

A Few minutes with the Boss

By: Joseph Andalina

Violence towards cops

An article I read last October stated that violence across the USA had declined, but not against police. It asks the esoteric question—why? Why, while the nation’s crime rate goes down, are police officers still dying? (At the end of 2011, the number stood at 173 across the USA. That includes all manners of death on the job, including 68 officers shot to death. This resulted in a 13 percent increase, or 20 more officers being killed in 2010.)

Over 20 of the 68 shooting deaths occurred while officers were attempting to make an arrest or had close contact with suspects. That includes officers who were ambushed and never saw it coming.

The think-tankers keep asking why. The IACP (chief’s group) held a conference in Chicago last year and they, too, asked why. They distributed a brochure to fellow chiefs about how they can better protect their officers.

They want cops to be prepared, but not to feel under attack by our citizens. The Justice Department also prints out “tool kits” (the new millennium buzzword) with written out information designed to remind us all how to be safe and handle conflicts in the general public. I have not seen this information. As is common in policing, it’s easier said than done.

But I believe Steve Groeninger of the North Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund hits the nail on the head. He says “Now there appears to be much more anti-authority sentiment.” Could this be a reason why officers are being attacked so regularly?

The US Department of Justice and the IACP don’t know why this is happening and hand out “tool kits.” But Mr. Groeninger knows why and says it. And I say it, too.

While the PR groups in police work “dig deeper in the data,” some of us just say the truth. People don’t like authority and they have less respect for the police. Along with a lot of other factors promulgated by lots of well-meaning leaders, the real answer is glossed over by the lack of respect and dislike of cops coming from a lot of our citizens that we are sworn to protect and to serve.

Much of this stems from the lack of leadership in our profession, and, of course, from some in the press. Gone are the days when your chief and politicians “backed” you over a beef or complaint. Now you have complaints coming in for the most mundane and everyday actions of good cops.

In some jurisdictions, complainants only have to e-mail, call, or in some areas, a web site coordinator will handle your beef for you (for a fee, I guess). Every police action is called into question. Forms alleging all sorts of nonsense are filed in duplicate, accusing cops of all kinds of

real, perceived, or simply made-up infractions. All too often the infractions that caused the police interaction in the first place are forgotten.

At times, leaders will then try to stigmatize cops to their fellow officers to coerce compliance with whatever punishment they think is necessary. Politicians want the hammer down so they can be re-elected, and our once noble grandmaster will go along with this beat down. Some of our leaders have “forgotten the faces of their fathers” as Stephen King might say about those who have lost their honor.

Chiefs want suspects to “say thanks” for ticketing or arresting them. They want no beefs. We all know that just isn’t the case. It’s a tough job and people are not going to say thank you when the ticket you are writing them will cost three Benjamins!

And when a cop does some real or perceived egregious act and it’s captured on film, the loop never stops playing. If it bleeds, it leads, but if it’s a cop in trouble, whether the facts are in or not, that story is always at the top of the news.

Suspects and complaints are always given priority and the officer has to go to his union in order to get fair treatment and to ensure that all his rights have been afforded. It’s redundant. It never stops. The finger-pointing at cops by citizens, the press, and our leadership eventually adds to the dysfunction of the crazies out there. **We** become the symbol of motivation by the weirdoes to harm a cop. We are the problem. The criminals are not going to say thank you when they are apprehended for their behavior.

They are going to strike out and they strike out at us because in their warped, hate-filled driven minds, they can, because respect is lacking, as well as the fear that is necessary in complying with the police.

It used to be that people feared the police. Not the “Jimmy, if you don’t listen to Daddy, the police will come” sort of fear. The fear that if you do the crime, the cops will come and you will go to jail. If you resist, you will get knocked on your ass—of course, using only force necessary to affect the arrest! That sort of fear. The public and the press used to have your back, too. Not anymore.

Leadership can talk all they want about the cops on the street, the economics of the area, the numbers, and the demographics. What are they trying to say, that poor people are more dangerous to law enforcement? Then say it—but they won’t. They can’t, because while poor areas are obviously more dangerous than say a coffee shop in the shopping mall, that didn’t stop a lone gunman from executing four police officers in one a few years back.

No, disrespect, dislike, and hatred comes from within, but it doesn’t help when the public and the press seemingly demonize all of us for the mistakes of a few and our leadership would rather cringe in the corner and wait for the politicians to tell them what to do.

Yes, we need “tool kits” but we also need support. Just because we are a cop doesn’t mean that charges should be dropped for the assailant when they strike us because cops should accept that they could be assaulted. Assault an officer, go to jail—no excuses—no bond.

Bring forth charges and no plea deals. Don’t believe everything people say about us. Most of it just isn’t true. People lie. When cops lie, punishment is forthcoming. If a guy does something bad and the cop responds poorly, why is the offender let off the hook but the officer pays with his job?

Respect for us first comes from within government. It will “bleed” out into the press and the public. Lord knows we have bled enough over the years. It’s time to respect police officers. Only then maybe will the public get it, and the violence stop. Pray that the police death statistic decreases while the public and press respect for us increases in 2012.

Editor’s note: Of course, the one thing that our fine leaders will never say is perhaps one of the reasons for the increase of officers’ deaths is that public safety has been compromised. Police have been laid off to the tune of 10,000 officers this past year. Budget cuts, including equipment and training have put our officers at risk. Craig Floyd of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund says it best: “I’m very troubled that these drastic budget cuts have put our officers at grave risk.” He adds “Our officers are facing a brazen cold-blooded element and fighting a war on terror and we’re giving them less training and equipment they need to do that job safely.”

I say we need more from our leaders than “tool kits” and politicians should be held accountable by our voting strength to increase not only public safety, but *ours* as well.