

U.S. Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of Investigation



APRIL 1995

# **FBI Law Enforcement**

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# **SAFE**

The word "SAFE" is rendered in large, bold, black letters. Each letter is filled with a high-contrast, black and white photograph of a city skyline at night, showing illuminated buildings and streets.

# **STREETS**

The word "STREETS" is rendered in large, bold, black letters. Each letter is filled with a high-contrast, black and white photograph of a city street scene at night, showing buildings, streetlights, and possibly a body of water reflecting the lights.



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Louis J. Freeh  
Director

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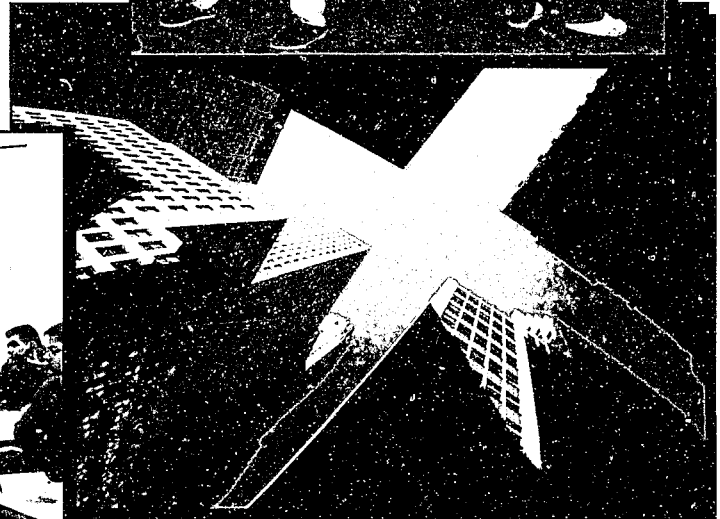
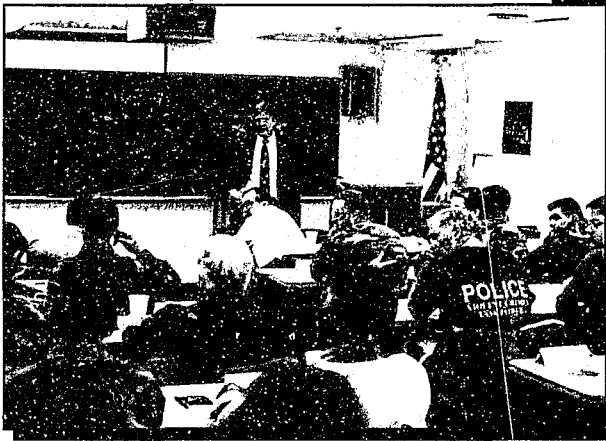
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# Safe Streets Combining Resources to Address Violent Crime

By  
Douglas Shur

APR 1995

ACQU... ..



“Murder!” “Drive-By Shooting!” “Fatal Carjacking!” These all-too-familiar newspaper headlines appear daily across the country. Violent crime is a harsh reality that threatens communities, large and small alike, throughout America. In his resolution of March 1, 1994, regarding the National Anti-Violent Crime Initiative, FBI Director Louis J. Freeh stressed the tremendous toll violent crime takes on society:

Random and senseless violence, combined with organized criminal enterprises engaging in violence

motivated by greed, pose a direct threat to our nation’s domestic security. The staggering dimension of this violence strikes fear in the hearts of decent people everywhere. At present, many Americans are held hostage in their homes....Unabated, our country’s epidemic of violence, which strikes at the very fabric of our society, threatens future generations of Americans.<sup>1</sup>

According to the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reports, 24,539 people were murdered in 1993; 70 of these victims were law enforcement officers.

In the same year, more than 104,800 rapes occurred, as well as nearly 659,760 robberies and over 1,135,100 aggravated assaults.<sup>2</sup>

Added to these figures is the startling fact that youths are beginning to engage in serious violent activity at a younger age. Last year, news accounts of an 11-year-old in Chicago who reportedly murdered a 14-year-old in cold blood shocked the Nation. The young offender subsequently was killed, allegedly by fellow gang members who feared that he would cooperate with detectives and implicate other gang members. The victims and perpetrators in such cases represent more than just



Lieutenant Shur of the Los Angeles, California, Police Department participated in the Safe Streets Executive Fellowship Program at FBI Headquarters.

