DAVID ONEK: Welcome to the Criminal Justice Conversations podcast, a coproduction of the Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice and the Berkeley School of Journalism. I’m your host, David Onek. The podcast, recorded in the Berkeley School of Journalism studios, features in-depth interviews with a wide range of criminal justice leaders: law enforcement officials, policymakers, advocates, service providers, academics, and others. The podcast gets behind the sound bites that all too often dominate the public dialogue about criminal justice to have detailed, nuanced conversations about criminal justice policy.

Today’s guest is Bill Bratton, the former Los Angeles Police Chief and former New York Police Commissioner. He is arguably the best-known and most well-respected law enforcement official in the country. Bratton served as Los Angeles Police Chief from 2002 to 2009, and serious crime dropped in each of those years. From 1994 to 1996, Bratton served as New York Police Chief
Commissioner, where he significantly cut crime by developing innovations such as CompStat, now widely used by police departments nationwide. He currently serves as Chairman of Altegrity Risk International, a private international security firm. Bratton is the author of Turnaround: How America’s Top Cop Reversed the Crime Epidemic. He joins us from a New York studio this morning. Bill Bratton, welcome to the program.

BILL BRATTON: It’s great to be with you.

ONEK: I want to talk first about your years as Chief of Police in Los Angeles. During your tenure, crime dropped significantly every single year, and it continues to drop. How were you able to make such a dramatic and sustained impact on crime in Los Angeles?

BRATTON: The good news for America, not just Los Angeles, is that we really have learned how to deal much more effectively with crime after the seventies and eighties, when it seemed to be going out of control, and many people were losing hope. Beginning in the nineties that we began to get it right, and then in the 21st century, building on those successes, we have been getting better all the time. The big risk now for Los Angeles, and, indeed, America, is that there was a significant
dis-investment going on as it relates to our criminal justice systems, prisons, police, probation, parole, all the elements of it. And that’s something to be very concerned about that it’s like a patient who is being treated successfully for a cancer, and all of a sudden you start reducing the radiation and chemotherapy, and the patient starts, as you might expect, not getting better, but once again feeling the effects of that illness.

ONEK: Well, and I want to get to that point about budget cuts in a moment, but first I want to talk about really two of the reasons that have been attributed to your success throughout your career and particularly in L.A. recently. One of those is working with the community, and the second is CompStat. In terms of building relationships with the community, the LAPD, of course, had a very strange relationship with minority communities prior to your arrival. You made rebuilding trust with the community a priority from day one in your tenure.Shortly after you became Chief, you spoke in an African-American church and said, “We need to find a way in this city to regain a trust, to heal the wounds that exist between your police and the community. We need to find a way to build bridges once again.” During your tenure, you spent a lot of time in the community, including having weekly staff meetings at the Home Grill Café,
run by Homeboy Industries, and by the way, Father Boyle of Homeboy Industries will be a guest on this program in the coming months.

BRATTON: A great guy.

ONEK: Yes, he is. I’m looking forward to that conversation. A Harvard study released last year found that 83% of Los Angeles residents said the LAPD was doing a good or excellent job, a truly remarkable number. What is the single most important thing you did as Chief to re-establish trust with the community in Los Angeles?

BRATTON: Well, I’m a community policing enthusiast and practitioner. Community policing in its simplest form is about the concept of partnerships, police and the rest of the criminal justice system working together instead of at odds with each other, partnership with the community. In many American cities, communities were not involved with their police forces. Police did not let them into the tent, if you will. In Los Angeles, it was even worse than that. I don't know if there was ever a trust between the African-American community and the Los Angeles Police Department. And the anger and the hatred boiled over into two of the worst riots that American cities have ever seen.
And the community policing philosophy really requires that police chiefs, police organizations reach out, and I’ve found that that’s worked for me in every one of the police departments I’ve worked in. And the ultimate goal of community policing is prevention of crime, that for the seventies and eighties, American policing was focused on responding to crime. It wasn’t felt that police departments could have much impact on the so-called causes of crime, but in the nineties and into the 21st century in city after city, New York and Los Angeles and Boston, the three I’m most familiar with, using the community policing philosophy and using refocused police resources. I constantly use the term cops count, police matter. The most essential element in community policing is the police, police who are properly staffed, properly resourced, and properly focused and willing to engage in partnerships. So, the single-most significant reason for successes in Los Angeles, not only with reduced crime, but with improved public feelings about their police force, is community policing. And I might point out that that same Harvard poll showed that 66%, more than two-thirds of African-Americans and Latinos also thought that the police were doing a very good job, and that is a figure that the Los Angeles Police Department was quite proud of.

