

Holtec's Executive Director of Global Security, Former Camden, NJ Police Chief J. Scott Thomson, Becomes a Key Voice on Police Reform

Former Camden, New Jersey Police Chief and current Holtec Executive Director of Global Security, J. Scott Thomson, had a distinguished 27-year career in a city that was once dubbed "America's Most Dangerous City."

The challenges the city of Camden faced during the early parts of Chief Thomson's career rested not only in gun violence, rampant drug dealing, murder and other crimes but a failing police force that had never regained the trust of the community since the race riots of the 1960s and '70s.

Holtec President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Kris Singh recalls this time in the city's history as in 1968, while still a University of Pennsylvania graduate student, the vice presidents of the 300 year old Philadelphia-based Joseph Oates Company relied upon him to run their business operations. Dr. Singh chose to relocate that business into Camden.

Dr. Singh recalls, "As people and businesses fled the city, we went against the tide and made a major investment against conventional wisdom." Dr. Singh would defy advice once again in 2015, selecting a former shipyard location, just a few hundred feet away from Joseph Oates, to locate Holtec's Corporate Engineering Office and Advanced Manufacturing Facility.



*Holtec's Executive Director of Global Security, Former Camden, NJ Police Chief J. Scott Thomson
Interviewed on Good Morning America*

The tragedy with George Floyd has sparked civil unrest across the country. Many people are questioning their trust in the police. Yet, in Camden, NJ the streets remain calm with community relationships strong. This is causing leaders and communities from across the United States to inquire as to Camden's transformation as a model to build stronger community bonds and significantly reduced crime.

Recently, [Good Morning America](#), [MSNBC](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [New York Times](#), [LA Times](#), [NPR](#), [Politico](#), [CNN](#), and [Harvard University](#), as well as numerous other organizations and international media outlets, have highlighted Camden and how a new policing paradigm can lead to positive change that helps the community grow. Thomson has provided bi-partisan testimony on how to innovate community policing to build trust and reduce crime to the last two presidential administration's commissions on law enforcement.

In 2012, Camden had its most violent year with a murder rate that exceeded Honduras. In 2013, every Camden officer was fired, including Thomson.

He then built a county police force with a new policing paradigm to reduce crime by empowering the community rather than militarizing it, building trust, and training officers to master the art of de-escalation while embedding them in communities with walking beats.

The results are extraordinary; what was once a city with a murder rate 18 times the national average, has seen homicides reduced by more than 60%. Violent crime cut in half and Chief Thomson's vision to change the identity of the police from warrior to guardian became the department's culture.

Chief Thomson reflected upon the 2013 inflection point. "People lived in fear and were being victimized at third world country rates. The community disliked those who were supposed to protect them. Children were dying. It was unacceptable, change had to occur and failure wasn't an option."

There were parts of the city where some of the police were not welcome and did not go because it was too dangerous. This needed to change and Chief Thomson's charge to the officers was, "Capture hearts and minds. When I drive down the city streets, I better see little kids riding bicycles in front of their homes and people sitting on their front steps. That would be what progress looks like in bringing the entire community together."

Through the work of Chief Thomson's department along with the collaboration of schools and numerous community groups; dramatic, positive changes have come to Camden. Crime is down and trust is up because of police guardianship.

This successful rehabilitation of the community was a major part of Holtec's decision to relocate its Corporate Engineering Office to the Camden waterfront, as well as bringing an important leader like Chief Thomson to the Holtec team.

Take a few minutes to watch and listen to some of Chief Thomson's recent media interviews:

[Situation Room – Police Reform](#) [CNN] – June 6, 2020

[Former Camden police chief on how to rebuild police](#) [GMA] – June 11, 2020

[How Camden, N.J. Disbanded And Rebuilt Its Police Department](#) [MSNBC] – June 8, 2020

[Former Chief Of Reformed Camden, N.J., Force: Police Need 'Consent Of The People'](#) [NPR] – June 8, 2020

[The City that Really Did Abolish the Police](#) [Politico] – June 12, 2020

["We Want Guardians, Not Warriors": The Transformation of the Camden Police Department](#) [Harvard University] – June 2020

[After George Floyd's Killing, Police Departments Change How They Discipline Officers](#) [Wall Street Journal] – June 6, 2020

[A discussion about how to reform policing](#) [NY Times] – June 2020

[Rethinking Police: How Camden, NJ, Reimagined Its Force](#) [NY Times] – June 14, 2020

[Disband the police? Camden already did that](#) [LA Times] – June 10, 2020