



Project Safe Neighborhoods: Strategic Interventions

Middle District of Alabama: Case Study 5

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Overview

The last decade of the 20th century witnessed significant declines in the rate of crime in the United States. This was true for most types of crime, including homicide and serious violent crime.¹ Despite these declines, the level of gun crime in the United States remains higher than that experienced in other western democracies and is a source of untold tragedy for families and communities.² Given this context, in 2001 the Bush Administration made the reduction of gun crime one of the top priorities of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), along with combating terrorism and enhancing homeland security.

The vehicle for translating this priority into action is Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN). PSN represents a commitment to gun crime reduction through a network of local partnerships coordinated through the nation's 94 U.S. Attorneys' Offices. These local partnerships are supported by a strategy to provide them with the resources that they need to be successful.

The PSN initiative integrates five essential elements from successful gun crime reduction programs, such as Richmond's Project Exile, the Boston Operation Ceasefire Program, and DOJ's Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative. Those elements are: partnerships, strategic planning, training, outreach, and accountability. The partnership element requires that the local U.S. Attorney create workable and sustainable partnerships with other federal, state, and local law enforcement; prosecutors; and the community. Strategic problem-solving involves the use of data and research to isolate the key factors driving gun crime at the local level, suggest intervention strategies, and provide feedback and evaluation to the task force. The outreach component incorporates communication strategies geared at both offenders ("focused deterrence") and the community ("general deterrence"). The training element underscores the importance of ensuring that each person involved in the gun crime reduction effort—from the line police officer to the prosecutor to the community outreach worker—has the skills necessary to be most effective. Finally, the accountability element ensures that the task force regularly receives feedback about the impact of its interventions so that adjustments can be made if necessary.

Partnerships

The PSN program is intended to increase partnerships between federal, state, and local agencies through the formation of a local PSN task force. Coordinated by the U.S. Attorney's Office, the PSN task force typically includes both federal and local prosecutors, federal law

enforcement agencies, local and state law enforcement agencies, and probation and parole. Nearly all PSN task forces also include local government leaders, social service providers, neighborhood leaders, members of the faith community, business leaders, educators, and health care providers.

Strategic Planning

Recognizing that crime problems, including gun crime, vary from community to community across the United States, that state laws addressing gun crime vary considerably, and that local and state resources vary across the federal judicial districts covered by U.S. Attorneys' Offices, PSN also includes a commitment to strategic planning whereby the PSN program is tailored to local context. Specifically, PSN provides resources for the inclusion of a local research partner who works with the PSN task force to analyze the local gun crime problem and to share the findings with the task force for the development of a proactive plan for gun crime reduction. The research partners assist the task force through analysis of gun crime patterns and trends that can help the task force focus resources on the most serious people, places, and contexts of gun violence. The research partners can also bring evidence-based practice to the task force discussions of gun crime reduction strategies.³ The inclusion of the research partner was also intended to assist in ongoing assessment in order to provide feedback to the task force.

Although each district creates strategic interventions that make sense in their local context, one strategy shared by all PSN task forces is increased federal prosecution of gun crime. PSN is built on the belief that the increased federal prosecution of gun offenders will reduce gun crime through the incapacitation of gun criminals and the deterrence of potential offenders. This working hypothesis is based on the notion that federal sanctions for gun crime are often more severe than those either available at the state level or likely to be imposed at the state level. Further, federal prosecution may include sanctions unavailable at the local level. The focus on prohibited persons possessing or using a firearm is built on the finding that a significant portion of gun crime involves offenders and victims with significant criminal histories. Thus, by increasing the certainty that a prohibited person in possession will face strong federal sanctions, the goal is to persuade potential offenders not to illegally possess and carry a gun.

The commitment to increased federal prosecution appears to be borne out. Fiscal year 2005 witnessed over 13,000 individuals charged with federal gun crimes, the highest number ever recorded by DOJ. Since PSN's inception, the number of federal firearms prosecutions has increased 73 percent.⁴

Training

PSN has involved a significant commitment of resources to support training. This program has included training provided to law enforcement agencies on topics including gun crime investigations, gun crime identification and tracing, and related issues. Training on effective prosecution of gun cases has been provided to state and local prosecutors. Additional training has focused on strategic problem-solving and community outreach and engagement. By the end of 2005, DOJ estimates that nearly 18,000 individuals had attended a PSN-related training program sponsored by one of the many national PSN training and technical assistance partners.⁵

Outreach

The architects of PSN also recognized that increased sanctions would have the most impact if accompanied with a media campaign to communicate the message of the likelihood of federal prosecution for illegal possession and use of a gun. Consequently, resources were provided to all PSN task forces to work with a media partner to devise strategies for communicating this message to both potential offenders and to the community at large. This local outreach effort is also supported at the national level by the creation and distribution of Public Service Announcements and materials (ads, posters). These materials are direct mailed to media outlets and are also available to local PSN task forces.⁶

The outreach component is also intended to support the development of prevention and intervention components. PSN provided grant funding in fiscal years 2003 and 2004 to the local PSN partnerships that could be used to support a variety of initiatives including prevention and intervention. Many initiatives were built on existing programs such as school-based prevention, Weed and Seed, or juvenile court intervention programs.

Accountability

The leadership of the PSN initiative at DOJ has emphasized that PSN would focus on outcomes—i.e., reduced gun crime—as opposed to a focus on outputs such as arrests and cases prosecuted. That is, PSN's success is measured by the reduction in gun crime. This accountability component was linked to strategic planning whereby PSN task forces, working with their local research partner, are asked to monitor levels of crime over time within targeted problems and/or targeted areas.

Additional Information

For more information on Project Safe Neighborhoods, visit www.psn.gov. If you are interested in supporting your local Project Safe Neighborhoods program, please contact your local U.S. Attorney's Office.

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Executive Summary

Context

The Middle District of Alabama (Middle District) is one of three U.S. Attorneys' Offices covering the State of Alabama. It is one of the smaller districts in the United States. The largest city in the district is Montgomery. The initial focus of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) in the Middle District was on Montgomery with a simultaneous strategy of building relationships with local enforcement agencies and county prosecutors. A unique feature of PSN in Alabama is the coordinated deterrence-based communication strategy, known as "Alabama ICE," across the three federal judicial districts.

Task Forces

Law enforcement officers and local prosecutors from throughout the district are assigned to geographically-structured PSN task forces. The central coordinating component of PSN is the Prosecution and Investigative Review Team (PIRT). PIRT meets weekly to review gun crime cases from the PSN task forces for possible federal prosecution. PSN in the Middle District has been characterized by exceptional leadership provided by the U.S. Attorney, who has been actively involved in PSN and built new relationships between the U.S. Attorney's Office and local law enforcement.