ONEK: Yes. I saw that figure as well, and it was quite
impressive. Let’s turn on, now, to CompStat, an innovation you pioneered in New York, and it’s now used by police departments nationwide. There’s recently been some controversy over CompStat in New York, and we’ll talk about that in a moment, but I want to start by helping our audience understand the basics of CompStat. In your own words, what is CompStat?

BRATTON: When I talked a few moments ago about police and their focus, the focus of police in the nineties in New York, Boston, other cities, began to center on the issue of crime and what to do about it, and before you can deal with the problem, you have to know the extent of the problem, and CompStat was a device that was created in the NYPD during my time as Police Commissioner to focus all levels of the organization on the single issue of crime, that if you wanted to restore peace and tranquility to the streets of New York City, you’re going to have to deal with crime, fear, and disorder. And CompStat has four elements that I think most people would quickly understand. One, timely, accurate intelligence, that you gather up your crime information as quickly as you can. And in New York, that meant back in the nineties, doing it every 24 hours, gathering the information to be analyzed. And now, with the real-time crime center that New York and Los Angeles have, they’re actually able to basically track crime in real-time, very
briefly after it’s occurred. So, timely, accurate intelligence is essential. Secondly, rapidly respond to what that intelligence is telling you. Before a pattern grows from three or four incidents to 30 or 40, identify that pattern or trend. And, this is the third element of CompStat, effective response, effective strategies, what will work to reduce that growing pattern or trend? What will work to stop that crime epidemic? And the last element, the fourth element, is relentless follow-up. Crime will always be with us, and while you may stop a pattern or a trend, while you may significantly, as we have done in the nineties and the 21st century, reduce crime, the idea is that if you don’t continue to pay attention to it, it will come back. And I liken it to a patient that has cancer, that after you think you’ve cured that cancer, you still have exams several times a year to ensure that it’s not coming back again, that you watch for the melanomas coming back again. Timely, accurate intelligence, rapid response, effective tactics, relentless follow-up, focused police, focused policing, and that was a major element. The second element is focus on quality-of-life crimes, the so-called broken windows that Judge Kelling and James Wilson wrote so eloquently about back in the 1980s, which, throughout my 40-year career in policing, I experienced, this idea that people encounter every day things that create fear in their communities, and they’re not necessarily the most serious
crimes, which most people, fortunately, don’t experience. But they do experience the aggressive begging, the prostitution, the graffiti, the drug-dealing. And so in dealing with crime, one of the mistakes American policing made in the seventies and the eighties was they weren’t focusing on quality-of-life, broken windows, at the same time they were attempting to focus on real crime. And even as they’re attempting to focus on real crime or more serious crime, the way they were focusing was after the fact. They were measuring their success on their response to crime, not measuring their success on the crime that was being prevented, which was one of the three cornerstones of community policing, partnership, problem-solving, prevention.

ONEK: Well, speaking of CompStat again, in San Francisco we’re just bringing the CompStat process to the city. Of course, one of your top assistants in L.A., George Gascon, has recently become the Police Chief in San Francisco, where, as you know, I sit on the Police Commission. And I’ve attended almost every CompStat meeting since it started. We’re very eager to get it started in San Francisco, and there are three things I’ve noticed in addition to what you’ve mentioned that I’d like to get your thoughts on. Three dividends it’s paid right away, and actually, before I say those, let me say, unfortunately, we have some struggles with timely, accurate data in San Francisco.
Even though we’re right in the heart of Silicon Valley, our data systems are very outdated, so we’re working hard to get those up-to-speed. But we’re able to start the CompStat process even though we didn’t have the perfect data, and it’s really done three things right off the bat. First of all, it’s greatly improved communication because innovations in one station are now openly shared with others at the CompStat meeting. Also, the process is public, and it’s really increased the public and media sense of the department’s transparency that they can come once every two weeks and see this open conversation about how the department’s doing. And third, with Chief Gascón being a new chief, it really gives him the opportunity to see who is performing and who isn’t. It really allows the department stars to shine. I was wondering if you could comment on those aspects of CompStat, which we’re really seeing the benefits of right away in San Francisco.

