

May 26, 1987

Let's Have More Police Officers on the Sidewalks of New York

To the Editor:

In "Add More Cops. Then What?" (editorial, May 1), you express concern about the planned addition of 1,931 new police officers to New York City's police force, raising the staff level above the period preceding the 1970's fiscal crisis. You say, "more cops mean more work for courts and jails already near collapse." It seems to me, however, that putting more cops on the street should have a deterrent effect on crime and thus not create more burden on the the rest of the criminal-justice system.

The decision to add officers only to the city's police force, and not to the transit and Housing Authority police forces, also means the end of the 7:2:1 formula. That formula dictated that for every 10 police officers budgeted by the city, 1 must be assigned to the New York City Housing Authority force, 2 to the Transit Authority and 7 to the New York City Police Department. Though not a city regulation, the formula for the most part determined allocation of police officers.

As a result, the housing and transit police forces grew well above the levels preceding the fiscal crisis, while the city police force, which responds to nearly 50 percent of the complaints of the transit system, remained below those levels.

Early last year, I called for modifying the formula, which had hurt city neighborhoods, such as, for example, the eastern Queens communities where my family and I reside, that do not have Housing Authority projects or subways. ("Let's Take Another Look at Allocating New York's Police Forces," letter, Jan. 2, 1986). Councilman Sheldon S. Leffler, for whom I serve as counsel and chief of staff, had previously suggested a review of that now abandoned formula.

With a police force at full strength, every effort should be made to press ahead with Commissioner Benjamin Ward's stated intention to deploy as many police officers as needed on foot patrols in our communities. Indeed, Mayor Koch's adoption of the City Council's longtime top priority recognizes this need.

The "C-POP" (community patrol officer program) foot-patrol beats have been well received in those precincts where they have gone into effect. Residents and merchants have voiced satisfaction at the perception that security is improved, even in so-called quiet neighborhoods.

All New York City residents welcome this initiative and look forward to the deterrent effects of more police officers walking our streets on patrol. The emphasis ought not to be on making arrests, and thereby straining our courts and jails, but on deployments that lessen the likelihood of events that might lead to arrests, prosecutions, convictions and jailings.

COREY B. BEARAK

Bellerose, Queens, May 13, 1987