



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS
CONTINUES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY

NASHVILLE, TN -- May 4, 2007 -- Craig Morford, United States Attorney for the Middle District of Tennessee, Torry Johnson, District Attorney General, Ronal Serpas, Metropolitan Nashville Police Chief and James Cavanaugh, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco Firearms and Explosives, jointly announced today the mid-year results for the Metro Nashville Project Safe Neighborhood Initiative. The announcement, which covered the first six months of Fiscal year 2007 (October 1, 2006-March 31, 2007), was made at a joint news conference at the North Precinct of the Nashville Metro Police Department, where the police were preparing to destroy over **1400** guns that have been seized from criminals on the streets of Nashville.

The officials announced that during the six months from October 1, 2006 through March 31, 2007, approximately sixty-two individuals were indicted on Federal firearms and related charges. Approximately thirty defendants have been convicted or sentenced during this time period. One defendant received a sentence of 252 months in prison and another was sentenced to 300 months in

prison. Federal Courts imposed an average sentence of ninety-six months incarceration with no eligibility for parole. During that same period, another 296 individuals were arrested on state charges. In addition, Metro Nashville Police Officers seized recovered 1,093 firearms, 844 of which were crime guns.

The offices of the United States Attorney, Davidson County District Attorney, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and Nashville Metro Police Department work together in a collaborative effort through the Project Safe Neighborhood initiative to curb gun violence by targeting criminals who illegally use and possess firearms. Federal and state prosecutors meet and screen cases to ensure that their respective resources are used in the manner that will produce the greatest number of prosecutions, while ensuring that the most dangerous offenders are prosecuted in the forum where they will receive the highest likely sentence. As part of the initiative, the Nashville Metro Police Department has assigned one detective from each of the six precincts to review, investigate and prepare crime gun cases for federal prosecution .

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) is the lead federal law enforcement agency in the PSN initiative and through partnerships with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies nationwide, investigate violent firearms offenders, firearms traffickers, and gangs who use firearms. In addition, the Department of Justice provides funding through grants to support the PSN Initiative. The Middle District of Tennessee has been allocated \$157,639 for the PSN Program for FY07 and has also been allocated an additional \$257,513 for related anti-gang initiatives for FY07.

“Project Safe Neighborhoods has stood the test of time because it works,” said United States Attorney Craig Morford. “Through our PSN initiative, we are able to take record numbers

of guns out of the hands of criminals and record numbers of criminals off of our streets. We reassure citizens that we are committed to making our communities safer and we assure criminals that if they pick up a gun they are going to pick up major prison time. My office is fully committed to this highly effective initiative and we are fortunate to have in Chief Serpas and General Johnson a Police Chief and District Attorney who are so committed to working together with us to combat violent gun crime.”

"We're very grateful for the Project Safe Neighborhood program", said District Attorney Torrey Johnson. "By using the stringent federal laws that are in place, we're able to take some of the most dangerous criminals off the streets. Unfortunately, the state laws that deal with gun crimes are too weak to be as effective."

“Gun carrying convicted felons are an absolute danger to this community and need to serve day-for-day hard time in federal pens away from Tennessee,” Chief Ronal Serpas said. “The PSN program is a significant tool that is enhancing the safety of Nashville’s families and guests. We in the police department are very serious about prosecuting gun crime to the greatest extent possible, and I am greatly appreciative of the strong commitment and support of U.S. Attorney Morford, General Johnson and our partners at ATF.”

“Arresting and prosecuting the worst of the worst offenders is a simple yet very effective philosophy,” stated Cavanaugh. “The combined PSN effort has the tools in place to rid communities of those who threaten us. Removing repeat, violent offenders from neighborhoods is the key”.

The following cases are just a few of the many examples of the types of results being achieved as a direct result of this cooperative effort:

Thomas Marquais Thompson, et. al.

In September, 2006, Thomas Marquais Thompson, age 25, of Nashville was sentenced to 40 years federal prison without parole for his role in a drug conspiracy involving the armed robbery of 20 kilograms of cocaine from an undercover police officer during an undercover drug operation at a Nashville hotel. In imposing sentence, Judge Echols, noted Thompson's "disdain and contempt for the criminal justice system" and found this a serious offense that reflected "no concern for innocent people at the hotel ... and threatened the life of the public." Three co-defendants received sentences of 30 years, 25 years and 24 years, respectively. Three other defendants await sentencing.

Walter Drake

In January of this year, Walter Prentice Drake of Nashville was sentenced to serve 21 years in Federal prison with no parole following his conviction after trial on felon in possession of a firearm charges. Drake had prior felony convictions for aggravated assault, armed robbery, and third degree burglary. Due to his felony history, Drake was subject to enhanced sentencing under the Armed Career Criminal Act, which mandates a sentence of at least 15 years imprisonment for persons who have three or more convictions for violent felonies and /or serious drug offenses.

Ronald Ozeala Love, Jr.

In February of this year, Ronald Ozeala Love, Jr., age 32, of Nashville, was sentenced to serve 10 years in Federal prison with no parole after pleading guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm. Love is a multi-convicted felon, with several convictions for drug trafficking.

In addition to aggressively investigating and prosecuting gun crimes, PSN partners work with community groups and others to promote deterrence. "While we are fully committed to aggressively prosecuting felons who possess firearms, we realize that we will never prosecute our way to safe neighborhoods," said Morford. "Reducing gun violence requires an 'all hands on deck approach.' It not only requires police to dedicate resources to investigate gun crimes, prosecutors to invest resources in charging those crimes, and Court's to render appropriate sentences, but requires neighbors and parents and pastors and others within effected neighborhoods to step up and speak out. Offenders need to know that violence will not be tolerated in our neighborhoods. They need to know that felons will not be allowed to carry and possess guns with impunity. And they need to know that violators will be held accountable and

severely punished. That is why our PSN Task Force has been marketing the message to criminals – “Carry a Gun and You’re Done”– through billboards. We will continue to deliver this message and continue to back it up with tough action.”

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