“  
**The Safe Streets mission is to establish long-term, proactive task forces that focus on violent crimes....**  
”

isolated instances of brutality; they project what is fast-emerging as a bleak future for America's youth.<sup>3</sup>

With shrinking budgets, States, counties, cities, and towns must optimize limited resources in order to combat career criminals and the chaos created by their activities. Violent crimes have no boundaries, and violent criminals, no sense of sanctity. Thus, no community is immune from the effects of violent crime. State and local law enforcement agencies have recognized this encroachment of violence in their communities and have taken necessary actions, such as placing more officers on the streets, targeting troubled areas, and instituting innovative community policing programs.

Attorney General Janet Reno's introduction of the National Anti-Violent Crime Initiative has directed Federal law enforcement toward a coordinated and cooperative response to assist State and local authorities. During the past several years, the FBI has developed a

successful model to coordinate this collaboration through multijurisdictional task forces known as "Safe Streets." The combination of Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies in a unified approach to crime successfully has placed violent criminals where they belong—in prison.

#### BACKGROUND

The end of the Cold War afforded the FBI an opportunity to enhance its response to the escalating trend of violent crime in America. In January 1992, the FBI elevated its Violent Crime and Major Offenders Program (VCMOP) to a national priority. At this time, the FBI also reassigned 300 special agents from its counter-intelligence program to the VCMOP and announced the Safe Streets initiative within the VCMOP. This initiative established the authority for each special agent-in-charge of the 56 FBI field offices to create FBI-sponsored task forces directed at the national violent

crime problem, in cooperation with State and local law enforcement.

The Safe Streets mission is to establish long-term, proactive task forces that focus on violent crimes and the apprehension of violent fugitives. Today's Safe Streets task forces (SSTFs) were modeled on the six successful prototype task forces that have operated in select FBI field offices since 1989.

Currently, 119 task forces operate in 52 field offices and involve over 350 State and local law enforcement agencies. The SSTFs have teamed 681 FBI special agents with 873 State and local law enforcement officers and 135 other Federal law enforcement personnel. These partnerships have formed 30 fugitive, 52 violent crimes, 28 violent crimes/fugitive, and 9 major offenders task forces.<sup>4</sup>

Fugitive task forces are responsible for locating and apprehending the most violent State and Federal fugitives. Violent crimes task forces target violent street gangs, drug-related organizations, and perpetrators of crimes such as murder, armed robbery, kidnaping, and extortion. Interstate theft/major offenders task forces focus on violent major theft groups, including armed truck hijackers, carjacking gangs, and jewelry theft rings. In addition to applicable State statutes, the SSTFs use the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization (RICO) statute, Interstate Transportation in Aid of Racketeering (ITAR) statutes, and Hobbs Act violations to attack the criminal element.

With the inauguration of the SSTFs, the VCMOP's accomplishments have been considerable, with more than 61,000 arrests made since

1991. In addition, the VCMOP has filed over 19,000 complaints or warrants and has returned over 20,000 indictments that led to 22,600 convictions. A significant share of these totals are directly attributable to the work of the Safe Streets task forces.<sup>5</sup>

### **TASK FORCE BENEFITS**

The task force concept mutually benefits all participants. Experienced State and local officers bring with them valuable criminal intelligence information and a familiarity with their plagued communities. These resources, combined with the FBI's expertise in conducting complex investigations and using Federal investigative tools, constitute an effective partnership to address violent crime. Deputizing State and local officers expands their jurisdictional reach to apprehend violent fugitives and to conduct expanded investigations. By avoiding wasteful duplication in areas of concurrent jurisdiction, task forces increase the effectiveness and productivity of limited personnel and logistical resources.

### **CASE STUDY: GARRET MOUNTAIN VIOLENT CRIMES/FUGITIVE SAFE STREETS TASK FORCE**

The Garret Mountain Violent Crimes/Fugitive Safe Streets Task Force (GMTF) in Northern New Jersey exemplifies the effectiveness of SSTF operations. The task force consists of 10 FBI special agents and 10 county and local law enforcement officers from 8 agencies. From May 1992 to August 1994, the GMTF apprehended 937 fugitives, cleared an additional 168 warrants

by locating the subjects in confinement, obtained 186 Federal Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution (UFAP) warrants, and was credited with 62 convictions.

