

From: Sam Katz
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Felony assaults on cops spiked last year

Union officials blame progressive lawmakers



The president of the Detectives' Endowment Association, Paul DiGiacomo, spoke at DEA headquarters last month about an increase of assaults on officers. To his left is Lou Turco, the president of the Lieutenants Benevolent Association. Behind him is the Staten Island borough president, Vito Fossella. DiGiacomo spoke following the unveiling of a memorial wall honoring detectives killed in the line of duty at DEA headquarters. Also pictured are family members of those detectives.

RICHARD KHAVKINE/THE CHIEF

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BY RICHARD KHAVKINE

Felony assaults on police officers spiked in 2023, and union officials are blaming what they say are increasingly liberal criminal-justice laws.

According to the NYPD, 2,235 officers were the victims of felony assaults last year, 18.5 percent more than the 1,885 cops similarly assaulted in 2022, the department said.

“A message has been sent since 2019 by many of our elected officials in the City Council in Albany and the Senate and the assembly that it's OK to assault the cop. It's OK to disrespect the cop. It's OK to do whatever you want to law enforcement,” the president of the Detectives Endowment Association, Paul DiGiacomo, said at the union's Tribeca headquarters following a Dec. 15 unveiling of a memorial wall honoring detectives killed in the line of duty. “We go out there every day, we put our lives on the line, and there's pure anarchy out there.... I blame that all on our politicians that created these laws that are ineffective and embolden the criminal element. You have to reverse these laws and make law and order a priority.”

The president of the Lieutenants Benevolent Association, Lou Turco, said that while police will often find and arrest those who assault cops, it's the little that happens next that's problematic.

“When you assault an officer, the New York City detectives, who are the best in the world, will find you. They will bring you to justice. That's where it gets lost. What does justice look like after they bring him to the court system? It gets lost,” he said at the DEA event.

He noted that one of his lieutenants was injured after being jumped by several persons when he tried to break up a fight on a subway train in November.

Lieutenant Gypsy Pichardo of Transit District 3, responding to a fight on a northbound 1 train at the 238th Street station in the Kingsbridge neighborhood of the Bronx on Nov. 11 was jumped and stomped on by at least two of several people who had been brawling. Pichardo took eight stitches above his eye to close a cut and suffered other injuries. According to the Bronx District Attorney's office, he still had trouble walking five weeks after the incident.

Two Westchester men, both 24, were arraigned Dec. 19 on numerous charges, including first-degree assault, assault on a police officer and second-degree gang assault, in connection with the incident.

“Luckily, he got out of there without major injuries to himself,” Turco said of Pichardo. “But what happens after that? That's where we're missing this whole discussion. We need to take a deep dive into finding out after detectives bring him to justice, which they did with my lieutenant, what happens with these individuals? And just think about this for a second.

The two men, Brian Innocent, of New Rochelle, and Marquise Webb, of Yonkers, are due back in court on Feb. 27.

The Staten Island borough president, Vito Fossella, said the increase of assaults on officers was “emblematic of ... a total reckless abandonment of doing the right thing and lawlessness.”

Rather than comply with lawful orders, people stopped by police whether on the street or in the subway, resist, too often physically, he said.

“And why do they do it? Because they can get away with it,” Fossella said at the DEA event.

One possible recourse, he said, is to institute no-plea provisions in cases of assaults on police.

“The first thing we need to do is stand united and support our men and women in blue,” he said. “They are the blue line between anarchy and safety. And we need to call upon our legislators and others in positions of power to say enough is enough.”

“It's not like ‘Blue Bloods’”

Speaking after the DEA event, Turco said the increase in assaults on cops is a consequence of a City Council that has little understanding of police work.

“It's not like ‘Blue Bloods,’ ” he said referring to the police procedural. “It's not like these tv shows where everybody's compliant. . . . Resisting arrest is ugly. It's ugly business. Any cop that goes to work, his goal is not to touch anybody. That's the goal of a cop. A good cop doesn't want to touch anybody. You want complete compliance, because once you touch people, you get hurt.”

Discussing crime statistics through the third quarter in early October, NYPD Chief of Crime Control Strategies Michael LiPetri noted that a year-over-year increase in felony assaults through Oct. 1 was being driven in large part by an increase in assaults on cops. “The two categories of the felony assaults that are driving that increase is domestic felony assaults and assaults on police officers,” he said during an Oct. 4 press briefing.

The president of the Police Benevolent Association, Patrick Hendry, at the time blamed the increase on “anti-police activists – many of them on the public payroll,” who he said had “normalized violent resistance against police officers.”

“Charges against criminals who assault cops are frequently downgraded or thrown out, while hard-working cops are having their careers destroyed for using appropriate force to defend themselves or safely make an arrest. Police officers are literally getting beaten up in this environment. It’s another reason that cops are still quitting in droves,” Hendry said.

For the year, felony assaults were up 6.3 percent overall last year compared to 2022.