

U.S. Attorney's Report to the District

While violent crime nationally has decreased significantly in recent years, in some areas the trend has been the reverse. Last year the number of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty reached a 20-year high, and statistics for this year also indicate a very high officer homicide rate. In some areas in the Eastern District of California, particularly urban neighborhoods plagued by violent gangs, gang-related shootings have increased.

This office has undertaken a number of initiatives to address these violent crime problems. While these initiatives call for vigorous enforcement of federal criminal laws, they also involve support for our law enforcement allies and for community residents and organizations that can help prevent violence and assist young people in playing constructive roles in society.

First, in an effort to reduce the number of officer deaths in the line of duty, Attorney General Eric Holder announced the Officer Safety Initiative in March. The initiative includes stepping up prosecution of violent offenders with serious criminal histories who pose a threat to the public, launching a national training program and an officer-safety website, and distributing information about DOJ grant funds to purchase bulletproof vests. This office has already charged at least 75 defendants with felony gun crimes since the beginning of the year, and has distributed materials to law enforcement agencies in the district with information on federal funds, training, and other resources to enhance officer safety.

Second, this office is working with local law enforcement officials and municipal governments to implement "Ceasefire" strategies to reduce gang-related shootings in south Sacramento, Modesto, Fresno, and Bakersfield. Ceasefire is a proven, data-driven strategy that has successfully reduced gang-related violence in many cities. It is supported here by California Gang Reduction, Intervention and Prevention (CalGRIP) grants. The strategy includes meetings with gang members at which members of the community, parents, service providers, law enforcement and others commit to assist gang members with constructive alternatives to violence including educational and employment opportunities, but warn those who persist in violent activity that they will be targeted for prosecution and removal from society. Our office will be aggressively prosecuting those gang members who choose violence.

Third, this office is implementing a national Department of Justice anti-violent crime strategy intended to prevent and deter violent crime in specific neighborhoods. In this district, we will focus on identified neighborhoods in Sacramento, Fresno and Bakersfield. In addition to increasing resources dedicated to investigating and federally prosecuting violent criminals in those areas, we will promote re-entry programs that reduce recidivism among offenders emerging from custody, and seek funding opportunities for organizations and agencies in those communities that play a constructive role in preventing violent crime and assisting young people in resisting the draw of violent gangs.