NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

Bloomberg's Top Cop Knows the Territory at NYPD

New York Mayor-elect Michael Bloomberg is off to a heartening start. Yesterday morning he named Ray Kelly as police commissioner.

It's hard to imagine a better choice for one of the most sensitive and crucial positions in city government. For one thing, Kelly knows the New York Police Department inside and out. A 31-year veteran of the department, he handled the top job under Mayor David Dinkins in the early 1990s.

In his first tour as commissioner, Kelly stressed minority recruitment — something the NYPD still needs — and a style of policing that relied on amicable community relations.

But as he stood before the media yesterday in Bloomberg's transition offices, Kelly also discussed a few refinements to his approach of a decade ago. He promised he would maintain the popular — and successful — battle against quality-of-life crimes that Mayor Rudolph Giuliani began. And he agreed that the Giuliani administration's Compstat program had worked. (It's the much-copied technique that uses computers to track crime trends daily and forces commanders to take swift counter-action).

This is all reassuring. Kelly said explicitly — and correctly — yesterday that he didn't view firm quality-of-life policing and decent community relations as mutually exclusive.

Meanwhile, Kelly is also the right man at One Police Plaza in the post-Sept. 11 world.

With New York City a terrorist target, the NYPD and federal law enforcement agencies must now play against their instincts and share information. As a former U.S. Customs chief and a former head of law enforcement in the Treasury Department, Kelly is uniquely suited to achieving this delicate task. And he is already an expert on the perils of terrorism.

Wish him luck. Kelly again will take the top job as the city's ledgers run a huge deficit. As he noted yesterday, he might need to work out a program to stave off a tidal wave of retirements among cops. And he may need to make more out of less. Fortunately, he knows the territory.

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