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Local Gang Bust Earns National Recognition

A local team of law enforcement investigators and prosecutors received national recognition this week for their work in bringing the leaders of a violent Tulsa street gang to justice, announced U.S. Attorney David E. O'Meilia.

The 2007 Project Safe Neighborhood National Achievement Awards were presented at the Fifth Project Safe Neighborhoods National Conference being held in Atlanta, Georgia this week. The team from Tulsa received the award in the category of Outstanding Gang Investigation for their investigation and prosecution of the Tulsa 107 Hoover Crips, a violent street gang that was responsible for a violent crime wave across parts of the city from 2003-2005. Gang members perpetrated a wide range of criminal activities, including drug trafficking, gun crimes, witness tampering, money laundering and multiple murders.

O'Meilia stated, "It is my pleasure to see the hard work and cooperation of all the team members in this tremendous effort rewarded on a national stage. It is truly an honor for them - to be recognized as being part of one of the most successful gang suppression operations in the country. They can rest assured knowing they have been successful in the profession they have chosen as their life's work - protecting their own community from the worst and most violent criminals."

The need for an all-out onslaught against the violent street gangs in Tulsa arose amid a year-long stretch involving 18 gang-related murders in Tulsa between April of 2003 and March of 2004. One especially disturbing double-homicide involved the retaliatory murder of a gang member's parents. Responding to this alarming increase in gang violence, U.S. Attorney O'Meilia organized a task force to combine the resources of federal law enforcement agencies such as ATF, FBI, DEA, and ICE, as well as state and local law enforcement agencies such as the Oklahoma State Bureau of Narcotics, the Tulsa County Sheriff's Office and the Tulsa Police Department. The ATF and TPD's Gang Unit played a central role. The task force operated out of a "war room" in the U.S. Attorney's Office.

A comprehensive strategy was developed, to include both short-term and long-term investigations. The short-term investigations yielded 107 targets, which resulted in 75 cases being filed - 18 in federal court and 57 in state court.

In the Spring of 2004, a decision was made to utilize the federal RICO laws for the first time in Tulsa. RICO stands for Racketeering Influenced Corrupt Organization. These laws were originally passed by Congress and used by the government to attack the mafia and other similar criminal organizations. In this instance, the RICO laws were used to pursue charges against 107 Hoover Crips gang leader Mikey D and other Hoovers' leaders. The Tulsa RICO investigation linked six homicides with dozens of other criminal acts, including drug trafficking, shooting with intent to kill and illegal weapons possession. It required an unprecedented level of staffing. For nearly two years, seven full-time law enforcement officers, along with two full-time federal prosecutors, were dedicated solely to the investigation and subsequent prosecution. The strain on the law enforcement and prosecutorial resources severely tested the stamina and resolve of the task force. Two cooperating witnesses were murdered during the course of the investigation, including the eyewitness of the double homicide. Additionally, two federal prosecutors received death threats.

In June of 2005, the investigation culminated in a 147-count indictment charging fourteen defendants who represented the Hoovers' leadership, including Michael D. Summers, aka Mikey D, age 32, three of his brothers, and one of his sisters. Charges included racketeering conspiracy to violate drug trafficking laws and to commit violent acts, such as murder and witness tampering, violent crimes in aid of racketeering and money laundering. The prosecution involved 158 witnesses and over 200 exhibits. It relied on a wide variety of evidence, including DNA matching, fingerprints, ballistic analysis, and NIBIN (firearms identification) technology.

Thirteen defendants pled guilty. The remaining defendant is facing capital murder charges in state court. Seven non-cooperating defendants received 124 years imprisonment, including 30 years imprisonment for gang leader Mikey D. Five cooperating defendants received 52 years imprisonment, including a cooperator who is testifying in the capital murder case. During the 18 months preceding the investigation, firearm homicides averaged nearly four per month. After the federal indictment and arrests, firearm homicides averaged less than two per month, a reduction of over 50%. The investigation and prosecution of this case will serve as the model for additional long-term gang suppression efforts in the Tulsa area.

Background: Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) is the umbrella effort and national moniker for the U.S. DOJ's push against violent gun crimes in our communities. Project Ceasefire is the name we have given to our local efforts.