

## **MURPHY SAYS HE WAS APPALLED BY POLICE GRAFT HE FOUND IN '70**

*By DAVID BURNHAM  
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In an extraordinary private memorandum, Commissioner Patrick V. Murphy has said that when he was appointed Police Commissioner in 1970, he was astonished and appalled by the corruption and lack of discipline he found in the department.

Mr. Murphy, writing last Jan. 12, indicated that at the time of his appointment by Mayor Lindsay he found the department was in some ways almost out of control.

“Corruption and doping off (almost anarchy) were beyond belief even for me,” Mr. Murphy wrote, adding that his More than 20 years as a policeman herb meant he was “not lacking a realistic understanding of the facts of N.Y.P.D. life.”

In a brief explanatory statement issued yesterday by Mr. Murphy after he learned that The New York Times had obtained a copy of his three-page memorandum, he indicated that by “doping off” he was referring to sleeping on the job—known to policemen as “cooping.”

Mr. Murphy's bluntly critical assessment of the department's performance under his predecessor, Howard R. Leary, did not end with his comments about the extent of corruption. The Commissioner said many commanders had revealed to him that they had an “appalling” ignorance about crime conditions in their precincts, that the number of supervisors in relation to patrolmen was “very bad” and that “patrol time was being wasted and poorly directed.”

The memorandum, labeled “Confidential,” initially was sent to only two top officials, Chief Inspector Michael J. Codd and Chief of Patrol Donald F. Cawley. Copies were later distributed to the department's borough and division commanders.

Its objective was to attempt to answer complaints from field commanders that they were being pressured to report less crime than was taking place, and at the same time to encourage them to increase their efforts to combat crime.

The sharply critical judgment on the Police Department and, by extension Mr. Leary, was in marked contrast to the opinion of Mayor Lindsay.

### **‘Stability and Reform’**

At the time of Mr. Leary's sudden resignation in September, 1970, after four and a half years as head of the largest Police Department in the country, Mr. Lindsay wrote that “above all, the stability and reform you have brought to the Police Department are great achievements.”

“Your record,” Mr. Lindsay said, “firmly supports my conviction that Howard Leary is one of the giants in the history of our Police Department.”

A press spokesman for the Mayor said Mr. Lindsay would make no comment on Mr. Murphy's memorandum. Mr. Leary also declined public comment.

Mr. Murphy's memorandum noted that such factors as poverty, unemployment and the condition of the criminal justice system meant that captains could not be held totally accountable for crime in their precincts.

### **Lists His Criticisms**

“But we cannot take the position that we can have no impact,” he wrote. “We damn well can have much more of an impact than we had in October of 1970 when I became Police Commissioner.” He then ticked off his individual judgments, including his comment about corruption.

“Precinct commanders apparently did not consider crime control one of their top priorities,” he wrote. “The ignorance of many of them of their current crime situation in personal conversations with me was appalling.

“Precinct commanders lacked sufficient authority to assign men to plainclothes and combat street crime.”

Mr. Murphy said that “crime analysis was not being used as a tool as it is today by precinct planning sergeants.”

He asserted that patrol time was being wasted and poorly directed. “The greatest waste in the department today continues to be preventive patrol time neither adequately directed nor controlled.”

The Commissioner also said that “supervisory ratios were very bad.” During the year and a half he has headed the department, Mr. Murphy has continually sought to increase the number of supervising sergeants and lieutenants, especially in areas such as enforcement against gambling and narcotics, where the potential for corruption is greatest.

In an apparent effort to soften his criticism of his predecessor, Mr. Murphy issued second statement.

“The dual problems of corruption and cooping,” he declared, “involve defects in organization and attitudes that have developed over generations of police officers and cannot easily be changed. Their solution involves extensive and time-consuming alteration of department structure and of police and public attitudes.

“Despite his efforts to deal with these problems and various changes he introduced, former Police Commissioner Howard Leary was frustrated by some of the forces of resistance to change.”

Last summer, at the time of the release of the interim report of the Commission to Investigate Alleged Police Corruption, the panel's chairman, Whitman Knapp, offered a considerably different assessment of the former commissioner. Mr. Knapp said he had “failed to exercise leadership in the field of corruption.”

### **Source:**

<https://www.nytimes.com/1972/05/17/archives/murphy-says-he-was-appalled-by-police-graft-he-found-in-70-murphy.html>