Problem Analysis

The problem analysis revealed that gun crime within the Middle District was most prevalent in the City of Montgomery, thus the initial target area was Montgomery. Crime maps revealed that gun violence in Montgomery was not heavily concentrated in particular neighborhoods but rather was "braided" throughout the city. Local officials believed that gun crime was primarily accounted for by individuals with extensive criminal histories. Analyses of gun offenders prosecuted federally under PSN did reveal extensive criminal histories for a variety of offenses including personal, property, drug, public order, and juvenile offenses. Some offenders had less extensive criminal histories but were believed to be at risk for gun crime on the basis of law enforcement intelligence. Task force members, supported by analysis of the PSN research partners, revealed that prison overcrowding in the state had reached such crisis proportions that the threat of sanctions for involvement in gun crime was no longer credible.

Strategies

The strategies adopted by the Middle District were roughly modeled on Project Exile in the Eastern District of Virginia, where the task force sought to increase the penalties for illegal possession and

use of guns, particularly by chronic offenders. Partnerships with local law enforcement were established to increase the flow of gun cases from local law enforcement to the U.S. Attorney's Office. A joint gun case screening process was established, and federal prosecution increased significantly. Indeed, there was an increase from 21 defendants prosecuted in federal court for gun cases in fiscal year 2000 to 103 in fiscal year 2003. Increased federal prosecution was coupled with a communication strategy based on billboards, posters, and radio and television advertisements.

Outcomes

Time series analyses were conducted to compare the trend in homicide, gun assaults, and armed robberies in Montgomery with the trend in property crime during the same time period. The results suggested a decrease for gun assaults and homicide but no impact on armed robbery. The data indicate a reduction from approximately 309 gun assaults per year to approximately 270, and a reduction from 29.5 homicides per year to 22.8. There was no impact on property crime, suggesting that it may have been PSN that reduced gun crime as opposed to an overall decline in crime affecting both gun and property crime. In addition, interviews conducted with officials throughout the district consistently pointed to PSN's positive impact on improved coordination and communication among federal, state, and local law enforcement.

Middle District of Alabama

The State of Alabama is served by three federal judicial districts, with corresponding United States Attorneys' Offices (USAOs): the Northern, Middle, and Southern Districts. Alabama is unique because the three districts have coordinated a common Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) theme, logo, and message. Specifically, Alabama ICE, standing for Isolate the Criminal Element, is the common vehicle used across all three districts to communicate a consistent theme: *Gun Crime = Hard Time*.

Middle District of Alabama

The Middle District of Alabama (Middle District) is one of the nation's smaller federal judicial districts in population (75th out of the 90 U.S. districts⁷) with an aggregate of 1,054,371 total inhabitants.⁸ The Middle District encompasses 23 counties. The City of Montgomery, with a population of just over 200,000, is the state capitol and constitutes roughly 21 percent of the district's overall population. Montgomery is home to a large percentage of people (36 percent) who are non-White (upper quartile), which is high compared to the U.S. percentage of non-White residents (24.9 percent). In addition, Montgomery ranks in the midrange when comparing population density. Montgomery has just under 69 people per square mile (68.7), which is slightly less than the U.S. average of 79.6 people.

Within the Middle District, additional population concentrations are located in Lee and Houston Counties (see figure 1 below). Lee County, located on the far east side of the district, shares a border with Georgia, and has a population near 120,000, nearly 11 percent of the entire district, concentrated mainly in the cities of Auburn and Opelika. Houston County, located in the southeast corner of the district, also shares its border with Georgia. Consisting mainly of the City of Dothan, Houston County makes up nearly 9 percent of the district population, with over 90,000 residents within the county. The remainder of the district consists of small towns and rural areas.

The Middle District suffers from high violent crime rates, as evidenced by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) Uniform Crime Report data from 2001, the outset of PSN. Specifically, the district ranks 21st overall among federal judicial districts (upper quartile) in its murder rate, with an average rate of 0.65 murders per 10,000 inhabitants. In addition, it ranks 48th (third quartile) in aggravated assaults with 24.31 assaults per 10,000 inhabitants. Figure 2 (below) displays the murder and aggravated assault rates for Montgomery County, the

Figure 1: Middle District of Alabama



overall district, comparably sized U.S. counties, and the U.S. county average. As the table indicates, Montgomery has a higher than expected rate of violent crime ranking in the upper quartile in both murders and assaults.⁹ When compared to the other U.S. 109 counties with a similar population,¹⁰ Montgomery’s murder rate ranks eighth.¹¹ Montgomery’s aggravated assault rank is also above the norm, ranking 33rd.¹²

The USAO in the Middle District is one of the smaller offices in the country. In 2000, the Middle District employed nine Assistant United States’ Attorneys (AUSAs) in its Criminal Division plus a Division Chief. This number increased to 12, plus a Division Chief, in 2005. Prior to the inception of PSN, the Middle District prosecuted 15 gun crime cases in 2000 and 20 gun crime cases in 2001. As will be discussed, the Middle District has experienced a significant increase in federal prosecution of gun crimes over the course of PSN.

Figure 2: Aggravated Assault and Murder Rates, 2001

Site	Aggravated Assault Rate (per 10,000)	Murder Rate (per 10,000)
U.S. Average*	30.65	0.65
Alabama Middle District	24.31	0.73
U.S. Counties of Comparable Size**	27.10	0.48
Montgomery County	34.36	1.3

*90 federal judicial districts. See endnote 7.
**Ranging from 173,510 to 273,510 population

The Development and Initial Implementation of PSN

In September 2001, a week before the September 11th attacks, Leura Garret Canary was appointed the United States Attorney (USA) for the Middle District. Although PSN had officially been “kicked off” by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) earlier in 2001, the focus on 9/11 and the threat of terrorism and related national security concerns resulted in PSN being delayed in the Middle District until early 2002.

In early 2002, the USAO put together the Prosecution and Investigative Review Team (PIRT). Led by an AUSA, PIRT became the vehicle for reviewing gun crime cases and deciding whether a case was appropriate for federal prosecution. PIRT began by meeting somewhat irregularly, about once a month. The team faced two challenges. First, there was no history of cooperative relationships between local law enforcement agencies and the USAO for the prosecution of gun crime cases. Second, the local Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Office had experienced significant turnover in leadership, did not have a mechanism in place for more proactive gun crime investigations, and had only six agents to cover the district. Subsequently, few cases were making it to PIRT to review for potential federal prosecution.

A Galvanizing Gun Crime in Montgomery

In April 2002, a 4-year-old girl and her mother were shopping in a Montgomery store when they were caught in the crossfire of a drug deal gone bad. The little girl was seriously injured, which led to a public outcry. The shooter was a convicted felon and not allowed under federal law to possess a gun—precisely the type of individual PSN is intended to address.

