

## U.S. Attorney's Report to the District

While violent crime rates in many parts of the country have been low in recent years, some parts of this district, including parts of Sacramento, Stockton, Fresno, Bakersfield and Vallejo, have endured high homicide rates, in which most of the victims were young people. The City of Stockton set new records for homicides the last two years in a row. In many of these areas, a few violent gangs are responsible for a large share of the violence. We at the U.S. Attorney's Office are working with local law enforcement agencies and other community partners to save lives and bring relief to the residents of bullet-scarred neighborhoods in this region.

In late April, I joined Stockton Police Chief Eric Jones, ATF Special Agent in Charge Joseph Riehl, San Joaquin County DA James Willett, and other local law enforcement officials to announce the results of a long-term proactive enforcement operation targeting violent crime in the Stockton area. The operation involved the identification of some of the most violent criminals in Stockton, and the deployment of federal ATF agents to investigate them. As a result of the operation, 44 defendants have been charged with federal felony offenses so far, and a dozen more were charged by the District Attorney. Law enforcement seized 84 firearms, including six machine guns, four short-barrel rifles, two silencers, and quantities of drugs and cash.

We understand that such operations alone cannot cure the problem of violent crime in urban areas. But they can create space to allow other efforts to take root. In Stockton we are supporting local authorities in the implementation of a "Ceasefire" strategy. Ceasefire is a proven, data-driven strategy that has successfully reduced gang-related violence in many cities. It includes face-to-face meetings in which members of the community, parents, service providers, law enforcement and others commit to assist gang members with constructive alternatives to violence such as educational and employment opportunities, but also warn those who persist in violent activity that they will be targeted for prosecution and removal from society.

For those that reject the offer of help and persist in violent behavior, effective follow-through by law enforcement is critical to the credibility of the strategy. In Bakersfield we are doing just that. A Ceasefire effort has been underway there for several years. One gang, the East Side Crips, continued to engage in violence despite pleas from the community and warnings from law enforcement. In November 2011 I announced federal criminal charges against 25 members and associates of the gang. A few days ago I announced that 24 of those defendants (one is a fugitive) have now been convicted of serious felony offenses. The 23 defendants who have already been sentenced received prison terms of up to ten years. Two thirds of them got five years or more. There is no parole in the federal system, and they will be serving all or almost all of the prison time imposed, in federal prisons far from Bakersfield.

In Stockton, early results are promising. So far this year, homicide rates are way down. But we understand that reducing violence must be a long-term effort involving many players,

including community members. We will continue to play our part to reduce violence in cities throughout the district.

If you would like to communicate with our office, contact the main number in Sacramento, or submit a suggestion by clicking on the button below. Thank you.

United States Attorney

*Benjamin B. Wagner*