



ATF News

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
Charlotte Field Division

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ATF ADDRESSES LOCAL VIOLENT CRIME AND GANG ACTIVITY *U.S. Department of Justice Hosts Roundtable Discussion in Washington*

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The Charlotte Field Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), has long recognized that the fabric of our society is undermined by violent crime and criminal gang activity.

Acknowledging the seriousness of these issues, Special Agent in Charge Zebedee T. Graham is reiterating that our local priorities include combating all violent crime, but specifically that which is perpetrated by criminal gangs. “The most effective strategy to reduce violent crime is to work jointly with our law enforcement partners and share intelligence and resources that target criminal gangs,” said Graham.

Locally, ATF is an active partner with the FBI, U.S. Marshals Service, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, United States and North Carolina Parole and Probation offices, and all other law enforcement agencies in the region in task force settings.

The ATF-lead Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), whose strategy to fight gun violence has been very successful. During its first four years, this initiative has seen nearly a 50 percent drop in firearms-related violence nationwide.

ATF Industry Operations conducts periodic inspections and investigations at federally licensed firearms dealers to ensure compliance with federal requirements, and to detect any criminal activity on the part of purchasers. This criminal activity includes trafficking of firearms, straw purchases, or providing firearms to the violent criminal element. These interdictions have proven to reduce the number of firearms reaching the hands of criminal gang members.

ATF has deployed the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) throughout the Carolinas. NIBIN uses the Integrated Ballistic Identification System (IBIS) to scientifically link firearms that are used in violent crime. The violent crime solve rate success stories involving the IBIS link continue to rise, thus having a measurable positive effect on local violent crime.

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Last year, ATF became a participant in the newest intelligence database, GangNet. GangNet is restricted to law enforcement and enables information sharing on relationships between known gang members throughout the country. This analytical tool will be used by ATF in the Carolinas to link gang members either to each other or to other outlaw gangs establishing known associates during active criminal investigations.

ATF is the only law enforcement agency in the world that has the ability to trace a firearm that has been used in a violent crime back to the potential defendant, by use of the ATF National Tracing Center. This unique resource is shared with and made available to all law enforcement agencies throughout the country to assist in their efforts to identify violent criminals that use firearms in their crimes.

ATF has partnered with the U.S. Attorney's Offices in all of the judicial districts and the state prosecutors in the Carolinas to ensure the best possible prosecution for violent gang members. As a result, habitual violent criminals have been removed from our communities for significant periods of time, and sometimes for life.

Last year, ATF again partnered with the U.S. Attorneys and the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) in the "Don't Lie for the Other Guy" national initiative. Under this program, licensed federal firearms dealers are trained and educated on how to detect potential illegal purchasers of firearms. In North and South Carolina, the dealers are given personal training, and follow-up materials to maintain their proficiency at identifying these purchasers. This program has already proven invaluable by helping the dealers keep firearms out of violent criminal's hands. The program has been well received by the firearms dealers in the Carolinas.

In 2004, ATF and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department concluded a joint investigation on the criminal gang MS-13 in the Charlotte area with 13 arrests. These gang members were prosecuted in state and federal court, with all of them entering guilty pleas to the firearms violations.

In the city of Raleigh, ATF is a partner in the police department's Firearm Suppression Team (FAST), which has had a significant impact on violent gang activity. All city firearms cases are reviewed for possible gang connection for intelligence and prosecution purposes, whether in state or federal court.

In the city of Durham, ATF has a full time representative assigned to respond instantly whenever a gang or gang member is suspected to have been involved in a violent firearms crime. Dozens of successful federal prosecutions of gang members have resulted in the combined efforts of ATF and the Durham Police Department.

In the city of Columbia, South Carolina, ATF is a member jointly with the FBI, Richland County Sheriff's Office, and Columbia Police Department, of the Columbia Gang Task Force.

In the city of Greenville, S.C., and surrounding area, ATF recently established the "Upstate Gang Task Force," consisting of full time partners with the Greenville and Anderson Police Departments, and the Greenville County Sheriff's Office.

In the city of Charleston, ATF has full-time detectives (task force officers) from the Charleston and North Charleston Police Departments assigned to the Violent Crime Task Force that focuses strictly on violent crime involving firearms in and around the “low country” area.

ATF established the Violent Crime Impact Teams (VCIT), with Greensboro being a VCIT city. The VCIT program targets specific areas that had an unacceptable level of violent crime, particularly gun-related homicides. This program uses investigative resources and integrated federal, state and local law enforcement strategy to identify, disrupt, arrest and prosecute the most violent criminals in the VCIT cities.

The Charlotte Field Division co hosts the annual “Gangs Across the Carolinas” gang training conference. Police officials and prosecutors from both North and South Carolina attend this training each year in the city of Charlotte. More than 450 federal, state and local investigators attended the 5th annual Fall Training Conference in October 2006.

“Violent crime, violent criminal gangs, and those individuals that use firearms in the commission of violent crimes are of great concern to us,” added Graham. “We will continue to work in a team environment with our other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors to maximize our effectiveness.”

For more information on ATF and its programs, go to www.atf.gov.

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