The Montgomery chief of police realized that processing this case through the normal state channels was unlikely to bring justice. Even if convicted, the suspect would most likely be sentenced to 10 to 15

years for assault and serve only 1 to 2 years due to Alabama's prison overcrowding. The chief turned to the USAO and Alabama ICE for help.

The state prosecutor brought charges of first-degree assault against the suspected shooter and a bond was set. As predicted, the defendant was let out on bond and released pending trial. However, in contrast to usual case processing, the USAO filed a complaint charging him with violating Title 18 USC 922 (g) (1) "Felon in Possession of a Firearm." Upon release from state custody he was immediately arrested by U.S. Marshals on the federal charge. The USAO then filed a motion requesting that the defendant be detained because of his violent acts. The motion was granted and the defendant remained in federal custody until he was convicted. The defendant received a sentence of 6 years and was transferred to the custody of the federal Bureau of Prisons. In addition, the state charge of assault was not dismissed, and the defendant will be tried for that charge at a later date. Upon indictment in federal court, this case became the first Alabama ICE case in the Middle District and was announced at a press conference in late May 2002.¹³ As the USA said, "We had to show we were serious. We had to show the community, both the public and local law enforcement, that we were serious."

Making the Task Force a Reality

Following the successful prosecution of the Montgomery gun assault case, the Montgomery chief of police assigned a well-respected investigator to the Middle District's ICE task force. Once the task force had someone assigned from the Montgomery Police Department (MPD), PIRT started to meet weekly rather than monthly.

Although MPD was now on board, few gun crime cases were making it to PIRT for review. The USA was working with the ATF Special Agent in Charge to increase the resources of the Montgomery ATF Office. This proved successful when in February 2003 ATF assigned five new agents Temporary Duty Station (TDY) to the Montgomery office to help catch up on the backlog of cases. In 30 days, these five agents wrote more than 30 cases.

With MPD on board and a group of ATF agents prepared to aggressively enforce federal gun crime laws, PSN was fully operational in the Middle District. The Montgomery ICE task force was formalized in March 2003. This was followed by PSN/ATF training, sponsored by the USAO, for police officers in April 2003. Over the next 11 months, additional ICE task forces were implemented throughout the Middle District (Pike County, July 2003; Houston County, July 2003; Lee County, August 2003; Tallapoosa County, January 2004; and Autauga County, February 2004). The common link between all the task forces was PIRT, which was now meeting weekly and reviewing gun cases referred by the various ICE task forces.

The Structure of PSN in the Middle District

As with all PSN task forces operating across the United States, the Middle District has created a unique operating structure that fits the needs of the district, including the statewide adoption of Alabama ICE as a common theme and logo communicating a deterrence message: gun crime will equal hard time. The leadership within the USAO and the ICE task forces also has made a series of strategic decisions about how PSN would be structured within the district.

PSN within the U.S. Attorney's Office

Particularly striking is the strong and active leadership of the U.S. Attorney. Ms. Canary is fully engaged in PSN and makes it clear within the USAO and throughout the district that, along with homeland security, PSN and the reduction of gun crime is a major priority.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for the Middle District is the relative lack of resources in terms of ATF agents and AUSAs. In some districts, this resource constraint might have resulted in a highly specialized program whereby the PSN Coordinator and perhaps one gun prosecutor would be given responsibility for PSN. Ms. Canary rejected this approach and decided that if PSN were to be successful everyone within the USAO would need to contribute. The PSN Coordinator, who also serves as the First Assistant United States Attorney (FAUSA), is assisted by the criminal chief, who also is actively engaged in PSN. In addition, all the AUSAs in the criminal division are expected to prosecute gun cases.

The Middle District also relies heavily on its Law Enforcement Community Coordinator (LECC). The LECC, working with the USA and PSN Coordinator, largely oversees the day-to-day operations of the PSN program. He coordinates with key players such as the research partners, community engagement partners, and local law enforcement agencies.

The PSN Coordinator oversees media and outreach efforts. Another AUSA serves as the PSN Attorney and coordinator of the PIRT task force meetings. The PSN Attorney prosecutes gun cases as part of his regular caseload and conducts much of the law enforcement training related to Alabama ICE (administered jointly with ATF). Administrative staff within the USAO also contribute to PSN. Finally, the drug prosecutors and investigators in the USAO have seen the benefit of ICE. Several of these officials mentioned that, oftentimes, defendants will get more incarceration time for a gun charge than a drug charge. This has led to positive relationships between the ICE task force and the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force.

Building Partnerships with Local Law Enforcement

Interviews with law enforcement leaders in the Middle District revealed that prior to Alabama ICE, there was minimal interaction between the USAO and local police and sheriff departments. The consistent theme was that local law enforcement did not view the USAO as a resource for addressing local crime problems. With this as background, the USA recognized early on that for PSN to be successful, significant attention would need to be given to building relationships with local law enforcement.

The USA was fortunate in that her office's LECC was a highly respected law enforcement leader in Alabama. Following a career in the Alabama Bureau of Investigation (ABI), the LECC retired as Chief of the ABI and took the LECC position within the USAO. The USA and LECC decided to actively reach out to the local law enforcement community. Indeed, beginning in early 2002, the newly appointed USA and the LECC traveled together to each county in the district to meet local officials, seek support for Alabama ICE, and recruit task force members from local law enforcement agencies. The USA talked to chiefs of police, sheriffs, district attorneys, and judges. Most were supportive of the program while somewhat skeptical of the "feds" and leery of "one more task force."

In response to these concerns, the USA took a different approach to the Alabama ICE task force. Recognizing that law enforcement resources were sparse, the USA still asked agencies to assign an officer to the ICE task force with the understanding that the officer would remain in his or her own agency and community rather than being assigned full-time to the task force. In many respects, the task force member would serve as the point-of-contact within the local agency. This structure has been a key to the success of Alabama ICE in the Middle District.

The initial task force, established in Montgomery in April 2002 and formalized in March 2003, included the USAO, ATF, FBI, local prosecutors, and law enforcement from Montgomery and the surrounding counties. In the following 11 months, the task force was expanded to five additional counties for a total of 28 task force officers trained (Montgomery County, 3; Pike County, 3; Houston County, 2; Lee County, 6; Tallapoosa County, 12; and Autauga County, 2). The task force focused on bringing gun cases to the USAO for possible federal prosecution.

PIRT as the "Glue" to the ICE Task Forces

Having established relationships with local law enforcement through the decentralized task force structure, the USAO's next encouraged them to forward gun crime cases via the PIRT process. The local task force member first screens the case to determine if it should be brought before the PIRT. Every Wednesday, task force members come from as far as 2 hours away to attend the PIRT meeting.

