

CHICAGOLAND

Chicago nears 500 homicides in 2008

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mer commander of SOS to be head of patrol.

Still, the city is approaching 500 homicides for the year, a number the city has not reached since 2003.

In an interview, Weis acknowledged being disappointed in this year's rise in violence, admitted he made mistakes, but said he has never taken his eye off crime.

"We're certainly not pleased . . . and we're going to do whatever we can to bring those numbers down," Weis said.

Chicago is on track to end the year with a 16 to 17 percent increase in homicides and an overall increase in violent crime of about 3 percent. It's also in a tight race with New York City for the most homicides in the country. By Dec. 14, New York had 492 homicides, the same as Chicago's tally on Friday.

Still, Weis said Chicago's murder total for 2008 will be among the lowest in decades—the fifth lowest since 1965. He called the number 500 an "arbitrary bar" to which the department did not hold itself accountable.

"We didn't fit it as a goal when we ended this year," Weis said. "The goal is zero homicides."

Weis points to the usual suspects in rising crime: gangs, guns and drugs. Deputy Supt. Steve Peterson, the head of investigative services, said the dismantling of larger gangs may have contributed to more violence.

"Perhaps some of the violence has spiked because we've been successful at bringing down some of the leadership of the gangs, and now we've created infighting," he said.

In response, Weis has reorganized the gang units. Previously focused on districts, they now are based on larger areas so officers can respond to gang crimes that cross district lines.

He said he's also working on a "three-phase" approach: working with the community, denying gangs access to communities by aggressively stopping them, and making patrol and gang units work better together.

Weis said he hoped the shuffling of staff and jobs would bring reductions in

crime in the new year.

"2008 was a year of transition, and 2009 is a year of results," he said. "There's no excuse next year for not knowing how your job works."

To deal with the department's image problem, Weis established an Office of Professional Standards to work on officer conduct and training, and brought in an FBI agent to lead it. Weis frequently says his standard for good conduct is that officers don't have to be right all the time, but they must be reasonable in their decision-making. Those who are, will have the department's support, he said.

Weis dumped nearly the entire district command staff within weeks of starting, then shifted commanders as the year wore on, and crime increased. Most recently he promoted Daniel Dugan, who worked as a deputy chief, to head of patrol. Dugan had been a commander of the Special Operations Section in at least part of the mid-2000s, when some wrongdoing is alleged to have taken place.

Weis said Dugan is a hardworking, dedicated leader, one of hundreds of SOS members who continue to work honorably as Chicago police.

"Dan Dugan is a solid leader; he has served this department for 26 years and, since becoming superintendent, I have seen his hard work and dedication to the men and women of this department," Weis said.

Dugan defended his time with SOS, saying only a handful of officers were accused of wrongdoing. He would not say whether he handled the complaints against those officers, citing their ongoing criminal trials.

"I've done a lot of soul searching. Was there something different or better I could do?" Dugan said. "I believe I made the best decisions I could at the time."

Dugan said a previous lack of oversight has been corrected, citing a new performance evaluation system that will "red-flag" officers with numerous complaints of abuse.

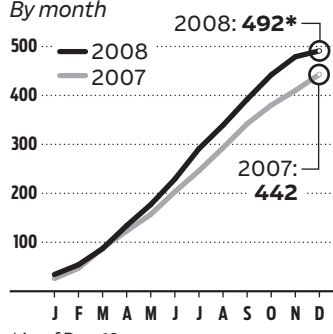
Weis declined to grade his first year in Chicago as the city's highest paid superintendent with a salary of \$300,000.

He said his mistakes in-

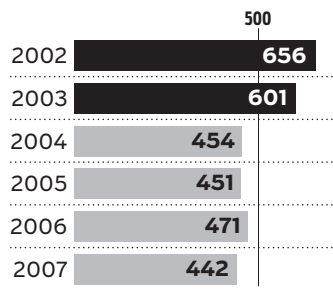
A 5th year under 500?

