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ATTORNEY GENERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT DIRECTIVE NO. 2021-10

TO: All Law Enforcement Chief Executives and County Prosecutors

FROM: Andrew J. Bruck, Acting Attorney General

DATE: October 5, 2021

SUBJECT: **Directive Establishing Statewide Gun Violence Reduction Task Force**

This Directive establishes the framework for the “Gun Violence Reduction Task Force,” a new initiative that we are launching today with the Acting U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey and our state’s 21 County Prosecutors. This is hardly the first interagency initiative to tackle gun violence in New Jersey, and you may ask why another task force is necessary. This document explains what problem we are trying to solve and why we believe our plan will work.

Since becoming Acting Attorney General two months ago, I have met with dozens of law enforcement leaders across New Jersey to discuss strategies for reducing gun violence. Without exception, the observations of every police chief and County Prosecutor included four basic facts: (1) a majority of gun violence incidents can be traced to a small group of individuals; (2) these incidents are concentrated in specific places, sometimes as small as a few city blocks; (3) the violence is fueled by a steady supply of illegal firearms, obtained mostly out of state; and (4) a growing number of incidents involve juveniles with no significant criminal record.

But it is a fifth observation that has most stuck with me. Over and over again, I heard that while law enforcement officers often know who is most responsible for the violence in their communities, this information does not always make its way to the prosecutors best positioned to hold these violent individuals accountable. Sometimes, the information gap exists between a local police department and their County Prosecutor’s Office, which by default serves as the lead prosecuting agency for most violent crimes. But just as often, there is insufficient information-sharing between county, state, and federal prosecutors, who have overlapping jurisdiction in firearms cases and must work together to identify which entity can most effectively prosecute their shared targets. The consequences of these information gaps can be deadly: the longer that a criminal remains on the streets after committing an act of violence, the greater the likelihood that the person will act again.

In several of New Jersey’s largest municipalities, law enforcement agencies have addressed



this issue by establishing city-specific anti-crime initiatives, which bring together federal, state, county, and local law enforcement to share intelligence on the individuals who present the most significant threats to public safety. These city-specific task forces are now mostly known as “Violent Crime Initiatives” (or VCIs) and they have been particularly successful in locations—such as Newark and Camden—where law enforcement agencies and prosecutors at all levels of government have forged genuine partnerships to share information and identify investigation targets.

The task force we are establishing today borrows the best features of the VCI model and takes it statewide. Our decision to include all 21 counties in the new task force reflects the reality that, while most violent crime is concentrated in a handful of hard-hit communities, the investigations into this conduct can span the entire state. A firearm trafficked into New Jersey through Salem County might wind up as the murder weapon in a Paterson homicide; a vehicle stolen in Ocean County might be used as the getaway car in a Trenton shooting. By improving information-sharing across agencies, we improve our ability to solve crimes and hold wrongdoers accountable throughout the Garden State.

Our Gun Violence Reduction (GVR) Task Force is built upon four components:

- *Agency Liaisons.* Each of New Jersey’s more than 500 state, county, and local law enforcement agencies is required to designate an officer to serve as its “Agency Gun Violence Intelligence Liaison.” This officer operates as a single point of contact within their agency for coordinating requests for information and investigative assistance to and from the GVR Task Force.
- *County Teams.* Each of the 21 County Prosecutor’s Offices (CPO) is required to designate an Assistant Prosecutor and a law enforcement investigator to serve as its “County Gun Violence Intelligence Team.” This pairing is responsible for coordinating requests to and from the local liaisons in their county and for ensuring that any high-priority targets assigned by the GVR Task Force to the CPO are effectively investigated and prosecuted.
- *Regional Coordinators.* The GVR Task Force is organized into three regional coordinating teams – North, Central, and South – that work to identify the individuals most responsible for gun violence in a community and then share intelligence in order to build the strongest possible criminal cases against these targets. The regional teams will be led by an Assistant U.S. Attorney, a Deputy Attorney General in the Division of Criminal Justice, an Assistant Prosecutor, and a superior officer of the New Jersey State Police (NJSP), with the teams physically based in the Real-Time Crime Centers that New Jersey State Police recently established in Newark, Trenton, and Gloucester County. The three regional teams will coordinate with one another under the supervision of a statewide management team consisting of senior leadership of the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the Attorney General’s Office, the County Prosecutors Association of New Jersey, and NJSP.
- *ROIC Intelligence Products.* The GVR Task Force will rely on information collected

and disseminated by the New Jersey Regional Operations & Intelligence Center (NJ ROIC), which the New Jersey State Police operates as a clearinghouse for law enforcement intelligence on gun violence. Intelligence products developed by the ROIC will help task force members in identifying high-priority targets and building cases against them.

The goal of the GVR Task Force is not to supplant existing law enforcement initiatives—including the VCI programs that are working well in certain New Jersey cities. And it is very much meant to complement and not to disrupt the various community-based violence intervention programs that are emerging across the state. The goal is to build a statewide infrastructure for improved law enforcement cooperation, which in turn will reinforce the many other promising anti-violence projects under way in New Jersey. It goes without saying that no single program will end gun violence in our state. But pairing targeted law enforcement efforts with meaningful community investments, we can save lives and make our state safer.