Following the decentralized task force format, not all members come every week. But if they have a case to present or seek updates on prior cases, the PIRT meeting provides a venue for local task force members to communicate directly with a team of AUSAs, local prosecutors, ATF agents, and other local law enforcement officials. Through these meetings, law enforcement officers can receive immediate feedback on the prospects for federal prosecution as well as continual feedback on existing cases. This weekly meeting has proven a critical component of team building among the local, state, and federal officials involved in the Middle District's Alabama ICE.

Training

In asking local law enforcement agencies to participate in the Alabama ICE task force, the USAO realized that local law enforcement officers would need to be educated about federal gun laws, how to investigate cases and write reports, the elements needed for federal prosecution, and case processing. The USAO felt it was important to have someone in every local law enforcement agency in the Middle District trained on Alabama ICE and responsible for the program and officer training. In August 2002, in cooperation with the Northern and Southern Districts of Alabama, the LECC conducted training on federal gun laws for local law enforcement at its annual statewide law enforcement meeting.

Within the first year of ICE fully operating in the Middle District, the PSN Attorney (i.e., the PIRT Coordinator) and ATF held trainings throughout the district for all local law enforcement agencies at no cost to the agencies. This two-person team created two different trainings: one a basic training for all law enforcement that can be done at roll calls, and another more in-depth for ICE task force members. During these trainings, the national PSN Program and Alabama ICE are described and federal laws pertaining to gun crimes and the elements needed to prove a case in federal court are reviewed. Specific gun cases and the information needed from local law enforcement to effectively prosecute a case federally also are discussed.

To supplement the training, the USAO created "visor" cards for law enforcement officers that list all the federal criminal gun laws. Officers carry these cards in their cars and have an immediate reference to the federal criminal gun law statutes. The USAO also created a smaller "palm" card that has questions for law enforcement to ask when they discover someone has a gun illegally. These resources helped enhance local investigations, which in turn improved the quality of gun cases being brought to the PIRT meetings. Importantly, they also communicated a message that the USAO and ATF were committed to working with and supporting local law enforcement in seriously responding to gun crime. Finally, the Middle District participated in National District

Attorneys Association trainings as well as several ATF-delivered trainings (e.g., “Characteristics of Armed Person and Firearms Identification”).

Community Engagement

The Middle District selected the River Area United Way to be both its fiscal agent and community engagement partner. This was a new role for the United Way in that it had never worked as closely with law enforcement as it would in ICE. The Executive Director felt, however, that PSN fit into the United Way’s role as a community agent. Furthermore, the PSN mission fit the United Way’s mission of public education and reaching out to the public to address significant community problems, in this case, the reduction of gun crime.

From the perspective of the USAO, the United Way offered two critical competencies. First, it provided expertise and a long history in the fiscal management of externally funded, community-level programs. Second, it provided expertise in community engagement not typical of a federal prosecutor’s office. Consequently, the United Way was asked to provide fiscal management, implement a media campaign, and help engage community groups and service providers to develop a prevention component of PSN.

Research Partners¹⁴

An additional PSN partnership involves the ICE task force and a research team. The Middle District selected a multidisciplinary team of faculty from nearby Troy University to be its research partner (RP). The RP was asked to conduct analyses of the nature and distribution of gun crime across the district. As strategies were developed and implemented, the research team modified its plans to conduct analyses that could inform the task force of whether PSN strategies were indeed targeted at the sources of the gun crime problem. Finally, the research team collaborated with the Michigan State University (MSU) research team to assess the impact of the Middle District’s PSN initiative on gun crime.

Early in the Alabama ICE experience, the RPs explored the possibility of gathering gun crime data from every county in the district. This proved to be impracticable, given that most of the involved law enforcement departments did not have computerized crime information systems. However, the RPs developed a relationship, facilitated by the USAO, with the Alabama Criminal Justice Information Center (ACJIC). ACJIC was able to provide gun crime data for 11 different key jurisdictions within the district.

The Nature of the Gun Crime Problem in the Middle District

The RPs began analyzing gun crime in the Middle District at a fairly global level and have since focused more directly on Montgomery, which accounts for 50 percent of all gun crime in the district, as well as on individual offenders prosecuted under Alabama ICE.

The RPs began by creating a trend report for Montgomery for the years 1998–2002. They analyzed gun cases and looked at demographics (e.g., age, race, and gender) of victims. The MPD and prosecution officials believed that crime was evenly distributed throughout Montgomery County. That is, gun crime is “braided” throughout the county rather than geographically concentrated in particular areas. The RPs’ analyses confirmed these suspicions.

The perception of local officials was that gun crime in Montgomery largely involved chronic offenders who chose to illegally carry and use guns. This was largely supported by analyses of those convicted in federal court under PSN (see discussion below of analyses of pre-sentence investigations). This was coupled with the belief that overcrowding in the state of Alabama prison system had reached such a critical level that convicted felons were unlikely to face prison time, or, if sentenced to incarceration, could anticipate significant reductions in time served.¹⁵

As summarized in figure 3, the PSN task force viewed the gun crime problem as primarily driven by chronic offenders who illegally possessed and used guns, largely in Montgomery but of concern throughout the district, and who perceived little threat of sanction due to the overcrowding crisis in the state prison system.

As will be discussed, following the initial problem analysis, the RPs have continued to monitor and evaluate the PSN Program. This has included examining crime trends and, at the request of the USAO,

Figure 3: Summary of Gun Crime Problem in the Middle District of Alabama

- Chronic offenders illegally carrying and using guns.
- Largest concentration in Montgomery but without clear geographic “hot spots.”
- Lack of credible sanctions at state level due to prison overcrowding.
- Lack of credible sanctions at federal level due to lack of federal prosecution for federal gun crimes.

analyzing data from the federal pre-sentence reports to help paint a picture of what types of criminals are involved in PSN/ICE cases.

Gun Crime Reduction Strategies

On the basis of this problem analysis, the PSN task force developed an overall strategy as well as action steps needed to effectively implement the strategy. These steps included suppression, intervention, and prevention strategies.

Suppression Strategy

The cornerstone of the suppression strategy was to increase federal prosecution in order to incapacitate chronic offenders and deter potential offenders from illegally carrying or using guns. Given the situation in the Alabama prison system, both federal and local police and prosecutors agreed that federal prosecution was the only available tool for increasing prosecution for gun crimes and both removing chronic offenders from the community and increasing the credibility of the threat of sanction.