Because of the GMTF and other law enforcement efforts, the Clifton, New Jersey, Police Department realized a 24-percent reduction in violent crimes and a 17-percent reduction in the overall crime rate in its community.<sup>6</sup> These reductions have occurred while cities nationwide with similar populations between 50,000 and 99,000 registered a decrease of only 2 percent and 1 percent, respectively.<sup>7</sup>

**“  
Overtime  
reimbursement  
through Safe Streets  
allows officers to  
devote their full  
attention to task force  
investigations.  
”**

The FBI has funded \$46,985 of GMTF's operational expenses since its formation. Officer overtime costs have amounted to \$47,735, of which the FBI has reimbursed \$37,130 to participating agencies. County and local agencies have absorbed the remaining \$10,605 in officers' overtime and have contributed another \$486,000 in officers' salaries and \$54,000 in equipment.<sup>8</sup>

### **ADVANTAGES**

With the Federal partnership involved in the SSTFs, local law

enforcement agencies have been able to apply Federal statutes and guidelines to criminal investigations in their communities. For example, the Chicago Police Department is under a Federal consent decree restricting the collection of intelligence. This was a result of the department's intelligence unit known as the "Red Squad" 20 years ago. However, the SSTF in Chicago was able to obtain Federal indictments on the Black Gangster Disciples leaders by using sophisticated intelligence and investigative techniques.

Working within two separate task forces, the police departments in Hartford, Connecticut, and Bridgeport, Connecticut, indicted 22 members of the Almighty Latin Kings Nation, including all leaders throughout the State. The task forces used drug buys and court-approved electronic surveillance to indict the Latin Kings.

In California, SSTFs developed Federal indictments on 10 Shoreline Crips and 12 Schoolyard Crips. Using cooperating witnesses and undercover police officers to conduct drug transactions, the task forces targeted the gangs' leadership.

Another key advantage of Federal participation in the task forces is the incarceration of criminals in Federal prisons. Convicted criminals must serve at least 85 percent of a Federal sentence. Actual incarceration rates in many States are substantially lower because of overcrowding and other factors. Faced with longer prison terms, criminals are becoming more cooperative as witnesses for the prosecution.

Additionally, the task forces improve the lines of communication

## The Mobile Violent Crime Joint Task Force



**T**he Mobile Violent Crime Joint Task Force (MVCJTF) in Alabama is comprised of the Mobile Police Department, Prichard Police Department, Mobile County Sheriff's Department, and the FBI. MVCJTF members work off-site where daily operations are supervised by a supervisory FBI special agent and a Mobile Police Department sergeant. Special agents and officers share similar responsibilities and duties. Each officer has received a "top secret" clearance, has been deputized, and has access to sensitive information.

The U.S. attorney's office and the district attorney's office were involved with the early formation of the MVCJTF, each assigning a prosecutor. The two offices now support each other in prosecution of task force cases.

Both the FBI and the participating local agencies have had direct input in developing the mission and goals of the task force. The MVCJTF first identified gangs as the area's primary violent crime problem, but as the task force accumulated more intelligence information, its focus changed to violent fugitives.

The Mobile Police Department and the FBI's Mobile Field Office attribute a considerable reduction in serious crimes, in part, to the MVCJTF. UCR figures for Mobile reflect a significant decrease in serious crimes between 1992 and 1993. Except for the homicide rate, which matched a 3-percent increase recorded nationally, the rates of serious crimes in the Mobile area declined significantly. The number of robberies decreased 11 percent, from 1,188 to 1,053, while the national decrease was 2 percent. Forcible rapes decreased from 172 to 114, or 34 percent. Nationally, the decrease was 4 percent. Aggravated assaults decreased from 906 to 870, or 4 percent, in contrast to a 7-percent increase nationwide. Burglaries decreased from 5,056 to 4,435, or 12 percent, twice the national decrease of 6 percent. Automobile thefts decreased from 2,284 to 1,412, or 38 percent. Nationally, the decrease was 3 percent. Larcenies decreased from 11,754 to 8,991, or 24 percent, whereas the number of larcenies nationwide fell only 1 percent. Above all, the Mobile Violent Crime Joint Task Force demonstrates what an SSTF can accomplish with all involved agencies working in partnership to address the violent crime problem.

between Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies. Intelligence-sharing not only assists regional SSTFs to identify and apprehend local criminals but also enhances individual investigations on a wider national scale.

An LAPD detective serving on a SSTF fugitive task force used the

database to search for homicide suspects. With this information, he was able to track to Alabama a suspect wanted for a 1973 homicide in Los Angeles. An Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution warrant was issued for the subject's arrest.

