



ATF News

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
New Orleans Field Division

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ATF-LED VCIT SUCCEEDING IN NEW ORLEANS

NEW ORLEANS – Less two months after Attorney General Alberto Gonzales announced increased federal resources to help New Orleans fight violent crime, the Violent Crime Impact Team (VCIT) led by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) has charged more than 20 people with federal firearms violations and seized 30 guns, ATF Special Agent in Charge David Harper, U.S. Attorney Jim Letten and New Orleans Police Chief Warren Riley announced today.

Harper, Letten, Riley and representatives from other federal law enforcement agencies spoke at a news conference held to discuss how the federal initiative was unfolding since being announced here by Gonzales Jan. 25.

The VCIT in New Orleans, one of 25 cities around the country where the initiative is under way, is currently staffed with one ATF supervisory special agent, an investigative analyst, 10 special agents and one New Orleans police officer. The VCIT concentrates its efforts on high violent crime areas within the city, utilizing federal firearms and narcotics violations to identify, arrest and prosecute the “worst of the worst” criminals.

Since the attorney general announced the increased federal assistance, ATF has also embedded agents with the New Orleans major case narcotics squad and established a liaison with the city’s Crime Abatement Team.

To date, the VCIT’s efforts have resulted in:

- 27 defendants charged with federal firearm violations.
- 30 firearms seized during investigations.
- 71 suspects under pending investigations for federal prosecution.
- 148 tips received by the ATF GUNS (581-4867) Hotline, resulting in six arrests for federal firearms violations.
- 108 tips received by the ATF GUNS hotline referred to other law enforcement agencies for investigation.

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“The primary goal of the ATF VCIT is to show a reduction of violent crime in the targeted area,” Harper said. “To meet our goal, we have recently detailed additional agents from outside the state to New Orleans. The ATF New Orleans Field Division has historically enjoyed a tremendous relationship with NOPD. ATF will continue to play a major role in this collaborative effort to reduce violent crime in the city of New Orleans.”

The VCIT initiative uses innovative technology, analytical investigative resources and an integrated federal, state and local law enforcement strategy to identify, disrupt, arrest and prosecute the most violent criminals in 25 U.S. cities.

The VCIT concept was modeled after Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) successes with additional ATF resources redirected from across the United States to target specific areas that had an unacceptable level of violent crime, particularly gun-related homicides, as compared to the national average.

More information on ATF and its programs to reduce violent crime is at www.atf.gov.

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