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Project Safe Neighborhoods credited with reducing violent crime
Despite recent spike in violent crimes, Chicago murders are on decline

For Immediate Release

Chicago, IL – Wednesday, July 8, 2009 - Today, the Chicago Crime Commission credited Project Safe Neighborhoods Chicago with playing a significant role in reducing violent crime and murder in the city. The purpose of Project Safe Neighborhoods is to reduce the incidence of gun violence in Chicago's most afflicted neighborhoods.

“Project Safe Neighborhoods’ objective is achieved through a multi-faceted approach that includes law enforcement, intervention, and prevention strategies. Participants carry out these strategies through the development of partnerships among Federal, State and Local government as well as community and faith-based providers,” according to J.R. Davis, Chairman of the Chicago Crime Commission. “Project Safe Neighborhoods’ comprehensive strategy is designed to prevent youth from committing a gun crime; intervene in the lives of those individuals struggling to re-integrate into society following release from prison; and prosecute to the fullest extent of the law those individuals who choose to threaten the safety of Chicago’s neighborhoods by committing a gun crime,” he added.

(more)

The cornerstone of the program, headed up by the Northern District of Illinois U.S. Attorney's Office, is that every state defendant charged with a gun related offense is reviewed for federal prosecution. "In the world of 'bad guys', going to federal prison and being cut off from family and fellow gang members is absolutely the worst thing that can happen to you," said Davis.

"Additionally, the U.S. Attorney's Office, in partnership with the Chicago Police Department, the Cook County State's Attorneys Office and federal law enforcement agencies, is aggressively prosecuting gang members and organizations in an effort to stem the violence that street gangs bring to Chicago's neighborhoods and the surrounding communities," he continued.

"Despite last weekend's spike in violent crimes, the number of murders in Chicago is on the decline compared to last year and is currently tracking at the 2007 homicide rate of 442. Moreover, this figure represents a significant reduction from the high of 761 murders in 1997," Davis continued.

While this data is promising, more work must be done. "An analysis of murders from 1991 through 2008 demonstrates that shootings were the predominant cause during that time period, ranging from 69 percent in 1991 to over 80 percent in 2008," Davis continued. "Also, of all murders committed in 2008 where motive was identified, street gang altercation was the motive in more than 35 percent of them," he said.

Davis believes Project Safe Neighborhoods will continue to be a leader in addressing violent crime in Chicago and will have a significant impact on reducing murders in the city.

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