



Department of Justice

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FACT SHEET: DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE INITIATIVE TO COMBAT GANGS

“Now we need to focus on giving young people, especially young men in our cities, better options than apathy, or gangs, or jail.”

President George W. Bush, February 2, 2005

Gangs have become an increasingly deadly threat to the safety and security of our nation’s citizens. Addressing this threat is one of the top priorities of the Department of Justice, and today Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales unveiled his plan to combat gang violence across America.

The Attorney General’s strategy is twofold: First, prioritize prevention programs to provide America’s youth and offenders returning to the community with opportunities that help them resist gang involvement. Second, ensure robust enforcement policies when gang-related violence does occur.

The cornerstones of the Attorney General’s program are an expansion of the successful Project Safe Neighborhoods program to include new and enhanced anti-gang efforts, and a new comprehensive anti-gang program to be rolled out later this year in six cities with significant gang problems.

Key Components of the Anti-Gang Initiative:

The Justice Department will dedicate \$30 million in grant funding to support new and expanded anti-gang prevention and enforcement efforts under the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative. These new funds will allow local PSN task forces to combat gangs by building on the effective strategies and partnerships developed under PSN.

- *Collaboration* – PSN brings together federal, state and local law enforcement and communities in a unified effort to reduce gun crime across America. Each U.S. Attorney’s office has created partnerships and a strategy to prevent gun crime and to enforce the law against armed criminals.
- *Increased prosecutions* – Under this successful initiative, the number of federal firearms prosecutions increased 73 percent from fiscal year 2000 to fiscal year

2005. Almost all of these gun criminals are convicted and sentenced to time in prison.

Six City Comprehensive Anti-Gang Program:

Under Attorney General Gonzales's leadership, the Justice Department will establish a comprehensive anti-gang prevention and enforcement program in six communities experiencing a significant gang problem. This program will incorporate prevention, enforcement and re-entry efforts to address gang membership and gang violence at every stage.

- *Prevention* – The Department will make available approximately \$1 million in grants per community to support comprehensive prevention efforts such as the Gang Reduction Program, which focuses on reducing youth-gang crime and violence by addressing the full range of personal, family and community factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency and gang activity.
- *Enforcement* – The Department will make available approximately \$1 million in grants per community to help support enforcement programs that will focus law enforcement efforts on the most significant violent gang offenders.
- *Reentry* – The Department will make available approximately \$500,000 per community to create mentor-based reentry assistance programs that will provide transitional housing, job readiness and placement assistance, substance abuse and mental health treatment to prisoners re-entering society.

Additional Prevention, Enforcement and Reentry Efforts:

- *Prevention* – Each U.S. Attorney will organize a summit of law enforcement and community leaders to discuss best practices, identify gaps in services, and create a prevention plan to target at-risk youth within their individual communities.
 - U.S. Attorneys will be encouraged to utilize all local prevention resources, including existing programs that have successful track records like Weed and Seed and Project Safe Neighborhoods.
- *Enforcement* – The Department of Justice will create a new national gang task force composed of representatives from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and U.S. Marshals Service, among others. The task force will create law enforcement strategies and operations across agency lines aimed at dismantling national and trans-national violent gangs.
 - The task force will coordinate overlapping investigations, ensure that tactical and strategic intelligence is shared between law enforcement agencies, and serve as a central coordinating center for multi-jurisdictional gang investigations involving federal law enforcement agencies.
- *Reentry* – Persons sentenced to prison may be gang-involved before conviction, become gang-involved while incarcerated, or risk gang involvement upon release.

To help address those risks and realities, the Bureau of Prisons will expand the Life Connections Program that currently operates in five of its facilities. At least three new programs will be started this year. The objective of the Life Connections Program is to reduce repeat offenses and bring reconciliation to the victim, the community and the inmate through personal transformation, using the participant's faith commitment.

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