



Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D. C. 20530

February 2, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL
THE ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY GENERAL
HEADS OF DEPARTMENT COMPONENTS
UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS

FROM: THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Merrick Garland", is written over the text "THE ATTORNEY GENERAL".

SUBJECT: VIOLENT CRIME STRATEGY UPDATE

Many of our communities are grappling with an increased incidence of violent crime. Keeping the American people safe is a top priority for the Department of Justice and the focus of the Department's violent crime reduction strategy announced in May 2021. Pursuant to this strategy, each U.S. Attorney's Office has crafted a district-specific violent crime strategy in consultation with federal law enforcement agencies and with our state, local, Tribal, and territorial partners.

The Department's strategy for combating violent crime recognizes that we are most effective in reducing violent crime when we target enforcement efforts and priorities, build community trust and earn legitimacy, and invest in prevention and intervention programs. As part of our efforts, the Department has updated and expanded longstanding, community-specific programs, including the Project Safe Neighborhoods and Public Safety Partnership initiatives. We have also launched new programs, including the five Firearms Trafficking Strike Forces the Department created to help stem the supply of illegally trafficked firearms from source cities and other communities into five key market regions. This program recognizes that violent crime is enabled by firearms that are sold unlawfully to persons intent on using them in crime, trafficked through pipelines that are designed for this purpose, or stolen from lawful owners or dealers.

As the Department continues to implement its national and district-specific violent crime reduction strategies, we will continue to evaluate our approaches and build on what works. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to violent crime; the drivers of violence vary from location to location and can change over time. The many prosecutors' offices, law enforcement agencies, grant-making entities, and other components that make up the Department of Justice are dedicated to working with our law enforcement and community partners to help reduce violent crime, and to regularly reevaluating our anti-violent crime strategies.

Today, I am announcing a number of steps the Department of Justice is taking to redouble our efforts to disrupt violent crime:

- ***Building on Existing Anti-Violent Crime Efforts, and Working with Our Partners:*** The U.S. Attorneys' offices will continue to prioritize combating violent crime, including the gun trafficking offenses that often precede violent criminal acts. At the direction of the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, U.S. Attorneys' offices will identify the resources they will dedicate to implementing their district-specific violent crime reduction strategies within 45 days. Each U.S. Attorney's Office will also hold a dedicated session within 30 days with their state, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement partners to identify any new or additional enforcement efforts to implement prosecution priorities, and to continue their joint efforts to identify and disrupt the drivers of violent crime in their communities. U.S. Attorneys' offices will identify promising practices and lessons learned during this process so that this information can be shared with other U.S. Attorneys' offices. This spring, the Department will hold a national summit on reducing violence and strengthening communities through its Project Safe Neighborhoods and Public Safety Partnership initiatives. In May, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) will bring together police executives from across the country at a national convening on gun violence solutions.
- ***Combating the Use of Privately Made Firearms in Violent Crime:*** The Deputy Attorney General will work with Department components to implement a national "ghost gun" enforcement initiative designed to equip our investigators and prosecutors with the tools and expertise they need to help combat the unlawful use of these firearms in violent crime, and to direct U.S. Attorneys' offices to work closely with law enforcement partners to bring cases designed to address the use of these guns in violent crime. As part of this initiative, each U.S. Attorney's Office and ATF field division across the country will designate specialists to work with colleagues at the Department and with our partners to advance this work.
- ***Cracking Down on Illegal Gun Pipelines by Enhancing Gun Trafficking Strike Forces:*** The Justice Department will increase the federal prosecutorial resources available to the firearms trafficking strike forces that the Department formed in July to advance our efforts to shut down the pipelines that feed crime guns into five key market areas.

Subject: Violent Crime Strategy Update

- ***Pursuing Unlawful Gun Dealing that Puts Firearms in the Wrong Hands:*** The Deputy Attorney General will direct U.S. Attorneys' offices to take steps to prioritize federal prosecution of those who illegally sell or transfer firearms that are used in violent crimes, including unlicensed dealers who sell guns to criminals without the required background checks.

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Beyond these efforts, I encourage you to continue examining what other steps the Department can take to build on our strategies, and continue to innovate alongside our partners at the state, local, Tribal, territorial, and community levels. Thank you for all you do each day to advance the Department's mission and to help keep the American people safe.