

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT: VIOLENT CRIME REDUCTION EFFORTS

Prioritize Combating Violent Crime

The Department of Justice is steadfastly committed to keeping the American people safe. Every day, federal agents and investigators, federal prosecutors, criminal justice experts, and grant managers at the Department work closely with their partners in communities and with state, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement entities to prevent, disrupt, and prosecute violent crime.

In May 2021, the Department launched a [comprehensive violent crime reduction strategy](#) to protect American communities from the increase in violent crimes—including the gun violence that is often at its core. Last year, working with law enforcement and community partners, U.S. Attorneys' offices updated their violent crime reduction strategies under the Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative to focus on the most significant drivers of violent crime in their jurisdictions and reflect the principles of the Department's 2021 comprehensive strategy.

The Department's strategy is designed to address violent crime from all angles. It includes targeted enforcement, data-driven approaches, and programming that reach every aspect of the problem, from the earliest prevention strategies and violence interruption approaches to post-conviction reentry services. The strategy recognizes that we are most successful when we work closely with state, local, Tribal, and territorial counterparts—and when we serve as a force multiplier for their frontline efforts, including with critical grant funding.

The daily meeting of the New York Gun Violence Strategic Partnership, which President Biden and Attorney General Garland will attend today, is one example of these principles at work and of the types of cross-jurisdictional and interagency efforts that have helped in our efforts to fight violent crime and gun trafficking.

The Department highly values our partnership with state, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement and will make every effort to ensure justice is done when a law enforcement officer is the victim of gun violence. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) supports the investigations of all shootings of police officers across the country by conducting urgent traces of the firearms used in these shootings and analyzing crucial ballistic evidence through the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) system. In January of this year alone, 25 law enforcement officers were shot—including four officers who died as a result, two of whom were dedicated young NYPD officers responding to a domestic dispute call. These tragedies remind us of the commitment and sacrifice of all law enforcement professionals, to whom we owe a profound debt of gratitude.

The tireless work of Department law enforcement agents, investigators, analysts, and prosecutors, in collaboration with our state, local, Tribal, and territorial partners, yielded significant results in 2021. The Department's enforcement agents seized more than 10,000 firearms and 250 tons of narcotics; arrested more than 84,000 fugitives, including over 6,000 homicide suspects; and captured almost \$1 billion from illicit drug proceeds. ATF's National Tracing Center traced more than half a million guns recovered by law enforcement, and its NIBIN system generated more than 150,000 leads to assist law enforcement in identifying, investigating, and prosecuting those who commit violent crimes and threaten the safety of our communities.

In the next phase of implementing its violent crime reduction strategy, the Department is building on what works—sharpening its focus in key areas, and further expanding multi-jurisdictional cooperative efforts to combat violent crime.

- **Today, the Attorney General is directing all 94 U.S. Attorneys' offices across the country to take the following steps to continue to prioritize combating violent crime, including the gun trafficking offenses that often precede violent criminal acts:**
 - **U.S. Attorneys' offices will prioritize resourcing their enhanced district-specific violent crime strategies developed in response to the 2021 comprehensive strategy.** To ensure that these efforts are appropriately supported, U.S. Attorneys' offices will identify within 45 days which resources (personnel, technical, cross-jurisdictional, and interagency) they are dedicating to implementing their strategies.
 - **Each U.S. Attorney's Office will further sharpen the enforcement component of its district-specific violent crime reduction strategy** by holding, within the next 30 days, dedicated sessions with their law enforcement partners to identify any new or additional enforcement efforts to implement prosecution priorities. U.S. Attorneys will identify within 45 days any adjustments to their strategies as a result of these convenings, including identifying promising practices that can be shared with other offices.
 - **U.S. Attorneys' offices will continue to focus on strategies to prevent, deter, and prosecute gun crimes that give rise to violence,** including as described below with respect to privately made firearms and unlawful firearms trafficking.
- **ATF will bring together police executives from across the country to collaborate on gun violence solutions at a national convening in May.** This convening will highlight ATF's Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC) resources; discuss collaborations that may be replicated, such as the New York Gun Violence Strategic Partnership; share best practices for implementing and sustaining these approaches; and focus on strategies for addressing the increasing number of ghost guns used in crimes.
- **Today, the Department is announcing the launch of a national drug-related violence reduction initiative designed to reduce the rates of violence and overdose deaths in communities.** This evidence-based, targeted enforcement strategy will leverage the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA's) partnerships with other federal, state, local, and Tribal law enforcement agencies. In its first phase, this initiative will involve intelligence-driven task force approaches in 33 locations across 23 states, selected based on violence and overdose rates. The Department will also establish pilot programs for intelligence analysts at DEA and U.S. Attorneys' offices to share information about the most violent drug traffickers in each district.
- **The President's fiscal year 2022 budget request seeks \$9.4 billion for violent crime, gun violence, and police, an 8.9 percent increase over fiscal year 2021.** This includes an additional \$45 million for ATF, which will support doubling ATF's capacity to investigate thefts from federally licensed firearms dealers, and funding for the NIBIN program; an additional \$48 million for the FBI; and an additional \$58 million for the DEA and the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force. This request also includes more than \$1 billion in federal grant funding for communities and police to address violent crime.
- **The Department is announcing plans to mobilize its Project Safe Neighborhoods and Public Safety Partnership initiatives to support the nation's local leaders in addressing violent crime.** In the spring of 2022, the Department will hold a National Summit to Reduce Violence and Strengthen Communities for U.S. Attorneys, local leaders, and community

justice stakeholders. This summit will bring together multidisciplinary teams of enforcement and prevention specialists, including community violence intervention practitioners, researchers, community groups, and others, to exchange information and promising strategies to reduce violent crime.