2008 could be the fifth year in a row that Chicago has fewer than 500 murders.

MURDERS, 2007 VS. 2008

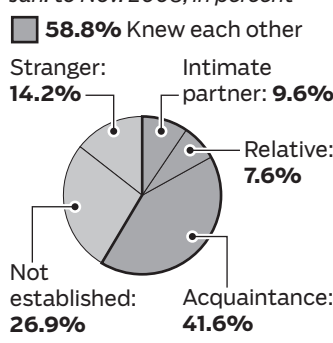


HOMICIDES BY YEAR



MURDER VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

Jan. to Nov. 2008, in percent



SOURCE: Chicago Police Department

City's top cop on the record

Watch police Supt. Jody Weis when he started in January at chicagotribune.com/weistalks

clude not meeting enough police officers and not going out into the community more. He also said he had hoped to start a multicultural advisory committee, but it never got off the ground.

Plans for 2009 include working with the city to have patrol officers answer fewer non-emergency calls so they can focus on crime calls. Weis said he is pushing for more accountability in his new gang-fighting units, such as the Mobile Strike Force.

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'Talk' can help show conspiracy, experts say

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for five years and could form the basis for an indictment in the case. The undercover recordings that capture Blagojevich willing to trade the Senate seat to the highest bidder could be important corroboration for other government evidence developed over the years.

For instance, at the trial of Blagojevich adviser Antoin Rezko, convicted fundraiser Ali Ata testified he discussed a potential appointment to a high-level state position with Blagojevich. At the time, a \$25,000 campaign contribution to Blagojevich from Ata sat on a table in front of the governor, Ata said.

Blagojevich's lawyer, Edward Genson, has already attacked Ata as "a convicted perjurer." The undercover recordings don't touch on the Ata allegations but could still buttress a government portrayal of a governor willing to trade jobs for campaign money, lawyers said.

"The value of those tapes is that they can be used to give more credence to the Ali Ata sequence because you didn't have that on tape," said Patrick Collins, a former federal prosecutor who led the prosecution of Ryan.

Levin and other former prosecutors stressed, however, that it is premature to conclude much at all about the quality of the government's case against Blagojevich.

Many questions

The criminal complaint gives only a glimpse at the strength of the approximately 3,000 minutes of conversations thought to have been recorded by the FBI. It also is too early to know who among the governor's inner circle might cooperate with the investigation and testify against him.

"Typically, you have an insider tell the story," Collins said before ticking off a list of star witnesses who helped



The BNC gets it to you first

Breaking News Center readers got the details on Blagojevich early at chicagotribune.com/bnc

"There is reason for Blagojevich to hope that he has a defense here."

—Patrick Cotter, former federal prosecutor

the government convict Ryan and other recent high-profile defendants.

The announcement last week that longtime Blagojevich confidant Christopher Kelly would plead guilty next month raised questions—despite his lawyer's denials—about whether he would agree to cooperate in the case against the governor. And negotiations with Rezko, who has implicated the governor in wrongdoing since his conviction last June, are on again. The pressure has ratcheted up as well on other players, including John Harris, the governor's chief of staff who was arrested with Blagojevich on Dec. 9.

"The dramatic events of last week can be a wake-up call," Collins said. "Every prosecutor has given 'the train is leaving the station' or some iteration of that speech" to persuade witnesses to cooperate before it is too late. With so much still uncertain, it's difficult to know whether the government has enough to convict the governor, Collins said.

"It's hard to evaluate the strength of the case without knowing who their insiders are who are going to connect the dots for them," he said.

Yet most of those insiders carry their own baggage and are scrambling to protect themselves. That opens op-

portunities for the defense to attack their credibility. But most recently, that strategy didn't work in Rezko's trial despite the beating taken on cross-examination by political insider Stuart Levine, the government's star witness.