BRATTON: Well, fortunately, in Chief Gascón, you’ve got one of the best police leaders in America today. He’s an extraordinary individual. He was my Director of Operations during four of my years in Los Angeles, so you’re very fortunate in San Francisco that you have him. He eats, breathes, and lives CompStat. He understands its importance. But the three points you raised. In my book Turnaround, I devote a chapter to CompStat, and I
point out that CompStat isn’t just about the counting of the numbers, the focus on crime, that it does many other things. It ensures accountability. It allows a Police Chief in a very large organization such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, 50,000 people in New York, to really get down into the engine room, the bowels of the organization, and see firsthand in these very transparent meetings, and that’s another element of CompStat that George has brought to San Francisco, the transparency. Let the public in. Let the press in. Everybody sharing information, inclusiveness, rather than exclusiveness. CompStat, if implemented correctly, has multiple benefits, and in everything I do in life and in my professional life, or personal life for that matter, I try to get multiple benefits out of any action, and CompStat really does just that.

ONEK: You know, we mentioned that San Francisco has an open process where the public and media are invited. I know in places like New York presently it’s a closed process, and I’m wondering what you see as the pros and cons of each type of CompStat.

BRATTON: Well, each city has to adopt, and each police chief has to adopt a style with which they can be comfortable. My style is inclusiveness, that if I had my way, I’d be basically
selling tickets and popcorn and M&Ms for people to come in and view it, because it really increases their trust in their police force. It increases their respect for how good they are. In CompStat, you certainly don’t discuss some of the hypersensitive cases that you’re working. You’re talking more about general themes and patterns and practices, and in many cities now, including Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco, once you get your technology up, the CompStat information is pumped out to the public even as the police are reviewing it, that on the LAPD website, the same information that’s being looked at from CompStat is up on the website for anybody in the public or the media to review. So, that I abdicate an open style. New York currently does not. That’s really up to their Police Commissioner, their department. [Gus Gowan?], I’m happy to hear, is doing what we did in L.A. I don't think there ever was a CompStat in L.A. that I intended that there weren’t outside police agencies or media or community members at that CompStat.

ONEK: Yes. We even put out press releases in San Francisco to try to encourage the press and the public to come and to remind them of the meetings, and a lot of them have come and have really felt that they learn a lot about the department, and it builds the trust, again, of the public.
BRATTON: It really does build trust that the idea that we have nothing to hide, and this goes to your earlier comment you had about the controversy in New York recently around CompStat. And the unfortunate reporting of that controversy that I gave the impression that there was a cooking of the books going on here, and one of the reasons for that was the fact that it is such a closed process here, and if it had been more open, some of those critiques may not have gained the traction that they did.

ONEK: Let me jump in then and just ask you about that issue --

BRATTON: Oh, sure.

ONEK: -- since I was planning to get there, and I want to give you a chance to address the findings of the recent survey. It was a survey of retired NYPD captains and commanders conducted by two local criminologists, and the researchers reported that over 100 of the officers surveyed reported that pressure to lower crime numbers for CompStat led some supervisors to manipulate their crime data, obviously a very serious charge. It was unclear from the survey what time period the officers were referring to, whether it was during your tenure or after your departure. Regardless, you responded forcefully to the charges in an op-ed piece, and I was wondering if you could tell
us your response to the survey and to the allegations of data manipulation.

