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Project Safe Neighborhoods Initiative Expands Resources

*To Combat Gang and Gun Violence in Three Priority Cities:
Flint, Saginaw and Jackson*

FLINT, Mich., - U.S. Attorney Stephen J. Murphy led the announcement of a Department of Justice grant award today that will expand the resources necessary to combat gun and gang violence in three priority communities in the Eastern District of Michigan: Flint, Saginaw and Jackson. Murphy made the announcement with Special Agent-in-Charge (SAC) Valerie Goddard of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Flint Police Chief Gary Hagler, Saginaw Police Chief Gerald Cliff and Jackson Deputy Police Chief Matthew Heins, together with officials from other federal, state and county law enforcement agencies.

"We advocated for more resources for three major cities in the Eastern District of Michigan where gun violence is increasing and gangs are becoming more organized and detrimental to the quality of life in these communities," said U.S. Attorney Stephen Murphy. "In Flint, Saginaw, and Jackson, local law enforcement efforts to combat violent crime will be supercharged from the resources this grant will bring forth," he added. "Working closely with our law enforcement partners in Flint, Saginaw and Jackson on the "Three Cities Initiative" (TCI) will make these neighborhoods safer by getting armed drug dealers and other violent criminals with firearms off the streets. One way this is accomplished is through citizens getting involved and providing us tips to the anonymous 800.ATF.GUNS tip line, a very important component of the overall strategy," said ATF SAC Goddard.

The \$1M grant award is being allocated to the TCI over three years and will be rolled out in five phases that include identifying the worst of the worst and weekly meetings, community outreach and public awareness, major sweeps based on intelligence gathering, evaluation and sustainability. Each city participated in the grant process and will receive a proportion of the award based on population, crime rate and other needs related to gun crime demonstrated in the grant. Need in each of these cities was aptly demonstrated with both Flint and Saginaw recently

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ranking as the fourth and fifth most violent cities per capita in the United States; and since 2004, Jackson experienced a 41% increase in gun related crimes.

"This funding is crucial in helping us make the City of Flint a safer place by giving us the additional resources we need to combat criminal street gangs and illegal guns that plague our community. I am very pleased with this funding and the collaboration," said Chief Hagler.

The Three Cities Initiative is modeled after the award-winning Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Operation TIDE (Tactical Intelligence Driven Enforcement) initiative already underway in both in the Northwestern and Eastern Police Districts of Detroit. In its first year as a task force, Operation TIDE contributed to a 43% decrease in homicides and a 26% decrease in non-fatal shootings in Detroit's Northwestern District. "This is all about gangs with guns who are committing the vast majority of the crimes. One gang member is one too many in Saginaw. We have identified the problem areas but now we will have the resources and network to make a greater impact," said Chief Cliff. While Deputy Police Chief Heins remarked that "expanding the capabilities of the Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative was the right thing to do. It (PSN) has helped combat crime for us before in Jackson, and this expanded task force will provide the intelligence and funding we need to further disrupt and dismantle these violent gangs."

Participating agencies in each city include the local police departments, county prosecutor's office, county sheriff's office, Michigan State Police, Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), U.S. Marshal Service (USMS), Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and U.S. Attorney's Office as the lead agency.

In addition to expanded enforcement, community outreach and public awareness are strategic components of the Three Cities Initiative. Citizens with tips on illegal gun sales and trafficking, gangs with guns and other illegal firearm activity are asked to urgently call the official PSN Anonymous Tip Line at 800.ATF.GUNS safely and anonymously. The tip line is operative 24 hours per day and is managed by the federal agency that provides the expertise on illegal gun tracing and confiscation.

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Note to media: All media outlets are encouraged to promote and use the 800.ATF.GUNS tip line in the context of crime stories where dangerous felons with guns remain at large.