



Warren C. Evans
Sheriff

News Release

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Law enforcement agencies join forces to take on subculture of guns, drugs and street gangs

A task force of 140 local, state and federal law enforcement officers has joined forces in an unprecedented and multi-faceted effort to go after individuals who are committing the largest percentage of violent crime in Detroit and surrounding communities, Wayne County Sheriff Warren C. Evans announced today.

The Guns, Drugs & Gangs initiative officially began on May 1 and is culminating this week with dozens of arrests, search warrants, and unannounced visits to the homes of parolees and probationers. With one day left in the operation, officers had arrested more than 70 suspects – including the suspected gunman in a double murder – and at least 12 other gang members. Officers also have confiscated significant amounts of drugs and several weapons, including an assault rifle and a tech-nine automatic handgun.

The effort is being led by the Wayne County Sheriff's Office and includes significant federal involvement from the FBI, ATF, DEA, US Immigration & Customs Enforcement, US Marshal and US Attorney's Office, as well as the Detroit Police Department, Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, Oakland & Macomb County Sheriff's Offices, Michigan Department of Corrections, Michigan State Police, Detroit Public Schools, and others.

The project first began in early April, when Evans' staff began cross referencing its own warrant files, with FBI data on known gang members. What Evans learned, he said, was eye-opening: nearly 25 percent of those wanted on serious gun, drug or violent offenses also had known gang affiliations. When the gang data was compared against active parolees and probationers in Wayne County with convictions for similar offenses, the gang connection rose to more than 50 percent.

It is believed that gang-related activity is responsible for the majority of fatal and non-fatal shootings in the city of Detroit, most of which take place in outdoor neighborhood settings where the possibility for innocent bystanders to be struck is extremely high.

“Although they are not highly organized like ones found South Central L.A., for example, these neighborhood gangs still wreak havoc on the communities they operate in,” Evans said. “This operation goes to the heart of violent crime in our area by focusing on who are known to be committing it.”

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According to the FBI, there are approximately 50 loosely organized neighborhood gangs in Detroit and surrounding communities. Included among them are the A-Team, the Detroit Thug Lords, the Zone 8 Gang and the Schoolcraft Boyz, all of which deal drugs and guns.

“We have to attack gun, drug and gang violence on all fronts with a coordinated and organized response,” said Prosecutor Worthy. “It just makes sense that we can maximize our ability to combat crime when we pool all of our resources.”

Among those arrested so far was one of two gunmen in a September 2007 shooting that left two people dead and two others seriously injured on Walton Street in Detroit. The 18-year-old suspect is a member of the A-Team gang, which operates in the area of Tireman and Livernois and deals in drugs. The shooting is believed to be related to a feud with another gang in the area.

The suspect is one of more than 80 known gang members with active warrants who have been targeted during this operation, along with another 80 who are on parole or probation and being subjected to unannounced home checks by Sheriff’s Deputies and Michigan Department of Corrections agents. Planners also identified an additional 250 wanted felons whose criminal history also includes gun, drug or violent offenses but have no known gang affiliation.

Andrew G. Arena, Special Agent in Charge (SAC), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Detroit, Michigan advised, “Enforcement operations like this highlight the great successes that can be realized through the collaborative efforts of local, county, state, and federal law enforcement agencies which ensure the safety and security of all citizens.”

Since many of the offenders are juveniles, the County's Department of Children & Family Services, which funds a violent juvenile apprehension unit. Also joining the GDG team is the Detroit Public Schools Department of Public Safety, which has been identifying current and expelled students engaged in suspected gang activity on school grounds.

Evans said that based on what already has been learned, each agency will benefit from debriefing interviews of each the suspects, which already is generating new leads in major cases.

“ATF is always proud to work with one of our favorite law enforcement partners like the Wayne County Sheriff's Office. Supporting efforts like the Guns, Drugs and Gangs Enforcement Project helps to make our neighborhoods safer one arrest at a time,” said Thomas E. Brandon, Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Detroit Field Division.