BRATTON: Well, first, the survey, paid for by the Captain’s Endowment Association, which has been at great odds with the current commissioner and the commissioners before the current commissioner. So, the survey was paid for by a group that has been basically in great dispute with the current leadership of the department. One of the two researchers is a former captain of the New York City Police Department. The second researcher was a researcher that I let, during my two years as police commissioner in New York, attend every CompStat meeting as part of the openers. So, he understands the process intimately. In New York, it is a tough, tough process. Captains have really put through significant pressure to speak about their knowledge of crime in their precincts. Why is it up? Why is it down? What are they doing about it? What help do they need? It is consciously intended to be tough and to elicit as part of the process who’s good at this, who isn’t, and to put into place and into position in the precincts the best and the brightest who are very good at dealing with crime, and those who might not have those skill sets but who might be skilled in other arenas, move them to those other arenas. But as it is intended to find the best and the brightest in dealing with the issue of
crime, which is the focus of CompStat New York. The rest of the survey itself, I’ve questioned the validity, if you will, of its findings based on the processes used. An anonymous survey, and an anonymous survey, and in that, not one person responding admitted in an anonymous survey to any wrongdoing on their part. Rather, about 100-some-odd, I think 137 of the respondents indicated that they were aware of. How were they aware of it? Did they hear about it? Did they read about it? Was it station house gossip? Were they all talking about the same story? There were several notorious stories that have surfaced over the years that most people would be aware of. So, the study, in the absence of seeing the study, because what was released to the New York Times was only the forward, if you will. The full study, to the best of my knowledge, I don't know if it was shared with anybody yet. So, we were all working with very limited information, and if this report was so complete and thorough, release the whole report. The same thing that’s being, that CompStat is being criticized for, not being open, well, we have a report that was prepared that was also not open. So, I sat on the sidelines for a couple of weeks and watched it go back and forth, but I’m quite proud of CompStat, that it was created during my time in the NYPD. It is the tool in the NYPD and LAPD that made those cities much safer, and it is a system not without fault. All systems have things that can be
improved, but cooking the books? I’m sorry. You’d have to have a huge number of people involved in the cooking of the books to affect the percentage reductions or increases in crime.

ONEK: The other thing you point out is that, you know, for a crime like homicide, there’s really no way to cook the books because there’s the body --

BRATTON: Exactly. We don’t have a police cemetery where we’re hiding the bodies that, homicides, if you have a homicide, 99.9% of the time you’re going to know about it. Stolen cars, another example that are down by a phenomenal amount in New York, and the area that has brought most intensive question, where there is the most latitude to make a decision by a supervisor or reporting officer, is in the area of larcenies. And it oftentimes goes to the value of the loss. The NYPD and the LAPD have extensive auditing systems to ensure that the information being reported to the FBI is accurate to the best of their ability.

ONEK: Points well taken, Bill. Let’s turn back now to the conversation about reduced budgets that we were talking about earlier. In L.A., you were able to increase the police force by approximately 1,000 officers in your time. Now your successor,
Charlie Beck, is just trying to hold the line at current staffing levels as L.A. struggles with a huge budget deficit. It’s got to eat you up to see all the hard work you put into building the department in danger of being rolled back. How can police departments continue to police effectively with reduced budgets?

