

REMARKS

OF

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OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

PUBLIC SAFETY PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT

ON

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NEW ORLEANS, LA

Thank you, Kristie [Brackens]. It's a privilege and a pleasure to be here in New Orleans. I want to thank Acting U.S. Attorney Evans and Superintendent Harrison for welcoming us to their great city and for all they do to keep New Orleanians safe.

The National Public Safety Partnership is a true collaboration, and I want to acknowledge all our federal, state, and local partners – mayors, police chiefs, U.S. Attorneys, and every one of their terrific staff.

I'd like to take just a moment to single out my Justice Department colleagues and PSP co-leaders – ATF Acting Director Thomas Brandon, FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, DEA Principal Deputy Administrator Robert Patterson, Associate Director of Operations William Snelson from the U.S. Marshals Service, staff from the Office for Victims of Crime, and the Director of the COPS Office, Russell Washington. This effort, and the successes we're seeing because of it, would not be possible without their dedication and leadership. Thank you all.

As well, I'd like to welcome leadership from our newest PSP sites who join me on the dais – Chief A.C. Roper Jr., of Birmingham, Alabama; Assistant Chief Randle Taylor of Indianapolis, Indiana; Deputy Chief Don Crowe of Memphis, Tennessee; and Deputy Chief Michael Troendle of Toledo, Ohio.

And last but certainly not least, I want to thank the outstanding PSP team, especially Kristen Mahoney and Kristie Brackens from our Bureau of Justice Assistance and Teddy Miller from the FBI, who, along with Kristie, serves as co-director.

I'm excited about this summit, and I'm even more excited about what this summit represents. We have more than 350 civic leaders, law enforcement executives, criminal justice professionals, researchers, and advocates from across the country, all working on behalf of a common cause – the safety of our communities.

We know you wouldn't be here today if this weren't an urgent issue. Even during the best of times, you have plenty to keep you busy back home. There must be something pressing that brings you here today.

I suspect the reason you're here is the same reason my Justice colleagues and I are here. It's the reason the heads of DOJ's enforcement and assistance agencies are all represented in this room. It's what drove the President to make crime reduction the focus of one of his earliest executive orders. And it's the single greatest concern of our Attorney General.

I'm talking of course about the wave of crime and violence that's sweeping over our cities, the tide of gangs and guns flowing into our neighborhoods, and the flood of illegal drugs swamping our communities.

A sanitized discussion about national crime rates clouds the reality that many of you face every day. What you see are families torn apart by violence; streets,

playgrounds, and schools that are no longer safe for our kids; entire neighborhoods held hostage by violent criminals.

While others talk in academic terms about low overall crime levels, you relate to a different set of data – the statistics showing murder rates up by 11 percent in 2015, the largest increase in half a century, with per capita homicide rates up in 27 of America’s 35 largest cities.

You also see, first hand, the ravages of drugs. Nearly 60,000 Americans lost their lives to drug overdoses in 2016. That’s an increase from the 52,000 overdose deaths the year before. Most of these deaths were caused by prescription opioids, heroin, and synthetic drugs like fentanyl that can pose a lethal risk to law enforcement officers. The opioid epidemic has become a public health emergency and is fast becoming a public safety crisis – and you are on the front lines.

The cities you love and that you dedicate your lives to serving – all of them wonderful places – are under a triple threat, from guns, gangs, and drugs. It’s critical that we act quickly and with all our available resources to meet it – which is exactly what we’re doing through the National Public Safety Partnership.

The Public Safety Partnership is the Justice Department’s answer to the President’s call to restore the safety of our cities. It’s a cooperative venture between the Justice Department’s enforcement units, our grant-making and assistance components, and local and state agencies, aimed at helping communities expand their capacity to fight serious violent crime.

PSP relies on data and evidence and taps federal and local expertise to design crime-fighting strategies. Its objective is to marshal resources from participating agencies, to share knowledge, and to make sure communities have what they need to meet the pressing challenges they face.

PSP encompasses two approaches, a diagnostic approach that looks closely at the factors driving violent crime and helps local leaders devise strategies, and an operations approach that provides intensive training, coaching, and analysis. In both cases, we’re providing support to state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies aimed at improving the investigation and prosecution of gun crimes, drug trafficking, and gang violence.

We’ve engaged 22 sites across the country, from Camden, New Jersey, to Compton, California. Four of those cities just joined the Partnership – Birmingham, Indianapolis, Memphis, and Toledo, Ohio. I’m very pleased to welcome them to this effort, and I look forward to making my office’s resources available as we work together to root out violence in their communities.

The cities that have been part of the Partnership have made substantial progress. At our site in Milwaukee, a Compstat program initiated by PSP has enabled a regular exchange of information and crime metrics between federal, state, and local officials.

Thanks to this cooperation, the target site recorded a 23 percent decrease in robberies. When the model was exported to another area of the city, the new neighborhood saw a 30 percent decline in non-fatal shootings and firearm-related homicides over the course of a year.

The PSP site in St. Louis launched a gun intelligence center early this year, created a domestic violence fatality review board, and engineered a collaboration between the FBI, DEA, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and local police and prosecutors. This partnership, called Mission SAVE, put a sharp focus on crime deterrence that helped yield more than 500 arrests, 400 weapon seizures, and \$5 million in assets.

And here in New Orleans, with PSP support, the New Orleans Police created a city-wide Tiger Team to look for armed robbery patterns across the districts and focus on known armed robbery offenders. They set up weekly meetings to share case information with the FBI, ATF, and Marshals. Thanks to their collaboration, armed robberies, homicides, and shootings have all decreased this year.

I think we'd all agree that these are clear markers of success and strong evidence that the PSP model works. The Public Safety Partnership shows us that even the most intractable public safety challenges can be overcome when all stakeholders are involved and committed to the charge.

We're still early in the game, and we shouldn't underestimate the enormity of the challenges we face, nor should we be content with short-term gains, however impressive. Lasting, sustainable progress will depend on an investment in cooperation and an openness to sharing information. You have demonstrated the depth of your commitment, and we are reaping the rewards. But there is more to do.

The small victories that you have managed to achieve already are a testament to the value of working together. You are setting an example, both for the citizens you serve and for the country at large. We are grateful for your leadership.

On behalf of the Attorney General, I commend you for your dedication to the Public Safety Partnership – and more importantly, to the safety of your cities. I thank you for your time and for all that you do on behalf of your communities. I wish you all the best for a successful summit.

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