



**Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
San Bernardino Police Department**



Violent Crime Impact Team (VCIT)

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**ATF AND SAN BERNARDINO POLICE DEPARTMENT
JOIN FORCES TO COMBAT VIOLENT CRIME**

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. – Special Agent in Charge John A. Torres of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and Michael Bildt, Chief of Police, San Bernardino Police Department (SBPD), announced today the implementation of a federal initiative to combat violent crime in San Bernardino.

On June 1, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales and ATF Acting Director Michael J. Sullivan announced the expansion of the ATF-led Violent Crime Impact Team (VCIT) initiative to four new cities, including San Bernardino. VCIT 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.

“VCIT’s primary goal is to reduce the number of homicides and other violent crimes committed with firearms,” Torres said. “The positive results of reducing a community’s incidents of homicide and other violent crimes committed with firearms, through the removal of those responsible, will have a lasting effect in making that community safer.”

Bildt stated: “Mayor Patrick Morris and I are committed to the three components of Operation Phoenix, which are suppression, intervention, and prevention. Our partnership with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives is a welcome addition to our suppression efforts and an example of our continued collaboration with our many law enforcement and community partners.”

During the six-month pilot program that initially launched VCIT in 15 cities, VCIT areas witnessed a 17 percent decline in homicides committed with guns. From June 2004 through 2006, 25 VCITs recovered more than 11,100 firearms and arrested more than 9,800 gang members, drug dealers, felons in possession of firearms, and other criminals of significance. This includes 1,650 that ATF identifies as the “worst of the worst” criminals.

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Working in partnership, ATF, state and local law enforcement, the U.S. Attorney's Office and the District Attorney's Office have used the firearms statutes and mandatory minimum sentencing provided in the federal court system to obtain the longest possible criminal sentences to keep criminals off the streets.

San Bernardino County District Attorney Michael A. Ramos commented: "I look forward to working with the federal and local agencies to combat crime in our community. This spirit of cooperation will assist us in our effort to prosecute the dangerous criminals who threaten our way of life in San Bernardino."

The VCIT initiative has proven that instead of reacting to violent crime, federal and local law enforcement can work proactively through a coordinated approach. VCIT uses geographic targeting, aggressive investigation and prosecution to remove the criminals who are responsible for terrorizing neighborhoods. The techniques reduce a community's incidents of homicide and firearms-related violence.

Torres added: "Together ATF and SBPD strive to reduce violent crime in the city and surrounding communities of San Bernardino, placing an emphasis on ending gang violence that erodes the quality of life in our neighborhoods."

Information on ATF and its programs can be found at www.atf.gov. Visit www.ci.san-bernardino.ca.us for more information on the San Bernardino Police Department.

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