Since the murder, the suspect changed his identity and became

an established citizen in Alabama. Accompanied by FBI personnel from the Montgomery, Alabama, Resident Agency (Mobile Division), the detective, now a special Federal deputy marshal, went to the suspect's business. When the detective placed the suspect under arrest for the Los Angeles murder, he

sagged and slowly lowered his head, then quickly denied the charges. However, the evidence told a different story, and the fugitive subsequently was convicted for the 1973 murder.

### Overtime

Several features combine to form the solid partnerships necessary to the success of the Safe Streets initiative. One of the most critical features stems from the FBI's authority to reimburse State and local agencies for the overtime worked by their officers assigned to the task forces.

This congressionally mandated authority is essential for two key reasons. First, it promotes a sense of equality among task force members; second, it provides the flexibility necessary to deploy personnel where and when they are needed for investigations. Because many law enforcement officers supplement their incomes with second jobs, they often are unavailable for duty outside of their regular shifts. Overtime reimbursement through Safe Streets allows officers to devote their full attention to task force investigations. Without such reimbursement, State and local officers may not be available for duty when the circumstances of a case requires it, leaving a diminished task force complement to conduct investigative work and face dangerous subjects.

The acute budget constraints facing many States and communities further underscore the importance of Federal reimbursement. Many agency administrators have noted that without adequate overtime reimbursement, participation in the task forces would be difficult,

if not impossible.<sup>9</sup> The sentiments expressed by the chief of the Oakland, California, Police Department represent the views of many administrators. He states that due to reduced public outlays, the department would find it difficult to participate in the highly effective task forces if it had to shoulder the responsibility for increased overtime itself.

“

**...the task forces are able to eliminate redundant investigations and make the most of the resources available.**

”

Overtime compensation not only permits State and local agencies to participate in the task forces but it also represents a cost-effective way to enhance the Federal response to community crime problems. The overtime pay provided to State and local officers allows the FBI to coordinate broad-based investigations using primarily regional personnel. This coordinated approach focuses expanded investigative resources on serious crime problems at a fraction of the cost of an exclusively Federal response.

To maximize results and ensure accountability, all parties involved exercise prudent management of overtime outlays. The onscene task force coordinator must approve each overtime request and then certify its justification in writing.

Reimbursement requests are reviewed again at FBI Headquarters to ensure that all expenditures are fully justified.

### Training

Training is an essential element for any operation, and in this regard, the Safe Streets task forces are no different. For State and local officers participating in the task forces, the FBI offers a 5-day Street Survival Course at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia, that covers live-fire training on tactical courses. FBI instructors also conduct realistic tactical situational problems at Hogan's Alley on the grounds of the Academy. Officers who have attended the training give it high marks.

Survival is the theme of the training, with an emphasis on planning and teamwork. Additionally, FBI field offices have provided task force personnel with firearms and tactical training, instruction regarding Federal report writing and distribution, and other training relevant to task force needs.

### Support

The FBI contributes the majority of logistical support for the Safe Streets task forces. From fiscal year 1992 through fiscal year 1994, the FBI authorized over \$8 million for logistical support, such as office space and equipment, vehicles, and cellular phones. During that same period, approximately \$4 million was spent for overtime reimbursement.

The financial support has provided the operational foundation for these task forces, and the overtime has ensured the investigative



flexibility necessary to dismantle increasingly organized criminal groups. Police administrators view this logistical support as essential for task force operations because it provides resources they could not afford otherwise.

### **ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE**

Safe Streets task forces have been effective in dismantling organized street gangs and apprehending violent fugitives, carjackers, and other violent offenders. Because the task forces are a cooperative effort among law enforcement agencies, the decision to start a task force eventually leads to a formal agreement between the FBI and the agencies involved.

Contacting the local FBI field office can assist agencies in determining the resources available and the feasibility of establishing a task force in a particular community. All interested agencies should analyze available information to assess the local crime problems. Sources of statistical information include the Uniform Crime Reports related to violent crimes; the National Crime Information Center searches identifying violent fugitives; the Bureau of Justice Statistics for criminal statistical analysis; the National Drug Intelligence Center for statistics and trends; and public sources of information, such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Sheriffs' Association, the National Insurance Crime Bureau, and medical facilities, for trends in violent crimes.

Another potentially valuable information source is a violent crime

advisory committee composed of civic organizations. These committees should have periodic meetings with law enforcement representatives to help prioritize the community's violent crime problems and to establish methods to review and evaluate these problems on a continuing basis.