To increase federal prosecution, the USAO was dependent on referral of cases from local police departments. Consequently, a great deal of effort initially involved the USA and LECC meeting police, sheriffs, and prosecutors to explain PSN/ICE and the commitment of the USAO to prosecute gun crime. Early efforts focused on Montgomery and then expanded to the remainder of the district. This also involved working with ATF to increase their resources and commitment to investigating and preparing gun cases for federal prosecution.

As previously discussed, the major tool for increasing federal prosecution was the establishment of PIRT.¹⁶ PIRT's weekly meetings created a venue to review gun crime cases for potential federal prosecution. The routine meetings also created an accountability mechanism to minimize the likelihood of serious gun offenders "slipping through the cracks," thereby incapacitating the most serious offenders and increasing the credibility of the threat of sanctions for gun crimes.

Intervention Strategy

The increased federal prosecution component was coupled with a community-wide intervention strategy of communicating the threat of sanctions. This was a core ingredient of the statewide Alabama ICE and modeled on Richmond's Project Exile. The media campaign was intended to maximize the impact of federal sanctions by communicating the USAO's commitment to federal prosecution of illegal gun possession and use. The Middle District PSN task force selected the United Way as its community engagement and media partner in part due to its experience in community media campaigns. The campaign was

Figure 4: Alabama ICE Logo

launched in September 2002 with bumper stickers, flyers, and posters—bearing the Alabama ICE and PSN logos—at local fairs and other large gatherings. It was soon followed with television commercials, radio ads, and billboards located throughout the city.

The United Way started out by setting some short-term goals:

1. Get the word out about PSN to the public through a series of press conferences.
2. Facilitate the USA attending at least one meeting at each of the 41 civic clubs in the area to talk about PSN.
3. Get the USA and the Chief of MPD on a local television news talk show.
4. Get a local *Cops* show to do an entire show highlighting Alabama ICE with the USA and the Chief of MPD.

The United Way also contracted for some traditional media spots, paying for 16 billboards then leveraging this purchase into 54 PSN/ICE billboards. In addition, local billboard owners agreed to leave PSN billboards in place after the rental period ended until the space was rented to another vendor. Consequently, billboards that would normally have been blank while waiting to be rented instead carried the PSN message.

Applying the approach that worked with billboards, the United Way paid \$43,000 for media coverage and ended up getting about \$100,000 of media time across the entire district. In January and February 2004, PSN had 519 television spots on the NBC affiliate, which the station now runs *pro bono*. They continue to run ads from the national media campaign as well as radio ads. PSN/ICE bus wraps also have been utilized throughout the district.

The second round of the media campaign expanded to include locally produced ads addressing domestic violence. The RP, leveraging

the resources of Troy University, helped facilitate the creation of an advertisement warning hunters that if they get convicted of a domestic violence offense, they will be a prohibited person under federal law and will no longer be able to possess a firearm.

Prevention Strategy

In addition to the strategies of increased prosecution and mass communication of the deterrence message, the task force implemented prevention strategies. The PSN task force utilized DOJ's block grant funds to support prevention efforts. While many prevention programs already existed in the community, they did not have a firearms component to them. With the help of PSN funding, these programs shifted their focus to include gun crime and safety issues.

The USA and her PSN leadership team shared with the selection committee their vision of what they wanted to fund with the block grant money based on their PSN strategic planning. The grants were awarded in January 2004, with the grantees having 2 years to complete their projects. The United Way assigned one person to work with the block grant program, who was responsible for allocating funds to the programs and ensuring their operations were consistent with PSN strategies. The staff person also monitored the grants line item by line item to make sure the program activities conformed to the proposal. Among the prevention programs funded by PSN are:

- GRAVE (Get Real About Violence Education), a diversion program for children found with weapons at school, is run by the Juvenile Court and the Prosecutor's Office in Montgomery County. The student's parent(s) must attend the program with their child. Program officials report that youth attending the program have had a very low recidivism rate. Other counties in the district have reported interest in the program.
- Dothan Police Department summer program for teens is a recreation program intended to provide teenagers with a positive experience and attempts to keep youth out of trouble during the summer.
- Metro Montgomery Youth Crime Stoppers program is a school-based early intervention program that distributes materials such as cartoons, pencils, erasers, bookmarks, and anti-violence pledges. Over 10,000 comic strips with the theme, "Keeping Cool Rules," have been prepared for distribution in schools as well as festivals, fairs, minor league baseball games, "kids and cops days," and similar events. The sheriff's department has a similar puppet program about non-violence.
- Metro Montgomery Youth Crime Stoppers set up an anonymous school tip hotline. This program is new (i.e., had not existed

prior to PSN funding). To date, this resulted in the confiscation of four guns and several weapons at local area schools.

In addition, PSN block grant funds were used to support a city computer upgrade intended to allow improved record-keeping and analysis. In an effort to increase the surveillance of high-risk probationers and parolees, the Pardon and Parole Board received funding to purchase eight vehicles to allow Pardon and Parole agents to conduct home visits.

Although fiscal responsibility is placed with the United Way, the USAO maintains close contact with the United Way and the grantees. The LECC works regularly with the United Way staff to monitor the funded programs, and the FAUSA similarly works with the United Way to ensure that the media and public education campaigns are effectively implemented.

Figure 5 summarizes the Middle District's gun crime reduction strategies.

Figure 5: Gun Crime Problem and PSN Strategies

Problem	Overall Strategy	Specific Components	
Chronic offenders	Incapacitate and deter	USAO commitment to federal prosecution	All AUSAs expected to prosecute gun crime cases
Lack of credible sanctions for gun crime offenses	Increase federal sanctions	PIRT—joint gun crime prosecution screening	Increase flow of cases and improve quality
	Increase supervision of gun crime offenders	Pardon and Parole Board involvement	Provide agents vehicles for community supervision
Perception of low certainty and severity for illegal gun possession and use	Implement public education campaign	Alabama ICE	TV, radio, billboard, poster, etc. campaign
Lack of geographic focus	Focus on relationships	Build relationships throughout district	USA and LECC meet all law enforcement leaders in district
		Sustain relationships throughout district	Locals involved in weekly PIRT meetings
			Locals involved in quarterly task force meetings Feedback to officers
Lack of gun crime prevention efforts	Prevention of illegal possession and use of guns	PSN funds used to support community-based prevention strategies	GRAVE—diversion program for youths found with weapons School-based gun crime tips line Anti-violence education programs for schools and youths

Results

Evidence of Implementation—Outputs

The data clearly indicate that federal prosecution of gun crime offenses has increased in the Middle District. Despite the relatively small number of AUSAs (nine in 2000), the number of indictments under U.S. Code Title 922 and 924 violations increased from 15 in fiscal year (FY) 2000 and 20 in FY 2001, to 92 in FY 2003, an increase of over 500 percent. Similarly, the number of defendants prosecuted in federal court increased from 21 in FY 2000 to 103 in FY 2003 and 86 in FY 2004. This increase in indictments and defendants placed the Middle District in the top 7 percent in terms of its percentage-point increase in federal prosecution. The numbers are even more telling when considered in light of the district's population. As one of the least populous U.S. districts (ranked 19th least populous out of 94), the Middle District's 2003 rate of defendants per 100,000 is 9.7. This federal prosecution rate per 100,000 population is among the top 15 (i.e., 14th) of the 94 judicial districts. Thus, evidence suggests that the goal of accepting all cases (absent evidentiary problems) was achieved.

