



Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D. C. 20530

March 8, 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL FEDERAL PROSECUTORS

FROM: THE ATTORNEY GENERAL 

SUBJECT: Commitment to Targeting Violent Crime

It is the policy of the Department of Justice to reduce crime in America, and addressing violent crime must be a special priority. With crime rates rising, this is not an easy task as all professionals know. But, we do have strong evidence that aggressive prosecutions of federal laws can be effective in combatting crime. Our Department's experience over decades shows these prosecutions can help save lives. Unfortunately, the most recent crime data available shows a 10.8 percent increase in the number of murders in this country, while federal prosecutions for violent crimes have been declining.

This memorandum directs a focused effort by the Department's dedicated public servants to investigate, prosecute, and deter crime. Last week, I established a Task Force on Crime Reduction and Public Safety consisting of law enforcement agencies and Department representatives that will make specific recommendations to me on ways in which the federal government can most effectively combat violent crime in partnership with local, state, and tribal law enforcement.

As a next step, I am today directing the 94 United States Attorney's Offices to partner with federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement to specifically identify the criminals responsible for significant violent crime in their districts. Once identified, the United States Attorney's Offices must ensure that these drivers of violent crime are prosecuted, using the many tools at a prosecutor's disposal. To accomplish this goal, in all cases, federal prosecutors should coordinate with state and local counterparts to identify the venue (federal or state) that best ensures an immediate and appropriate penalty for these violent offenders. I know many of you are already employing these strategies, and I ask that you increase this effort to ensure that your process is achieving the results you seek.

When it is determined that federal prosecution of these violent offenders is appropriate, federal prosecutors should use the substantial tools at their disposal to hold them accountable and ensure an appropriate sanction under federal law. Oftentimes the criminal statutes specifically

designed to target violent crime will be most applicable. Those statutes include, but are not limited to:

- 18 U.S.C. § 922 (firearms offenses, including possession and straw purchasing offenses);
- 18 U.S.C. § 924(c) (possession of a firearm during and in relation to a violent crime or drug trafficking offense);
- 18 U.S.C. § 1951 (Hobbs Act robbery);
- 18 U.S.C. § 2119 (carjacking);
- 18 U.S.C. § 1959 (violent crime in aid of racketeering); and
- 18 U.S.C. §§ 1961-68 (Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act).

Of course, federal prosecutors are not limited to using only these tools, and, in fact, statutes targeting other criminal acts may be equally effective. For example, many violent crimes are driven by drug trafficking and drug trafficking organizations. For this reason, disrupting and dismantling those drug organizations through prosecutions under the Controlled Substances Act can drive violent crime down. I encourage you to employ the full complement of federal law to address the problem of violent crime in your district. Further guidance and support in executing this priority – including an updated memorandum on charging for all criminal cases – will be forthcoming.

By consistently identifying the leading violent offenders in our communities and employing all available tools to hold them accountable, we will combat violent crime. Thank you for your commitment to work aggressively toward this goal and for your service to the Department.