Launch a National Ghost Gun Enforcement Initiative

Privately made firearms (PMFs), known as ghost guns, are a rapidly growing contributor to violent crime. From January 1, 2016, through December 31, 2020, there were approximately 23,906 suspected PMFs reported to ATF as having been recovered by law enforcement, including in connection with 325 homicides or attempted homicides. The trendline is troubling: in 2016, local law enforcement reported to ATF 1,750 suspected PMFs; by 2020, that number had grown to 8,712, an increase of over 400 percent.

- **Today, the Department is announcing the launch of a national ghost gun enforcement initiative designed to prevent these unserialized firearms from being used to commit crimes, including by prioritizing bringing federal charges against criminal use of these weapons.**
 - **As part of this initiative, the Department will train a national cadre of prosecutors on enforcement issues specific to the use of ghost guns in crimes.** These specialists will serve as a resource in every district across the country.
 - **The Department will disseminate a set of materials designed specifically to assist investigators and prosecutors** in bringing cases against those who use ghost guns to commit crimes.
 - **ATF will designate a ghost gun coordinator** in each ATF field division to serve as a resource for federal, state, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement officers and prosecutors on questions involving unmarked firearms used in crime.
- **The Department will soon finalize a rule that will help curb the proliferation of ghost guns.** Last year, the Department announced that it would publish a proposed rule to help curb the proliferation of untraceable guns. The [proposed rule](#) was published 30 days later and is a priority regulation at the Department.

Crack Down on Illegal Firearms Trafficking, Including the “Iron Pipeline” and Other Illegal Gun Pipelines

A core part of the Department’s violent crime strategy is cracking down on illegal gun trafficking and sales that put firearms into the hands of violent criminals.

To take action to crack down on illegal gun pipelines, in July, the Department [launched](#) five cross-jurisdictional strike forces to help reduce gun violence by disrupting illegal firearms trafficking in key trafficking corridors across the country. These strike forces have focused on shutting down illegal gun trafficking that travels from source cities, through other communities, and into five key market regions: New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area/Sacramento region, and Washington, D.C.

The strike force in New York leverages data and analysis from ATF’s CGIC, which uses information from NIBIN, firearms tracing, and more than a dozen gun incident data sets from NYPD to identify the most prolific drivers of violent gun crime and their sources of firearms. Last year, the New York CGIC locally disseminated 100 leads on firearms trafficking and referred an additional 49 leads to

other ATF field divisions for action. This model is replicated across the country: ATF operates 25 core CGICs—one in each of its field divisions—and supports an additional 42 local and regional CGICs established jointly with local and state partners to expand collaboration and access to ATF's unique resources. The Department is focusing on pursuing illegal gun trafficking that puts guns in the wrong hands—whether it be through street dealing or other unlicensed dealing to those who use the firearms to commit violent crimes. Licensed firearms dealers are often our first line of defense against gun crime and a source of critical enforcement information. But for those dealers who willfully break the law and put public safety at risk by violating certain ATF requirements, ATF will seek to revoke their licenses pursuant to its zero-tolerance approach, absent exceptional circumstances.

The Department is taking the following steps to enhance enforcement against unlawful firearms trafficking:

- **The Department announced a commitment to expand federal prosecutorial resources available to its gun trafficking strike forces to help further efforts to shut down the pipelines (including the “iron pipeline” on the East Coast) that feed crime guns into these five key market areas.** If enacted, the President's fiscal year 2022 budget would provide the Department critical new attorney, agent, investigator, and Deputy U.S. Marshal resources nationwide, which will enable the Department to realign additional resources to violent crime.
- **Today, the Attorney General directed U.S. Attorneys to prioritize federal prosecutions of those who criminally sell or transfer firearms that are used in violent crimes, including unlicensed dealers who sell guns to criminals without the required background checks.** Enhanced coordination with state, local, Tribal, and territorial partners will be an essential component of these efforts. We must go after not just those who commit violent crimes, particularly the most violent offenders, but also those who seek to provide firearms to those who plan to use them to commit violent crimes.

In addition, the Department will implement the following actions to enhance outreach and coordination with licensed firearms dealers, who can help keep firearms out of the wrong hands:

- **The Department will issue a new policy explaining how responsible conduct by federally licensed firearms dealers may play a role in its related enforcement decisions**—rewarding self-reporting of noncompliance and other proactive behavior that helps to prevent tragedy.
- **The ATF is announcing a new initiative to enhance communication with federal firearms licensees (FFLs).** When a firearm sold by a federal licensed dealer in a multiple firearm sale is shortly thereafter recovered and traced as part of an investigation involving a violent offense such as a homicide or assault, ATF will provide specific notice to the selling dealer that the firearm was used in a violent crime.
- **The President's fiscal year 2022 budget, if enacted, would increase the number of ATF industry operations investigators** assigned to conduct inspections, identify security vulnerabilities, and respond to thefts at federally licensed firearms dealers. ATF has prioritized investigation of FFL burglaries and robberies because every firearm stolen from FFLs poses a threat to community safety as well as to our law enforcement partners.