BRATTON: Well, one of the ways is through marketing. Police chiefs have a very big soapbox to stand on, and one of the things that I saw from a number of my colleagues, including George Gascón, Charlie Beck, they’ve gotten very adept at is point out and embracing the theme that cops count, police matter, that we are an investment. We are not a cost to the public. The investment in public safety is essential. It’s the number one obligation of our form of government. And that investment, particularly in terms of the improved policing that we’re engaging in in the United States, excuse me, in the last 20 years, has paid phenomenal dividends in a quick reference. It has been estimated in several studies that the Rand Corporation reviewed several years ago, and that George Gascon wrote a major report on, that the cost of a homicide, the economic cost of a homicide in the city of Los Angeles, ranges anywhere from $4 million to $11 million per victim, whether that victim is from the affluent area of Brentwood, or from the South
side of the city, where so many of the gang members live. And if we take even the most conservative number, $4 million, well, in the last eight years, Los Angeles Police Department has been out there working with the public and the political leadership of two great mayors, who have really driven the increase in the size of the department and the budgeting of the department. They’ve reduced homicides in that city by almost 400. So if you take that 400 decrease, multiply it by $4 million, the most conservative number, the economic impact benefit to the city of Los Angeles is about $1.6 billion. The police budget, the budget I work with, I think was around $1.3 billion. That’s a pretty good rate of return on the investment. Four hundred fewer crime victims, 500 to 600 fewer people going off to jail for the rest of their lives for those murders, approximately 1,000 families, victim’s as well as defendant’s families, who are not torn apart by the loss of a loved one. I think it’s unfortunate that even with the budget crises that Los Angeles and other cities are facing is that there is this rush in many instances because police oftentimes are the largest budget item in a city’s budget, to cut that investment. I think it’s the absolute wrong thing to do at these times. This is when you want to increase focus on police and their benefit. You want to keep the city safe so that when the economy turns around, jobs will come back, businesses will invest, tourists will come,
parents will send their kids to colleges. You don’t want to risk having the city seen as having an increase in crime, so a parent here in New York decides, I’m not going to let my kid go to USC or UCLA, too dangerous. A company that could basically invest anywhere in the world, well, we’re not going to invest in L.A. We don’t think that our employees are going to be safe. We’re not going to be able to recruit people to work in L.A. That tourists, tourists who can go anywhere in the world are not going to go to a place where they feel like they are going to be endangered. So, I’ve talked about this throughout my career, and many of my colleagues now, Chief Beck, Chief Gascón, and others, are continuing to talk about it, a reasoned argument as politicians and the public who elect the politicians make the decision, where do you want to spend your tax dollars?

ONEK: Bill, everywhere you’ve been you’ve established a real culture of professional development. A remarkable number of your former assistants have become chiefs in other departments over the years, including George Gascón. In San Francisco, we haven’t had this culture in the past. In fact, I’m only aware of one San Francisco officer who is now a chief elsewhere. That would be Susan Manheimer in San Mateo, who just became the first female president of the California Police Chief’s Association.
BRATTON: And she is great. She is great. I know Susan quite well. She is great. She is great.

ONEK: She really is the exception that proves the rule, though, in terms of San Francisco folks becoming chiefs elsewhere, whereas you have really disciples all over the country. How have you been able to groom so many people for leadership positions and establish such a strong professional development culture in the departments you’ve worked in?

BRATTON: Really by working very hard at it. I really do believe that one of the roles of a leader, police chief, is the development of personnel within the organization who can advance within the organization or if they so choose pursue opportunities in other locations. So, I’m quite pleased that among the group I work with in the LAPD, you have Jim McDonnell is now the chief in Long Beach. You have Charlie Beck, now my successor at LAPD. You have George Gascón up in San Francisco. You had Mike Hillman, until recently a deputy chief of the sheriff’s department in Orange County. We have a number of others: James Craig, who’s a chief of police up in Portland, Maine. Many have gone on, not only during my time, but during my predecessor’s time, any number of chiefs came out of L.A. The idea is to, a big city is a phenomenal training academy for
future chiefs of police, because you really in a big city see it all and experience it all. And if you’re given the opportunity to take risks, and that’s one of the things I think I provide to the people that work with me, that I’ll hold them accountable, but I encourage that they take risks. And if they fail, that if they’ve made the effort, if they’ve fought the good fight, they’re not going to be punished. That, unless they’re found to be incompetent or corrupt or just, unfortunately for them, incapable of doing the job they’ve been assigned to. But by and large, they’ve responded, and I’m quite proud of the fact that so many of the people who I’ve had the great privilege of working with who have helped to make me look so good over the years, in fact when they went off on their own, they made themselves look good and the departments that they were privileged to lead.

ONEK: Well, George Gascón is certainly an example of that. He’s a true professional, and it’s a real pleasure to work with him in San Francisco. I have a question, though, about when you came to L.A. Gascón and some of the other leaders of LAPD at the time applied to be L.A.’s chief as internal candidates back in 2002, and you ended up with the job. George is now facing a similar situation in San Francisco, working with insiders who applied for his position. How did you work through that
inherent tension with Gascón and others in L.A. when you arrived as chief?