One goal of the PIRT meetings was to ensure that individuals with extensive criminal histories charged with a gun crime received serious consideration for federal prosecution. A second goal was to identify for potential federal prosecution active offenders believed to be at-risk for gun crime involvement. Evidence that PSN/ICE has targeted chronic offenders is available through analysis of the prior criminal histories of the first 94 federal defendants convicted under PSN, compiled from a review of the federal pre-sentence investigations. These 94 defendants had accumulated 761 prior convictions, an average of 8.1 prior convictions per defendant. The prior offenses included personal crimes (20.1 percent), weapons offenses (4.9 percent), property crimes (17 percent), public disorder (27.1 percent), drug offenses (18.8 percent), and juvenile crimes (12.2 percent). The wide variety of offenses is consistent with the second goal of the PIRT meetings, federal prosecution of offenders believed at risk for continued gun crime, who may not present extensive histories of violent crime. In total, these 94 defendants received sentences ranging from 4 months to life. Excluding life sentences, the average sentence was 75 months (i.e., 6 years and 3 months).

Evidence of Impact—Outcomes

Ultimately, the goal of PSN is to reduce gun crime. To assess whether the Middle District's PSN strategies had this impact, the outcome analyses focused on gun crime and homicide trends in the City of Montgomery. In addition, to control for "outside factors" that may change gun crime rates, property crimes were analyzed to assess if there was a simultaneous reduction in overall crime that might

account for the findings. The focus on Montgomery was based on the fact that it served as the initial principal target area of the task force. Though the task force moved to a district-wide strategy, the early focus was on Montgomery and PSN efforts have been sustained in Montgomery through the present.¹⁷

As an initial step in the outcome analysis, researchers reviewed the annual trends in homicide, armed robbery, and assault with a firearm. Comparing 2002 and 2003 with the previous 2 years provided evidence of a decline in these crimes, particularly for aggravated assaults with a firearm (see figure 6).

Figure 6: Gun Crime Trend Data—City of Montgomery

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Homicide (total)	30	27	30	18	25
Aggravated Assault with a Firearm	319	293	303	244	283
Robbery with a Firearm	448	464	543	505	488

To proceed with a more detailed outcome analysis, researchers examined the monthly trend for three categories of offenses: homicide, armed robbery with a firearm, and aggravated assault with a firearm.¹⁸ Researchers treated the May 2002 date of the first publicly announced PSN/ICE conviction as the formal intervention date of PSN implementation.

Although the trend lines are suggestive of a reduction in gun crime, to assess the significance of these trends researchers conducted a time series analysis, one of the most powerful evaluation tools because it can take into account crime trends prior to the intervention point and assess the significance of any change in crime levels following the intervention.

The time series analyses are based on monthly data from January 2000 through December 2004.¹⁹ Figure 7 (below) presents the key findings.²⁰ Assaults with a firearm had a statistically significant decline ($p < .05$) suggesting there is a maximum likelihood mean reduction of three assaults with firearms per month immediately after the intervention date of May 2002. This translates into a reduction from approximately 309 gun assaults per year to approximately 270. Homicide also declined, though its significance level was marginal (alpha .116). This translates to a reduction from 29.5 homicides per year to 22.8. The analyses do not indicate any effect on armed robbery.

A possible explanation for this decline in violent crimes could be that overall, crime rates were declining at a simultaneous, or similar, rate. If this were the case, the above findings would simply be a result

of a general decline in crime. In order to control for a possible global change in crime independent of firearm offenses (e.g., whether there was a regression to the mean in overall crime patterns), researchers examined monthly time series analysis of motor vehicle thefts and property offenses.²¹ The authors hypothesize that if such a global decline occurred, the time series analysis on property crimes would have a similar negative mean difference, and that this difference is not due to chance (with the same alpha standard: $p < .15$).

When examining the comparison offenses, there was actually a slight increase in the average number of motor vehicle thefts and overall property offenses, although this change was not statistically significant. Thus, property offenses remained consistent over the time series period. That is, the comparison variables that account for outside factors (global decline in overall crime) did not change during this same period. This suggests that the reduction in homicide and assaults with firearms may be attributable to the PSN intervention.

Thus, the results suggest that PSN/ICE contributed to a significant reduction in assault committed with a gun and in homicides in the period following the first widely-publicized ICE federal prosecution. There was no observable effect on robbery.

The decline in crime is coupled with a belief among law enforcement officials that the perceived costs of illegally carrying or using a firearm have changed in the minds of potential offenders. This is attributed to the actual increase in federal prosecution as well as the public media campaign. Anecdotally, during each visit to Alabama, the members of the research team observed ICE billboards and heard either television or radio PSN ads. Law enforcement officials provided numerous stories of defendants asking upon arrest, “please don’t ICE me.” On a flight to Montgomery, a RP had a conversation with a

Figure 7: Time Series Analysis—May 2002 Intervention Date

Crime	Pre-Intervention Mean	Post-Intervention Mean	Mean Difference (Post-Pre)	ARIMA Model			Intervention Coefficient	p-value (s.e.)
				p	d	q		
Target Offenses								
Assault with Firearm	25.78	22.50	-3.28	0	0	0	-3.29 (1.6)	.038
Armed Robbery (Ln)	3.64	3.68	0.04	0	0	1	.049 (.10)	.616
Homicide	2.46	1.90	-0.56	0	0	0	-.558 (.36)	.116
Comparison Offenses								
MV Theft (Ln)	4.67	4.86	0.19	0	1	0	-.017 (.05)	.747
Property (Ln)	7.09	7.15	0.16	1	1	0	-.019 (.021)	.787
(12) ²²								

Montgomery resident who, when asked by the researcher whether he had heard of Alabama ICE, immediately responded, “Oh yes, gun crime equals hard time.”