Pursuant to the authority granted to me under the New Jersey Constitution and the Criminal Justice Act of 1970, N.J.S.A. 52:17B-97 to -117, which provides for the general supervision of criminal justice by the Attorney General as chief law enforcement officer of the State in order to secure the benefits of a uniform and efficient enforcement of the criminal law and the administration of criminal justice throughout the State, I hereby direct all law enforcement and prosecuting agencies operating under the authority of the laws of the state of New Jersey to implement and comply with the directives outlined below regarding the creation of an intelligence-driven, violence suppression task force, as well as a statewide intelligence liaison network.

I. Creation of Statewide Violence Suppression Task Force

The Gun Violence Reduction Task Force will be comprised of a management team and three regional coordinator teams. Each of these four teams will consist of representatives from the following entities: U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of New Jersey, the Division of Criminal Justice (DCJ), the 21 County Prosecutor’s Offices (CPOs), and the New Jersey State Police (NJSP).

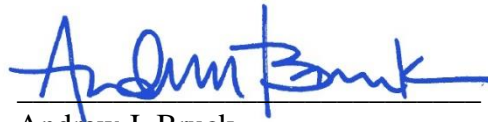
- A. ***Statewide Management Team.*** This team will oversee the GVR Task Force, and resolve any legal, jurisdictional, workload, or operational issues that may arise. The Statewide Management Team will hold regular meetings with the Regional Coordinators to not only monitor operational progress, but also identify and compare crime trends across regions.
- B. ***Three Regional Coordinator Teams.*** Each will be comprised of four individuals: an Assistant United States Attorney, a deputy attorney general, an assistant prosecutor from one of the CPOs in the relevant geographic region, and a superior officer from the regional intelligence unit of the New Jersey State Police. These four individuals will work as one cohesive team physically based out of the Real Time Crime Center (RTCC) for their relevant geographic region, utilizing real-time crime data and human intelligence gathered through the intelligence network also created by this directive, to develop investigative and prosecutorial strategies to suppress the violent criminal activity they identify. The regional teams shall be organized as follows:

1. The **North** Region will operate out of the RTCC in Newark and include Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Sussex, Union, and Warren counties.
 2. The **Central** Region will operate out of the RTCC in Trenton and include Burlington, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, and Somerset counties.
 3. The **South** Region will operate out of the RTCC in Gloucester County and include Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem counties.
- C. **County Teams.** Each County Prosecutor is directed to appoint a member of their investigative staff and an assistant prosecutor to serve as their County Team. The County Teams will work with the Regional Coordinators to coordinate joint efforts with local agencies and serve as an information sharing conduit between the GVR Task Force and local agencies.
- D. **Agency Liaisons.** Every law enforcement agency in New Jersey is directed to appoint an officer (of any rank) to serve as an Agency Gun Violence Intelligence Liaison for the agency. While federal agencies operating in New Jersey are not directed to appoint a liaison, our federal partners are invited to be active participants in the activities of the task force by also appointing a liaison to work with the Regional Coordinators. Agency Liaisons will serve as the point person for the task force on all intelligence gathering and vetting matters that arise in the localities they police.

II. **Other Provisions**

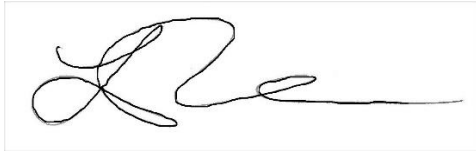
- A. **Non-enforceability by third parties.** This Directive is issued pursuant to the Attorney General's authority to ensure the uniform and efficient enforcement of the laws and administration of criminal justice throughout the State. This Directive imposes limitations on law enforcement agencies and officials that may be more restrictive than the limitations imposed under the United States and New Jersey Constitutions, and federal and state statutes and regulations. Nothing in this Directive shall be construed in any way to create any substantive right that may be enforced by any third party.
- B. **Severability.** The provisions of this Directive shall be severable. If any phrase, clause, sentence or provision of this Directive is declared by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, the validity of the remainder of the document shall not be affected.
- C. **Deadlines.** The DCJ Director shall establish the manner and timing for task force participants to designate personnel and liaisons to support the task force, provided that all designations are made no later than October 31, 2021.
- D. **Training.** The DCJ Director shall determine what if any additional training is required for task force participants, including agency liaisons, and shall establish the manner and timing for such training.

- E. **Questions.** Any questions concerning the interpretation or implementation of this Directive shall be addressed to the DCJ Director, or their designee.
- F. **Effective date.** This Directive shall take effect upon issuance. The provisions of this Directive shall remain in force and effect unless and until it is repealed, amended, or superseded by Order of the Attorney General.



Andrew J. Bruck
Acting Attorney General

ATTEST:



Lyndsay V. Ruotolo
Director
Division of Criminal Justice

Dated: October 5, 2021