BRATTON: Well, first off, the fact that they’re finalists in the selection process indicate that they have been determined by others to be the best and the brightest, so in my case, in the LAPD, all of the contenders for the job that interviewed with me, with the exception of John Timoney, who was an outsider, and there was one other former L.A. chief who was a chief in another department, were promoted up. George Gascón, Sharon Papa, Jim McDonnell, all were promoted up to three-star assistant chiefs. Why not use them? I want to use their ambition. And two of the three of them, in fact, have ended up as chiefs of police, Jimmy just recently in Long Beach, and Gascón in Mesa, now San Francisco, and indeed Charlie Beck that, who was one of the contenders within the department most recently. So, I’m very comfortable having people who want my job. I’m very comfortable that I can hold it till I’m ready to leave, and then they’re welcome to it, and I want them hungry. I was hungry to get ahead, and same thing in the NYPD that I brought a lot of people up in the ranks. Most of my three- and four-star chiefs in the NYPD were formerly one-star chiefs who I double- and triple-promoted. And you go where the talent is, and you have to have confidence that you can lead them and confidence that
they’ll be not necessarily loyal to you as the individual, but you want them loyal to the organization and responsive to the public. And that if they have that loyalty, if they have that responsiveness, they’re going to do a good job.

ONEK: Let me ask you about the future of policing. You’ve led many innovations in policing over the past several decades, CompStat and community policing among them. The big new idea you’re pushing is predictive policing. The Department of Justice just held its first predictive policing conference several months ago, and you were the keynote speaker. Can you define what you mean by predictive policing?

BRATTON: Let me do it in a sort of evolutionary way, that when I came into policing in 1970, we were embracing the professional model of policing, which was emphasizing improving our investigative skills, forensic skills, our rapid response, our responsive skills to crime, because it wasn’t believed by society or by police chiefs that there was much police could do about the so-called causes of crime, that those were societal problems. In the nineties, community policing, the next evolution took hold, the belief that we in fact could do something about the causes of crime, which is primarily human behavior, and that’s what we the police do. We control human
behavior within the Constitution and the law. And community policing really proved to be a great philosophy and great in practice and operation, partnership, problem-solving, prevention. After 9/11 we moved into the information or intelligence-led period. Actually, information period, which then led to intelligence. With information you make intelligence. The idea that we were clearly understanding based on experiences in the nineties, that you needed to work with information to make informed decisions, and it was going to become even more critical fighting crime or terrorism. You needed accurate information, the CompStat system, if you will. Well, the sophistication of our gathering of intelligence and our analysis of it has become so sophisticated that we are able to actually begin moving into what I describe the next phase as predicted policing, that we can in many instances, like a doctor who examines you when they do the physical, is predicting based on your past history, your gene pool, your generics, that certain things are going on in your body that we can interfere with, that we can intervene. Similarly in policing, we can do that, and let me give you two quick examples. In Los Angeles, we know that gangs celebrate their anniversary day, their creation day. The gang every year usually gather together, and in those gatherings, they tend to act up on their own, and they get acted upon by other gangs who know they’re going to be in a
certain location, and the idea they make easy targets on that particular day. We’re able to assign large numbers of police officers to cover those events to prevent the violence that in our absence we could almost guarantee or predict would occur. A more recent example that most people could understand, USA Today several months ago reported on a small department that’s just recently acquired a new computer mapping system, and on that mapping system one morning they started receiving a lot of calls from the public about broken windows, vandalized windows. And as they were putting those calls up on the map, it became quite apparent that there were a number of individuals moving through the town, smashing these windows. Looking at the map and the direction the police basically positioned themselves where they were predicting these individuals, turned out to be several young me, were going and basically interrupted that crime spree real-time. Those are two basic forms of predicted policing. Sounds a little far-fetched, but believe me, in the new world that I’m in, which is all about the gathering of information and making intelligence out of it in the private sector to predict which employees are likely to succeed if you hire them, to predict for a company if this investment you’re making is a good investment, to predict for a company that’s seeking to hire a person by something else to do due diligence to predict with some degree of certainty that their investment is going to pay
off. Well, that’s the direction policing’s going, and it’s good news for all of us.

