



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

March 22, 2011

MEMORANDUM TO ALL UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS

CC: DIRECTOR, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL, CRIMINAL DIVISION
ADMINISTRATOR, DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION
DIRECTOR, U.S. MARSHALS SERVICE
ACTING DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, FIREARMS &
EXPLOSIVES

FROM:  The Attorney General

SUBJECT: Law Enforcement Officer Safety Initiative

Too many dedicated law enforcement officers die senselessly each year while bravely confronting violent criminals and gangs. In recent months, we have seen a dramatic rise in the number of officers killed in the line of duty. After a two-year decline in law enforcement fatalities, officer deaths in the line of duty spiked last year, making 2010 one of the deadliest years on record for law enforcement in nearly two decades. Unfortunately, this year we are on track to exceed last year's devastating numbers. Since the beginning of this year, 27 law enforcement officers have been killed either by firearms or felonious assaults, including Deputy U.S. Marshal Derek Hotsinpillar in West Virginia, Deputy U.S. Marshal John Perry in Missouri and ICE Special Agent Jaime Zapata in Mexico. This is an increase of more than 13% in fatalities compared to this same point in time in 2010, when 20 officers were killed by firearms or felonious assaults. These statistics do not reflect the number of federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement officers who have been assaulted and injured during this same time, but survived the attack.

These numbers concern me, as they should all Americans. We rely on our law enforcement officers to protect our lives and property and we must do all that we can to make sure they are protected while on duty.

To that end, today I met with state and local law enforcement officers to discuss ways that we may work together to reverse the troubling trend of increased violence against law enforcement officers. I am also launching a Law Enforcement Officer Safety Initiative.

Every day, your leadership plays a critical role in efforts by Federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement to reduce violent crime in your district. That same leadership will be essential to our efforts to improve officer safety. You are in a unique position to ensure that your Federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement partners are aware of available resources for improving officer safety and that those agencies have taken appropriate measures to ensure that

their agents and officers are well-prepared for the life-threatening situations they confront on a daily basis.

Officer Safety Initiative

I am directing each United States Attorney, within 90 days, to convene a meeting among the Federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies and prosecutors in the district, focused on officer safety. At those meetings, the United States Attorney should at a minimum do the following:

- 1. Ask all local law enforcement officers and prosecutors present to work toward identifying the “worst of the worst” – offenders with criminal histories who cycle in and out of local jails and state prisons – and discuss whether any of these repeat offenders may be prosecuted under Federal law for crimes that make an offender eligible for a stiffer sentence.** At today’s meeting with state and local law enforcement officers, they emphasized how Federal prosecution often serves as an effective deterrent against violent crime. I ask that you schedule these meetings with local prosecutors regularly and frequently. Many U.S. Attorneys already conduct such meetings, a best practice that we encourage you to continue.
- 2. Ensure that our state, local, and tribal law enforcement partners are fully informed about the resources that the Department makes available to help protect officers.** The Department has developed a number of programs to help our state, local, and tribal law enforcement partners protect their officers. These include:
 - VALOR – Preventing Violence Against Law Enforcement and Ensuring Officer Resilience and Survivability, which is OJP’s Bureau of Justice Assistance’s national training initiative to improve the safety of our officers. As part of the VALOR Initiative, a new officer safety website has been established on the secure servers of the Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS). This site has been designed to serve as a secure “one stop shop” for law enforcement to access all types of officer safety-related information, including awareness materials, videos, information on armed and dangerous subjects, information on concealment methods, and a training calendar.
 - RISSafe Officer Safety Event Deconfliction System, which OJP’s Bureau of Justice Assistance funded to share information on planned law enforcement events – such as raids, controlled buy operations, surveillance, and warrant service actions – to identify and alert affected agencies and officers of potential conflicts on a 24/7 basis. RISS Center field representatives are available to provide briefings on RISSafe to law enforcement leaders in each district as requested. More information is available through the secure RISS network or via www.riss.net
 - Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP), which provides funding to law enforcement agencies that is then used to reimburse agencies for a portion of the costs to purchase new vests that meet program criteria. Funding for bullet-resistant vests

will soon become available for FY 2011. In FY 2011, I have directed that agencies receiving funding through BVP must have a written mandatory wear policy in effect for uniformed officers. Since 1999, over 13,000 jurisdictions have participated in the BVP Program, with \$277 million in federal funds committed to support the purchase of an estimated 800,000 vests. This year alone vests purchased using BVP funds have saved the lives of six law enforcement officers.

- I have directed OJP's Bureau of Justice Assistance to develop within the next 60 days a law enforcement officer safety "toolkit" that can be used by you and state, local, and tribal law enforcement leaders to learn more about the resources that have been made available to promote officer safety, including training, deconfliction services, funding, and other information resources.

- 3. Ensure that all Federal task forces are making effective use of event deconfliction systems.** In addition to the case and target deconfliction that Federal task forces currently use, all Federally-supported task forces should utilize event deconfliction services funded by the Department through the Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS). We should encourage state, local and tribal officers not affiliated with Federal task forces to routinely utilize an event deconfliction system, such as RISSafe or HIDTA Intel Centers, for their operations. The RISSafe database was established in 2008 and has already deconflicted over 300,000 Federal, state, and local law enforcement events.
- 4. Request that the Special Agent in Charge for each agency in the district review the agency's own operational security plans and training procedures to ensure that they are adequate and up-to-date.**

The United States Attorney should report to EOUSA on the results of the officer safety meeting and, within 45 days, should report to EOUSA about each SAC's operational security review. EOUSA will provide a template in order to expedite the filing of this report. Because enforcement of existing laws is an important part of making safe our communities and the law enforcement officers who patrol them, in the coming weeks, I also will be calling on each of you to accelerate your efforts under Project Safe Neighborhoods to review and modernize your district's violent crime strategy.

Additionally, I ask that you use your position as the Federal government's chief law enforcement officer in your district to communicate in appropriate circumstances to the judges in your district that assaults and attempted assaults on law enforcement officers are serious offenses that deserve the most serious penalties available under Federal, state and local statutes.

I know you share my great concern for the safety and security of our communities and the law enforcement officers who serve and protect us. Together, I am convinced that we can reduce violent crime and reverse the officer fatality trend that we saw in 2010 and earlier this year. I appreciate your cooperation and your help with this important endeavor, one that can help communities and save lives.