New York City police continue surveillance and repression under Mayor de Blasio

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Two New York Police Department (NYPD) officials, Commissioner Bill Bratton and deputy commissioner of intelligence John Miller, have recently made clear that surveillance of the population and attacks on the democratic rights of minority youth in particular will continue, despite claims to the contrary by new mayor Bill de Blasio.

Miller told the *New York Daily News* on June 19 that he was "hyper-concerned" that US citizens are being trained by Islamic extremists in Syria and Iraq and would "return to New York City." He added, "if their mindset is to return to America and to engage in terrorist activities, they're likely going to end up in New York anyway."

Miller estimated that more than 100 American-born Muslims are being trained by the extremist Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to carry out operations in Syria and Iraq. He claimed to have information on former New York residents being trained by ISIS, but did not give details. Miller went on to endorse sending military advisors to Iraq, based on the alleged need to deny ISIS any "sanctuary."

Endorsing Miller's efforts to stoke fear over the threat of terrorism, FBI director James Comey said the following day that "Counter-terrorism is the No. 1 priority for us. We are always on that issue. We will continue working with our partners in the joint terrorism taskforce such as NYPD."

Miller's statements reveal that the claims by Mayor Bill de Blasio that he was calling a halt to the unpopular policies of the Bloomberg administration are more style than substance. De Blasio, elected last November, has tried to distance himself from Bloomberg by a number of steps, including the disbanding of the NYPD's Demographics Unit, responsible for monitoring mosques, Muslim student groups, Muslim-owned restaurants and social organizations.

Spying on these groups, however, has continued, "through direct outreach by the NYPD to the communities concerned," according to an NYPD statement released last April. Miller's comments reveal that NYPD surveillance may in fact be expanded, using the recent debacles facing US foreign policy in Iraq and Syria as justification.

De Blasio has also backpedaled on his campaign promise to end the notorious stop-and-frisk policy that was used to racially profile vast numbers of primarily young black and Hispanic men under Bloomberg. The policy, which a court decision last year declared to be an unconstitutional infringement of the US Constitution's Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable search and seizure, was drastically cut back in the last months of Bloomberg's term in office, but the de Blasio administration will be monitoring the effect of the changes in the program.

The announcement of a monitoring period follows Commissioner Bratton's statement a week ago that the NYPD was looking into the possible effect of scaling back stop-and-frisk encounters on crime. "We have a very comprehensive analysis underway to get a sense of it, stop, question, and frisk, the decline in it, is having any impact on overall crime," the commissioner declared.

In the first quarter of 2014, the NYPD stopped 14,261 people, a huge drop from the figure of 191,588 in the first quarter of last year. According to the NYPD, overall crime has decreased by 2.5 percent, but shootings have increased by 11.2 percent this year.

Bratton's statements demonstrate that the de Blasio administration will continue the policy of every big business government—whether headed by a Democrat or

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Republican—of tying street crime to policing rather than taking any steps to fight poverty, unemployment and the myriad of social ills besetting the working class. A correlation between the increase in shootings and the decline in stop-and-frisk stops will be used to increase the number of searches and harassment of youth.

The NYPD has frequently said the purpose of the program is to arrest people for gun possession, despite the vast majority of arrests coming from marijuana possession. In 2012, 5,000 arrests were for marijuana while only 729 guns were recovered, according to the New York Civil Liberties Union.

Even as stop-and-frisk has been scaled back, arrests, primarily of black and Hispanic men, for marijuana possession have continued almost unchanged. Between January and March, the NYPD arrested 7,017 people for marijuana possession, just 654 fewer than the same three months last year, according to the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services. Out of those arrested, 86 percent were either black or Hispanic.

The NYPD has also begun a new crackdown on the most impoverished sections of the population, making 511 panhandling arrests between December and June 22, a 260 percent increase from the same six-month period last year. The NYPD also raided a homeless shelter in Manhattan, in May, and stated that it will do so again.

In preparation for more arrests, Bratton could move as many as 400 police officers currently working in desk jobs onto the streets for patrol duties during the summer. The program, known as “Summer All Out,” will last 90 days, a period considerably longer than in past instances of such police reassigments.

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