ONEK: What would you say to civil liberties concerns that your predicting whether someone will commit a crime is very different than if they actually commit the crime or not.

BRATTON: Those concerns are legitimate. They need to be addressed, and that’s the whole concept that I support about transparency, that we’re not doing any of this stuff in a vacuum, that the whole idea of encouraging the National Institute of Justice to sponsor these predictive policing conferences, and right now there’s half a dozen American cities that are experimenting with it, you don’t do this in secret. The idea is that you use lawful methods. You ensure that groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union are invited to the table to talk about it, critique it. But if it’s within the law, if it’s within the power and the purview of the police, the police would be doing a disservice to the public not to use those capabilities. What we have to commit to is always doing it constitutionally, always doing it compassionately, and always doing it consistently, so that we’re not doing it different in one neighborhood from another neighborhood, to one community versus another community. So, the civil libertarians, that they
have a responsibility to advance their concerns, and police have a responsibility to address them.

ONEK: Though we just have a couple minutes left, I was wondering if you would tell us a little bit about your new company, Altegrity, and your position there.

BRATTON: Sure. Happy to. I’m Chairman of a company called Altegrity Risk International. Altegrity Risk International is one of four companies under the umbrella of Altegrity, which is based here in New York. The company is an information services entity that uses very sophisticated technology to very quickly gather information, analyze it, and get to our customers in a quicker, cheaper, faster way information and analysis that they’re looking for. And very specifically, one of our companies, USIS, does the majority of the federal government security clearances for secret, top-secret investigations. Another company is either the second or third largest pre-employment screening company in the country. That’s Hire Right, based in Irvine, California. The third company, Explore, works very heavily with the insurance industry providing them information on drivers. We have over 40 million drivers’ records in our computer files. And my company, Altegrity Risk International, we are doing a lot of sophisticated,
investigative, due diligence decision analysis type of work. We’re also hoping we have a division that will be bidding on State Department, Department of Defense, and criminal justice contracts that will come out of the federal government to help these emerging post-conflict nations and nations that are still in conflict, like Afghanistan and Iraq, to provide criminal justice systems that are modeled after American success stories. And it is hoped that certainly with the success that I’ve had over these last 40 years in American policing, that some of that will be a differentiator in taking these systems overseas and helping these emerging nations become stable, democratic countries that benefit the United States, because then they don’t become jump-off points for narco trafficking, human slavery, cyber crime. The more stable these countries are, the less availability that they provide for criminal elements who are trying to direct their activities into the United States. So, it’s a win-win all around.

ONEK: It sounds like you’ll be staying very busy. One final question. What is the one thing about big city policing that you want to make sure the general public understands?

BRATTON: How essential it is. Cops count, police matter. You cannot have a safe city. I would argue that we even have impact
on the economy. For many years we had it backwards. We thought that the economy controlled crime. As we’ve seen in this most recent recession, the worst since the 1930s, America is not seeing a resurgence of crime. It is not seeing a return to the bad old days, and a significant reason for that is that, I believe, police, particularly in the larger cities, have become much more effective at what we do, and we’re continuing to get even more effective. And that’s why I’m very concerned about a trend toward disinvesting in public safety, disinvesting in police, which seems to be underway certainly, Los Angeles a case in point, here in New York to a more limited extent, because the idea is you don’t want to basically take away the medicine that has been working and increasingly is showing promise to be able to work even more effectively.

ONEK: Bill Bratton, thanks so much for joining us.

BRATTON: Great to be with you.

ONEK: Please tune in next week, when we’ll be joined by Sunny Schwartz, author of Dreams from the Monster Factory: A Tale of Prison, Redemption, and One Woman’s Fight to Restore Justice for All. Thank you for listening to the Criminal Justice Conversations podcast. You can find this episode
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Thanks for listening.