The defense can try to sow doubt by highlighting inconsistencies among accounts of government witnesses. The criminal complaint against Blagojevich shows Rezko's recollections differ from other government witnesses on key issues.

Room to fight

Patrick Cotter, another former federal prosecutor, said the undercover tapes go only so far—stopping short of closing any of the circles that Blagojevich was discussing. No deal was consummated for the Senate seat, and no one on the Chicago Tribune editorial board was axed in return for state assistance for Tribune Co., the newspaper's parent company, in its sale of Wrigley Field.

U.S. Atty. Patrick Fitzgerald made it clear that with the covert investigation now public, federal investigators have to interview all the players in the alleged schemes and try to close those loops.

"There is reason for Blagojevich to hope that he has a defense here," Cotter said.

Yet the excerpts from the undercover tapes made public so far appear to be very damaging to Blagojevich and could be tough to overcome for the defense. With those tapes and the right witnesses, "that's an ugly, ugly trial," Cotter said.

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Cell phones save sports nuts

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Officials at ESPN say traffic on its mobile Web site is higher than ever—38 percent more than last year at this time, with weekends 120 percent busier than weekdays. Recognizing the trend, cell phone companies and sports teams have beefed up technology to satisfy the needs of the sports obsessed, offering live game footage, special text-message articles and even programs produced specifically for people watching from their phones.

"We want to reach out to all our fans in as many ways as we can," said Chicago Bears spokesman Scott Hagel.

The Bears have averaged more than 7,000 hits on game days since they launched a mobile Web site in September. "As you're waiting in those long mall lines, doing your Christmas shopping on Sunday, it's an easy way to check in," Hagel said.

The sight of sports lovers transfixed by their cell phone screens is becoming so common some etiquette experts worry people are missing a major point: Cell phone interruptions are rude.

It's the latest in a litany of offensive cell phone habits that people have allowed to become socially acceptable, complained Marianne Rowedimas, whose Buffalo Grove company, the Image Factor, specializes in teaching communication skills.

"If you really, really must check that score, then excuse yourself, go to the restroom and check it there," Rowe-Dimas said.

Not a chance, said Lino Mastrodomenico, 40, of Westmont, who loves his work-issued Nextel phone specifically because it allows him to check game scores without going anywhere. "It's just more convenient," he said.

It's not a strictly male habit, either, argued Mastrodomenico's wife, Lisa. A few weeks ago, she and several other women were at a baby shower and the hostess' offerings did not include having the Bears on TV. So one of

the shower attendees checked the score from her phone—and was greeted with cheers.

As recently as three years ago, people still depended on TV displays at department stores, not their own hand held devices, to check on their teams while at the mall. Since then, cell phone technology has improved, and plans allowing Internet access have dropped in price.

Companies that offer cell phone Internet content have worked hard to improve and promote their offerings, said Lewis Ward, research manager of Wireless Entertainment for International Data Corp., which studies technology trends.

As a result, cell phone Internet checking has become its own American pastime. Though only a small percentage of total cell phone subscribers nationwide used the Internet from their phones three years ago, today it's up to almost 20 percent. Sports fans make up 6 percent of that audience, according to a 2008 consumer survey, Ward said.

It's a great perk for Ben Sheri, a 21-year-old Bears and Bulls fan who works at Sports Authority at Yorktown Mall. When he's scheduled for a shift during an important game, he looks forward to breaks when he can flip open his cell phone, thumb a few buttons and voila—instant updates on touchdowns, yardage, possession and more.

"It just eases the stress," Sheri, 21, of Villa Park said. "For me, it's all day, six to eight times a day, 40 or 50 times a week."

To make the most of the interest, this year Sprint partnered with the National Football League to offer a revamped NFL-Mobile live, which allows customers to download live footage of games to their phones.

ESPN has an entire team dedicated specifically to providing content to mobile phone users. The sports network sends 50 million text messages to cell phone sub-

Etiquette

Yes, checking sports scores by cell phone is a newer phenomenon. But that doesn't mean we should be rude about doing it. Here are some ground rules from a local etiquette expert about staying a superfan without annoying people around us.