Summary

Project Safe Neighborhoods in the Middle District of Alabama can best be described as a Project Exile-type approach. Confronted with research indicating that gun crime was largely committed by chronic offenders, concentrated in Montgomery but without readily identifiable geographic concentrations, and convinced that potential offenders no longer feared the threat of state sanctions for illegal gun possession and use, the PSN task force decided to focus on increased federal prosecution coupled with an aggressive public education media campaign. The strategy was largely dependent on establishing new partnerships between local, state, and federal law enforcement, as well as with research and community engagement partners, to change the way business takes place in the prevention of and response to gun crime. The findings suggest that indeed the response to gun crime changed in the Middle District and that, at least in the principal target area of Montgomery, there has been a measurable decline in gun assaults and homicides. This section will review the key components of the way business changed as well as the lessons learned from the Middle District’s experience with PSN.

Leadership

A striking finding, consistently expressed by all officials interviewed, was the crucial role of the leadership provided by the U.S. Attorney. The USA continually affirmed PSN as a top priority to local, state, and federal law enforcement partners and to the community. Local law enforcement noted that the USA and her AUSAs followed through on their commitments to support local law enforcement through increased prosecution of gun offenders and by including local law enforcement as equal partners in PSN. As one chief of police stated, “The U.S. Attorney is true to her word.”

In addition to the role of the USA, leadership was provided by the ATF Special Agent in Charge, local chiefs and sheriffs, the Law Enforcement Coordinating Council, and the AUSAs involved in PSN. This diffuse leadership appeared to be a product of the task force structure.

Task Force Structure

The initial assessment of potential barriers to effective implementation of PSN in the Middle District suggested two major challenges. The first was the small size of the USAO coupled with the small number of ATF agents at the time PSN was initiated. The second was the lack of a

history of federal-state-local law enforcement collaboration. To address these challenges several strategic decisions were made.

First, rather than rely on one person to be the driving force behind PSN, numerous resources were devoted to PSN. The USA was personally very active in communicating the PSN message and building relationships with local law enforcement. The criminal chief would be responsible for ensuring that federal prosecution of gun crime would be a major priority for all AUSAs. Another AUSA was appointed PSN Coordinator with overall responsibility for PSN implementation and for overseeing the media and community outreach. Another AUSA was tasked with leading the Prosecution and Investigative Review Team process. The LECC, a well-respected law enforcement official from the state, became the U.S. Attorney's liaison to local and state law enforcement. The United Way was enlisted to serve as fiscal agent and to implement the media and community outreach campaign.

Second, rather than ask local agencies to devote personnel to a more traditional multi-jurisdictional task force model, the USA and LECC addressed the concerns of local chiefs of police and sheriffs and created a task force structure whereby local agencies provided liaison officers to the PSN task force who were able to continue serving their local agencies. The local liaison officers, coupled with local prosecution counterparts and AUSA gun prosecutors and ATF agents, constituted the PSN task force coordinated through the PIRT process.

As a result of this structure, PSN was not dependent on any single leader but instead relied on multiple leaders playing various roles and sharing responsibility and accountability.

Partnerships

As noted above, a key dimension of changing the business of the criminal justice system response to gun crime in the Middle District involved establishing a network of relationships among the USAO and federal law enforcement, local law enforcement, prevention-oriented social service providers, the media and fiscal partner, and the research partners. This was a primary focus of the USA and PSN team within the USAO. Evidence of the success of these efforts was clear during site visits and interviews with key personnel. Local law enforcement officials from throughout the district spoke of the new-found relationships between their agencies, the USAO, and ATF.

An important ingredient in the federal-local relationship was that the local law enforcement executives were able to help shape the structure of the PSN task force. Rather than permanently assign officers to a federal multi-jurisdictional task force, where officers might be assigned throughout the district, the PSN task force was structured with liaison officers who remained within their home agencies but who contributed to the PSN task force through their involvement in PIRT.

Similar relationships were established with local prosecutor's offices. Interviews suggested that prior to PSN, some local prosecutors perceived "a wall" between their offices and the USAO. PSN, and the efforts of the U.S. Attorney and the PSN team within the USAO, were credited with establishing new relationships with the local prosecutors. The result was that the local prosecutors are now actively reviewing gun-related cases to determine which cases can most effectively be handled locally and which should be referred to the PIRT for potential federal prosecution.

In addition to the relationship established with the United Way as the fiscal agency, other new relationships have emerged as PSN has evolved. For example, the USAO is partnering with the Family Justice Center in Montgomery in the effort to address domestic violence, and the city's Weed and Seed Program has been linked to PSN.

And the integration of research was new for all involved. Initially, the RPs attempted to collect crime data from all law enforcement agencies in the Middle District. They quickly encountered problems and realized this would not be a beneficial use of their time. Consequently, they focused their analysis on gun crime in Montgomery. In addition, the RPs would have liked to examine patterns across ICE cases but for various reasons (e.g., security clearance and ongoing case investigations) they were unable to access the case files. Instead, the compromise was an analysis of federal pre-sentence investigations for all ICE cases.

Regular Meetings

Officials at both the federal and local levels credit the PIRT meetings with establishing strong partnerships, addressing case specific and broader policy issues, and creating accountability to ensure that gun crime cases are addressed effectively. The weekly PIRT meetings were very well attended and described as critical for developing and maintaining a focus on gun crime.

The weekly PIRT meetings are supported by less frequent luncheon briefings. Beginning in 2004, the USA initiated the first of what is now three ICE luncheon briefings. All chiefs of police, sheriffs, district attorneys, and law enforcement and prosecution personnel assigned to the PSN task force are invited. The meetings are considered opportunities for the USAO to update attendees on PSN, to affirm the USAO's commitment to PSN, and to thank local officials for their continued involvement and support of PSN.

Challenges

As with most PSN task forces, ICE officials describe a series of ongoing challenges. Foremost for the Middle District are the number of federal gun prosecutors and ATF agents. The USAO PSN team is concerned that their ability to effectively prosecute cases referred to the

USAO, given the increased desire of local officials throughout the district to refer cases for federal prosecution, will be constrained by the small number of ATF agents and federal prosecutors.

Another challenge relates to turnover in key personnel. The Montgomery Police Department witnessed the resignation of the chief of police, who had been one of the key proponents of ICE. Fortunately, the new chief is described as being similarly committed. Similarly, officers assigned to the PSN task force have often been reassigned. The district has addressed this issue through a commitment to training, and interviews suggest that some turnover is beneficial because the officers assigned to the task force take their knowledge of ICE and federal gun crime prosecution to their new assignments.

Evidence suggests that the USAO has been able to overcome these challenges. The task force continues its work, as witnessed by the high level of participation in PIRT meetings. Additional evidence is provided by the application of the PSN/ICE model to other crime problems. Specifically, the PSN approach served as the foundation for a Child Pornography Task Force. Similarly, the Montgomery Police Department developed an auto theft unit based on the PSN approach of analysis, focused response, and assessment.

