

OPINION

GUEST ESSAY

Police need tech for public safety

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BY RALPH CLARK AND WILLIAM BRATTON

Guest essay

New York City Mayor Eric Adams' appointment of Jessica Tisch as police commissioner demonstrates a clear understanding that police must embrace technology as a core pillar of law enforcement. Formerly the NYPD's deputy commissioner for information technology, Tisch understands the importance of utilizing technology to help the NYPD protect nearly 8.3 million New Yorkers. It's the same understanding exhibited by police departments on Long Island, which are increasingly embracing technology as a crime-fighting tool.

This is critical because public safety is at a crossroads. The NYPD and departments on Long Island and nationwide face limited budgets, staff shortages, accountability demands, and, in some cases, efforts to defund their resources. At the same time, disorder is persistent — as demonstrated by recent attacks across the city's subway system — and criminals are finding new means to perpetrate crimes. Yesterday's approaches will not solve today's challenges.

Leveraging cutting-edge tools can help solve crimes, lock up bad guys, and build trust. Investing in technology is no longer optional; it is essential. Having dedicated our lives to improving public safety, we know that when tested and proven technologies are correctly incorporated into policing, meaningful outcomes follow.

Technology allows police departments to proactively use data to identify crime trends and effectively allocate resources. By doing so, police can respond to high-risk areas before violence escalates.

Take gunshot detection technology. These systems immediately alert officers to gunfire, reducing response times and helping first responders intervene before further harm occurs. Every moment saved is a chance to save a life.

Suffolk County District Attorney Ray Tierney was instrumental in deploying ShotSpotter as part of "a coordinated information driven approach to stopping gun violence," as he said. Today, ShotSpotter covers 22 square miles of Suffolk, equipping first responders with a critical public safety tool.

The ability to "get immediate eyes on the scene" was cited by Hempstead Village police in announcing that they will be using a drone to assist officers with real-time intelligence. License plate readers, which alert police to wanted vehicles, are being used by many Long Island departments.

Tools like real-time crime mapping and situational awareness protect officers by giving critical details before they arrive on scene.

Technology can also help foster trust between police and communities by facilitating transparency. Bodycams are a prime example. So, too, are crime analytics platforms, which provide community-facing dashboards, affording residents visibility into the data driving police decisions. These and other tools signal that departments are committed to fairness and open communication.

As criminals employ more sophisticated tools, policing requires modern tools to respond. Technologies like AI-driven analysis and digital forensics help departments counter high-tech criminal operations. Without these resources, departments risk falling behind, leaving residents vulnerable.

Automated programs that digitize rote administrative tasks streamline workflows and free up officers to spend more time on the streets. In Suffolk, Tierney adopted CaseBuilder, a centralized cloud-based investigation management software that helps detectives investigate crimes more efficiently and effectively.

The challenges facing police departments are growing more complex. Technology is not just a solution — it is the foundation for how public safety must evolve. Investing in tools that improve response, safety, accountability, and efficiency is a step New Yorkers deserve.

Communities across the country are looking for leadership and innovation in public safety. We must deliver.

■ **THIS GUEST ESSAY** reflects the views of Ralph Clark, chief executive of SoundThinking, a company that helps law enforcement use technology like ShotSpotter, and former New York City and Boston police commissioner William Bratton, who serves on the SoundThinking board.

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