■ Do not check while sitting at a dining table, even if you can do it under the table without people noticing.

■ That also means don't leave the phone out on the table where diners can see it lighting up with alerts.

■ Limit your checks to once per hour, when you retreat to a separate area by first saying, "I'm sorry. Could you excuse me? I need to use my phone."

■ If someone is checking scores during conversation, pointing out his faux pas would be rude too. Simply find a way to excuse yourself and locate more engaging conversationalists.

■ Do not reinforce score-checking behavior with comments such as, "What's the score?" or "How about them Bears?"

scribers a month, containing updates about scores, player trades and other sports news. And for a subscription fee users can pick from their choice of special video clips produced specifically for viewing on cell phones.

All the options make it easy for Mark Isoniemi of Darien and other dads to stand in the line waiting to see Santa Claus with his wife and three kids.

"Family is more important than sports," said Isoniemi, who uses his phone to check on his teams, the Cleveland Browns, Cavaliers and Indians. None of his teams were playing that night. But if they were, his wife would understand a quick peek.

"I haven't been bothered by it. It's quick," said his wife, Dorothy Warzocha. "He gets his little update, and then he's fine."

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Religious Services and Information

Catholic-Roman

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700 West Adams ~ 312.648.1021

NIGHT VIGIL ~ IN THE QUIET OF THE SEASON
Monday, Dec. 22 Beginning at 7:30 p.m. in the church

CHRISTMAS EVE MASSES ~ WEDNESDAY, DEC. 24
Family Mass/Christmas Pageant: 3 p.m., church (Fr. Jack Wall)
Candlelight Mass featuring the Choir of Hope: 3 p.m., church hall (Fr. Novak)
Family Mass: 5 p.m., church (Fr. Tom Hurley)
Mass hosted by Foundations Youth Ministry: 5 p.m., church hall (Fr. Pat McGrath)

Midnight Mass with Fr. Tom Hurley in the church and with Fr. Novak in the church hall 10:30 p.m.: Church doors open 11:15 p.m.: Music begins Midnight: Mass begins

CHRISTMAS DAY MASSES ~ THURSDAY, DEC. 25
Mass Schedule: 7, 8, 9:30, 11:15 a.m.

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY ~ SUNDAY, DEC. 28
Mass Schedule: 7, 8, 9:30, 11:15 a.m., 12:45 & 5 p.m.

NEW YEAR'S EVE ~ WEDNESDAY, DEC. 31
Mass Schedule: 5:30 p.m. with Fr. Hurley

NEW YEAR'S DAY FEAST OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF GOD ~ TUESDAY, JAN. 1, 2009
Mass Schedule: 10 a.m. with Fr. Hurley

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Catholic-Roman

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CHRISTMAS EVE-DEC 24
Saturday: 5:00 p.m.
FAMILY CELEBRATION-3:00 PM
CANDLELIGHT EUCHARIST-8:00 PM

CHRISTMAS DAY-DEC 25
Sunday: 10:00 a.m.
HOLY EUCHARIST-10:00 AM

NEW YEAR'S EVE-DEC 31
Sunday: 10:00 a.m.
HOLY EUCHARIST-7:00 PM

EPIPHANY-JAN 4
Sunday: 10:00 a.m.
FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS-8:30 AM AND 11:00 AM
A Blessed and Joyous Christmas to ALL!

Grace Lutheran Northbrook

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5 PM AND 10 PM

CHRISTMAS DAY 9:30AM
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4:00 PM AND 5:30 PM

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Organ Prelude by David Schrader at 11 p.m.
Solemn High Mass With Full Choir at 11:30
Refice: Missa S. Theresiae ab Infante Jesu

DEC. 25: CHRISTMAS DAY AT 10 A.M.
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