Figure 8 summarizes the key components of the PSN task force.

Figure 8: Summary of Key Components of the Middle District of Alabama’s Successful PSN Task Force

Key Component	Description
Leadership	Active role of USA; PSN clear priority
PSN Task Force Structure	Shared responsibility (USA, PSN Coordinator, Criminal Division Chief, PIRT Coordinator, LECC) All AUSAs expected to prosecute gun crime cases
Partnerships	Active outreach to local law enforcement agencies by USA and LECC Inclusion of RPs as task force members and integration of research into ICE process Active involvement of media and community engagement partners
Regular Meetings	PIRT meets weekly

Conclusion

A key criterion for whether a PSN district would be selected for inclusion in the case study series is whether gun crime is being addressed in new ways following the implementation of PSN. For the Middle District of Alabama, the answer appears to clearly be “yes.” New partnerships have been established between federal, state, and local law enforcement as well as with research and media and community engagement partners. A gun case prosecution review team has been established with the goal of identifying cases most appropriate for federal prosecution in the hope of increasing the costs for illegal possession and use of guns and thereby incapacitating chronic offenders and deterring potential gun crime. Coupled with this strategy, the district has worked with the PSN task forces in the two other USAOs serving Alabama to communicate the gun crime deterrence message throughout the state. Finally, gun assaults and homicides appear to have been reduced in the target city of Montgomery following the implementation of PSN and in contrast to the trend in property crime.²³

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Endnotes

1. Bureau of Justice Statistics: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjc/cvict_c.htm (as of 12/28/04).
2. Levels of property crime and violent crime not involving a gun are lower in the United States than many other western democracies, but gun crime remains exceptionally high in the United States. See Zimring and Hawkins, 1999; Bureau of Justice Statistics: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/ijs.htm (as of 12/28/04).
3. Reviews of promising gun crime reduction strategies that can assist research partners and task forces include Braga, 2004; National Research Council, 2005; Ludwig and Cook, 2003; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999. See also Dalton, 2003; Decker, 2003.
4. These data were reported by the U.S. Department of Justice, Executive Office for United States Attorneys (10/05).
5. Data compiled by Professor Joe Trotter and colleagues as part of American University's PSN Technical Assistance Program.
6. Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2004. See also www.psn.gov.
7. Comparable demographic and crime statistics were unavailable for the federal districts of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and the Marianas Islands. All comparisons are based on the 90 remaining federal districts.
8. All population data are based on the 2000 U.S. Census.
9. Montgomery County ranks 203rd in murder rate and 551st in aggravated assault rate out of the 3,143 counties (and independent cities) in the United States.
10. The exact population for Montgomery County is 223,510. Thus, all counties with a population of +/- 50,000 people (e.g., counties with at least 173,510 and at most 273,510) were reviewed.
11. The mean murder rate for these 109 counties is 0.4756 with a standard deviation of 0.5187. Montgomery has a murder rate of 1.30, 1.5 standard deviations greater than the mean.
12. The mean aggravated assault rate for these 109 counties is 27.10 and the standard deviation is 19.1. Montgomery has an aggravated assault rate of 34.36 and is within one standard deviation of the mean.
13. The USAO had prosecuted other gun crime cases that were ICE-eligible, but this was the first case announced publicly as an ICE prosecution.

14. This case study is the product of a collaboration between Troy University and Michigan State University.

15. The belief that overcrowding discredits the threat of sanctions was echoed by officials in the Southern and Northern Districts of Alabama.

16. Gun crime prosecution screening teams have proven one of the major PSN strategies across the country. For more information, see Decker et al., 2006.

17. It will be interesting to assess the long-term trend in gun crime throughout the district. However, insufficient time has passed in terms of meaningful implementation of PSN in the other areas of the district to allow outcome evaluation. In addition, the relatively low base rates of gun crime outside of Montgomery may make it difficult to detect significant changes in gun crime.

18. Researchers used total homicides as opposed to homicides with a firearm because of the relatively small number of gun homicides in a city the size of Montgomery.

19. Researchers examined what is known as a distinct zero order, or abrupt permanent change, that is designed to test whether the trend in crime following the May 2002 intervention date was significantly different than the pre-intervention trend. All of the time series conducted adhere to the assumptions of the ARIMA (Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average) modeling requirements, specifically bounds of stationarity and invertability (details of the analysis are presented in the technical appendix). Following the argument of Sherman and colleagues (2000) and Hayes and Daly (2003) in the case of evaluation research, researchers employed the less restrictive significance level ($p < .15$) to assess significance. This means that researchers considered a change to be significant if it would be unlikely to occur by chance less than 15 out of 100 times.

20. For a more detailed discussion, refer to the technical appendix.

21. Property offenses are operationalized as a combination of burglaries, larcenies, and motor vehicle thefts.

22. In the case of property offenses, there was clear monthly mean and variance non-stationarity as well as annual seasonality (e.g., spikes in the autocorrelation functions (ACFs) every January), which were controlled by creating a seasonal and annual differencing component in the model.

23. There was no observable impact on armed robberies.

Technical Appendix: Analysis of Impact, Time Series Analysis

The analyses are based on monthly data from January 2000 through December 2004. The research partners (RPs) examined two distinct zero order transfer functions, or abrupt permanent change functions, time series statistics with intervention dates in May 2002 (media-celebrated case) and February 2003 (five new Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Alcohol and Explosives officers assigned). All of the time series conducted adhere to the assumptions of the ARIMA (Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average) modeling requirements, specifically bounds of stationarity and invertability.

First, the series for each crime type was examined to see if it was stationary over time. If so, the raw data was used. If not, logging (natural logarithm) the data addressed the issues of variance non-stationarity. In the case of property offenses and motor vehicle theft, the RPs both logged and differenced the series in order to parcel out some of the unstable spikes in property offenses that occurred across time.

After assessment of the stationarity issue, the series was plotted and the autocorrelation functions (ACF) and partial autocorrelation functions (PACF) were examined to see if key spikes required modeling any moving average (the “q” in the tables) or autoregressive (the “p” in the tables) components. Each series modeled the spikes, if necessary, independent of one another (i.e., the best series were identified to fit each crime type independent of one another). None of the models has any q-statistics, or white-noise estimates, that are statistically significant (which follows another assumption of time-series statistics). The series fit the data independent of the intervention component.

Finally, an intervention component was added to the model. For homicide and gun assaults, the coefficients are negative in value, suggesting a reduction in both intervention periods. However, armed robbery, property offenses, and motor vehicle theft rates were relatively identical in both pre- and post intervention periods (suggesting there is no change in armed robbery or property offenses over this series).