



METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

MEDIA RELEASE

Chief Ronal W. Serpas

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chief Ronal Serpas today announced the Metropolitan Police Department will dedicate more resources than ever before to attack gun crime in Nashville so that, whenever possible, gun-toting criminals can be sent to federal penitentiaries hundreds of miles away from Tennessee to serve lengthy sentences.

Through a close and expanded partnership with United States Attorney Jim Vines, District Attorney Torry Johnson and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Special Agent in Charge Jim Cavanaugh, Serpas said the chances of gun defendants landing in federal court are about to significantly increase.

“What we’re talking about is a very serious county-wide version of the HEAT (Help Eliminate Armed Thugs) program that began in the summer of 2002,” Serpas said. “In the summer of 2005, we intend to ratchet up the thermostat to broil.”

Effective Friday, six additional detectives are being added to the precincts (one per precinct) for the express purpose of following up on every gun case/seizure made in that precinct to determine if the defendant qualifies for federal prosecution. ATF Special Agent in Charge Cavanaugh, in turn, is assigning six agents to the precincts to get the federal cases in the pipeline as quickly as possible. The officers and agents will meet weekly until further notice with a team of federal and state prosecutors who are committed to seeing that gun criminals receive the maximum prison sentence possible.

“We not only want gun criminals off our streets, we want them out of this area,” Serpas said. “Federal pens in remote areas of other states are the perfect places for them.”

Among those who qualify for federal prosecution are those who use guns in furtherance of the drug trade, convicted felons who possess guns, illegal aliens who carry guns and persons who possess firearms after being convicted of even misdemeanor domestic violence. Since the summer of 2002, more than 120 gun cases have been accepted for federal prosecution. That number could well double or triple due to the enhanced effort.

“Every lawyer on my staff has been put on notice to be ready to prosecute gun crimes,” United States Attorney Jim Vines said. “Chief Serpas, General Johnson, Agent Cavanaugh and I are very serious about this effort and I firmly believe we will make a difference in Nashville’s safety.”

Vines noted that the federal system allows for dangerous and potentially violent defendants to be held without bail pending trial. Sentences in federal court carry a minimum term of five years without the possibility of parole for carrying a firearm during a drug felony or violent crime.

ATF Special Agent in Charge Jim Cavanaugh expects this new effort to have quick and lasting results.

“ATF and its partners will definitely be adding to Nashville’s summer ‘HEAT.’ We will be aggressively working to combat firearm trafficking and the possession of illegal firearms by prohibited persons and violent criminals,” Cavanaugh said.

District Attorney Torry Johnson expects the expansion of the HEAT program to bring stiffer sentences on the state level as well.

“The potential of federal prosecution in borderline cases will enable my staff to secure longer sentences through plea agreements at the state level as defendants try to avoid the federal system,” Johnson said.

Through June 18, violent crime in Nashville is up 3.4% when compared to the same time last year. Homicide through June 18 is up by 12 cases (23 last year verses 35 this year).

“The men and women of the police department are working harder and smarter to get violent criminals and guns off our streets,” Serpas said. “This enhanced HEAT effort will be a very important tool as we all do our best to reduce violent crime below last year’s level and beyond.”

Through June 18, the men and woman of the Metropolitan Police Department have taken 1,014 guns off the streets, a 4.6% increase over the same period in 2004. Nearly 80% of those guns are pistols.

EXAMPLES OF PERSONS PROSECUTED UNDER THE HEAT INITIATIVE

- Kyle L. Bell, 25, of Nashville, who was sentenced to 29 years and 7 months in federal prison for distributing cocaine in public housing while carrying firearms.
- Rodney L. Love, 30, of Nashville, who was sentenced to 55 years in federal prison for drug trafficking and firearms offenses.
- Charles Homer Lloyd, Jr., 51, of Nashville, who was sentenced to 37 months in federal prison for possessing a rifle after being convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence.

- Michael E. Smith, 37, who was sentenced to ten years in federal prison for possessing a rifle outside a school zone and charges related to the possession, manufacture and transportation of destructive devices.
- Joshua Graves, 22, of Nashville, who was charged this month with unlawful gun possession by a convicted felon. Graves led Officer Joe Shelton on a brief pursuit. When Graves stopped the car, Shelton saw that he was carrying a pistol. Graves tossed the gun back into the car and subsequently reached back inside the vehicle. Shelton was forced to fire on Graves, who received a minor gunshot wound to his shoulder. Graves was convicted of robbery in 2001.
- Dejuane Bond, 25, of Nashville, who was charged this month with trafficking cocaine. Metro Officer Ian Herlein stopped Bond, who was free on bail on a reckless homicide charge, on June 17. Herlein saw cocaine in the car. Bond wound up head butting the officer during a struggle and fled. Cocaine weighing 252 grams was recovered from the car, as was a large amount of ammunition of different calibers.

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