

# NEWS

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United States Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey  
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor  
Newark, New Jersey 07102

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***Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney***

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***More Information?*** Call the Assistant U.S. Attorney or other contact listed below to see if more information is available.

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Contact:  
Greg Reinert, PIO  
856-757-5233

camd0301.rel  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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Camden to Get Violent Crime Impact Team  
Led by Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms

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(More)

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Public Affairs Office  
<http://www.njusao.org>  
Michael Drewniak, PAO

973-645-2888

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NEWARK – Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez and U.S. Attorney Christie J. Christie have announced that Camden will be among selected cities in the United States to get a team of federal law enforcement officers led by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to assist in fighting gun trafficking and violence, with the goal of identifying and prosecuting the most violent individuals.

Camden was among five new cities identified yesterday by Attorney General Gonzalez to get the support of Violent Crime Impact Teams (VCIT). As part of VCIT, county and local law enforcement officers and agents from the ATF, the U.S. Marshals Service and other federal agents will be assigned to coordinate and deploy the initiative in Camden.

The VCIT announcement follows Christie’s meeting in early January with federal, county and local law enforcement. At that time Christie announced a coordinated effort to assist in the fight against violence and gun crime in Camden, which has been identified among the nation’s most violent cities.

"I want to thank Attorney General Gonzales for recognizing the need for new federal law enforcement resources in Camden," Christie said today, "With this Violent Crime Impact Team partnering with other federal authorities, the Camden County Prosecutor and Sheriff and the Camden PD, we will see a measurable effect on the quality of life of our residents."

Attorney General Gonzalez made the announcement concerning the new VCITs yesterday, during a public appearance (see his remarks below).

"ATF is committed to working together as true partners to combat violent crime in Camden," said Mark Potter, the Special Agent in Charge of the ATF Philadelphia Field Division, which covers Camden. "We look forward to using our expertise to help improve the lives of the citizens of Camden."

"Gun violence has plagued our city and its residents for many years," said Camden Police Chief Edwin Figueroa. "With the additional aid of ATF we will be able to expand our investigative capabilities of violent crime committed with guns. This joint effort will augment the Camden Shoot Team and assist in the investigation of gun smuggling into Camden."

"I welcome additional federal resources to help fight city crime, particularly gun crime with its close link to narcotics trafficking," said Camden County Prosecutor Vincent P. Sarubbi. "This latest infusion of resources adds to the momentum generated by other initiatives implemented over the past few months to achieve a significant reduction in crime in all of Camden's neighborhoods. I look forward to working with all law

enforcement agencies and making Camden safe for its law-abiding residents.”

The VCIT initiative takes a six-point approach to reducing violent crime:

- Use technology and human intelligence to identify geographic areas within 15 cities with violent firearms crime;
- Identify and target the worst violent offenders, the criminal organizations that support them, and determine how many of them are armed career criminals;
- Use criminal investigations as well as investigative tools and resources to disrupt and dismantle criminal activity being perpetrated by the targeted individuals and organizations;
- Arrest and prosecute the targeted individuals and their associates in the federal or state jurisdiction that lends itself to the most appropriate penalty;
- Work with community leaders to cultivate solid and sustained commitment between the community's residents and law enforcement; and
- Evaluate results on a monthly basis to assess VCIT progress toward achieving the initiative's goals.

VCIT has been designed to work in conjunction with Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), a comprehensive nationwide strategy geared toward combating gun crime in communities across the country. VCIT builds on the success of PSN, but adds additional resources to the target cities.

Federal gun charges can mean tough, mandatory prison sentences for repeat felons or those who commit crimes with guns.

In fiscal 2003, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey charged 114 individuals with federal gun crimes. In fiscal 2004, 92 individuals were charged federally with gun crimes. This year, to date, 39 individuals have been charged federally.

Between July 1, 2003, and March 31, 2004, 97 individuals were convicted and sentenced in New Jersey federal court for gun offenses. Approximately 68 percent convicted were sentenced to more than three years in prison, and approximately 43 percent convicted were sentenced to more than five years in federal prison.

Following are remarks made yesterday by Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez:

“For the past four years, the President has challenged the Department of Justice to work with our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners to drive down the

rate of violent crime, crimes committed with guns, and trafficking in illegal drugs. We have met the challenge. Today crime is at a 30-year low.

“The President’s Project Safe Neighborhoods - which coordinates the efforts of Federal, state, and local law enforcement to stamp out crimes committed with guns - has been a key reason for that success, and an example of the cooperation the President had demanded. So is our latest Project Safe Neighborhoods-inspired initiative, Violent Crime Impact Teams. The VCIT initiative has shown how we can fight crime better, expand freedom, and open new opportunities in communities that had lost all hope.

“To date, our ATF-led Violent Crime Impact Teams have moved into 15 cities in need of anti-crime reinforcements. These teams also include DEA agents; Deputy U.S. Marshals; state troopers and county sheriffs; probation officers; and federal and state prosecutors. Working together, they have taken the most violent and the most dangerous offenders off our streets.

“The progress thus far in our 15 cities in just the first nine months has been outstanding. We are now expanding this program to new communities. Today, I am pleased to announce that VCIT strike forces will soon be on the streets in five additional cities: Hartford, Connecticut; Houston, Texas; Fresno, California; Camden, New Jersey; and New Orleans, Louisiana.”

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