will be tasked with handling certain situations](#), most of which did *not* occur in New York City.

"It is designed for dealing with events like our recent protests, or incidents like Mumbai or what just happened in Paris," the commissioner [Bill Bratton] said.

So... it's designed for dealing with protests — the most recent of which were kicked off by the clearing of a cop who [choked an unarmed man to death](#). The other two incidents have nothing to do with New York other than the fact that the NYPD sent its own officers overseas at [the request of nobody](#).

Apparently, the new unit will be armed to the teeth, as behooves ~~not~~ protest cops.

"They'll be equipped and trained in ways that our normal patrol officers are not," Bratton said. "They'll be equipped with all the extra heavy protective gear, with the long rifles and machine guns — unfortunately sometimes necessary in these instances."

Or not, said the department when its new counterprotest unit began [taking heat for Bratton's conflation of terrorism and tying up traffic](#).

When asked if New Yorkers should expect to see police officers with "machine guns" at city protests, a spokesman for the NYPD told The Intercept, "No. They're not carrying them at protests." In general, however, the spokesman said officers would have access to the weapons "either on them or in their vehicles."

So, they won't carry machine guns while policing protests, but they'll be in easy reach. Bratton stated that responding to protests and terrorist attacks require "overlapping skills," hence the creation of a single unit. There has been no further clarification on what these "skills" might be, other than possibly being able to discern whether it's a protest or terrorist attack they're dealing with and, consequently, whether the machine gun stays in the squad

car.

This new unit must be something special. Or its already-existing counterpart must be something awful.

SRG also will supplement the 1,000-officer NYPD counterterrorism program, which has also been trained in heavy-weapons tactics, a police official said.

In addition to the 1,350 counterterrorist cops, there will be more surveillance. The NYPD's push to turn the city [into the next London](#) continues, with the promised addition of cameras in every subway car, accessible to both the conductor and "offsite" viewers within the PD.

Bratton is also pushing for something less lethal than "long rifles" to be carried by his cops.

The commissioner said he will also ask Mayor Bill de Blasio for more funding to [buy more Tasers as an alternative to the use of force](#). Bratton reportedly wants at least 450 cops — five or six at each of the city's 77 precincts — to carry Tasers on them, not leave them in their cars...

Well, I'd say Bratton need to fix the second part first. There's no reason to buy new Tasers if you can't get cops to carry them. Locking them up in the glovebox pretty much ensures that the only force officers can deploy will be of the "deadly" variety. The difference between tasing someone into submission and *shooting* someone into submission is often the difference between life and death. Of course, NYPD officers are also fond of other such "less-lethal" tactics like chokeholds and [unprovoked beatings](#). Adding a Taser just means some citizen's going to have electricity pumped into his system on top of anything else the officers feel like deploying.

Using the word "terrorism" in a sentence is an easy way [to route funds](#) to your law enforcement agency. New York — being both highly populated and an American icon — is certainly high on the list of terrorist targets. But years of counterterrorist investigations have [done very little](#) to reduce the threat. The NYPD has been overselling and under-delivering on the "imminent terrorist threat" front for years. Because it has so little to police at home, it's been sending its officers around the world to actual terrorist attacks — a tactic that has earned it little more than the irritated scorn of those actually charged with policing much more dangerous parts of the world.

Above and beyond all of this, there's Bratton's assertion that the *same* special unit should be tasked with counterterrorism *and* handling protests, as if the two were remotely related in any way. The message is clear: civil disobedience is an attack on New York City itself — and Bratton's boys and girls trained in the art of counterterrorism will be on hand to break up the next one. To dissent is to strike terror into the NYPD — itself a pleasant thought. But once the SRG hits the streets, it probably won't end well for those would-be terrorists and their evil protests.

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