**“  
Safe Streets task forces have been effective in dismantling organized street gangs and apprehending violent fugitives, carjackers, and other violent offenders.  
”**

When determining a course of action to address a violent crime problem, communities should consider carefully the availability of resources. Because any successful task force requires adequate resources, participating agencies need to assess the current resources allocated to the crime problem and what additional assets, if any, are necessary to address it. The assessment also should suggest methods to eliminate any duplication of effort. The involved agencies should keep appropriate lines of communications open for intelligence-sharing.

The development of a Safe Streets task force should include the expertise and jurisdiction of appropriate Federal agencies in addition

to the FBI. The Federal composition of each task force should be determined by the crime problem prevalent in that community. Both State and Federal prosecutors should be included as task force participants to maximize prosecutive efforts. However, overall task force coordination is the FBI's responsibility with input from all involved agencies.

Another necessary item to start an SSTF is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among participants. To establish the operational framework properly and to clarify the duties and responsibilities of each participating agency, the MOU should address the following areas:

- Task force goals and objectives
- Policy and direction
- Supervisory responsibilities
- Funding and equipment considerations
- Administration
- Prosecutive guidelines
- Media procedures
- Investigative procedures
  - Conformance with the Attorney General's Guidelines for Criminal Investigations and Informants
  - Uniform reporting of investigations
- Cross-designation of personnel considerations, i.e., deputation
- Executive briefings.

A separate agreement should address Federal reimbursement of overtime for full-time State and local task force participants.

## Community Outreach

The Safe Streets initiative also fosters community outreach activities. Agencies are encouraged to establish and maintain activities such as Adopt-a-School. Law enforcement personnel, if not already

involved with community activities, should consider attending meetings with civic leaders and associations to improve cooperation, to solicit support, and to obtain feedback regarding ongoing community and law enforcement initiatives.

## CONCLUSION

Citizens from every part of the country and every walk of life express concern over the rising rates of violence. Not since the height of the "gangster era" in the 1930s has crime threatened the very fabric of

### Wichita-Sedgwick County Violent Crimes/Gangs Joint Task Force



**T**he Wichita-Sedgwick County Violent Crimes/Gangs Joint Task Force (VC/GJTF) completed its first year of operation on September 30, 1994. It consists of seven members from five agencies—two FBI special agents, one special agent from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, two detectives from the Wichita, Kansas, Police Department (WPD), one detective from the Sedgwick County, Kansas, Sheriff's Department, and one special agent from the Kansas Bureau of Investigation.

The task force has focused on investigating armed robberies of commercial businesses and has used the Hobbs Act statute as a prosecutive vehicle. These businesses included restaurants, laundromats/cleaners, fast-food restaurants, convenience stores, and other establishments.

During Fiscal Year (FY) 1994, the task force investigated a total of 608 cases, solving 451 cases for a solution rate of 74 percent. The task force identified 129 subjects who accounted for 451 violent crimes. These cases resulted in 36 Federal indictments and 59 State indictments. The task force has 8 Federal conviction, and 24 State convictions.

In the last year, 8 groups accounted for 217 armed robberies in Wichita. Eight individuals from these groups pled guilty, with only one going to trial. This subject was found guilty on 10 counts and faces a 75-year sentence.

The number of robberies for the last 5 years has averaged 1,400 per year, with a 20-percent solution rate (approximately 280 solutions per year). The task force investigated 500 of the 1,200 robberies committed from October 1, 1993, to September 30, 1994, and obtained a solution rate of 74 percent. This caused the overall solution rate of the WPD to jump to 52 percent, 28 percent above the national average (24 percent) for robbery clearances.

An important byproduct is the overall decline in the number of robberies. By putting serial robbers behind bars, the task force evidently is causing potential criminals to reconsider their lawbreaking actions. In addition, the task force has gained the confidence of the entire law enforcement community, as evidenced by beat officers making daily or weekly visits to the task force offices to supply intelligence or to offer other forms of assistance.

society as it now does. Such a widespread assault on basic values and society's sense of decency requires a coordinated response from law enforcement.

The nearly 120 Safe Streets task forces operating nationwide coordinate the resources of Federal, State, and local agencies to address identified violent crime problems in targeted communities. Never before has a partnership between Federal and regional law enforcement agencies been directed at a single crime problem.

Modest Federal outlays for personnel, training, equipment, and overtime are joined with the investigative abilities of State and local investigators who understand the

crime problems plaguing their communities. With combined resources focused on specific criminal activities, the task forces are able to eliminate redundant investigations and make the most of the resources available.

The singular goal of the various task forces is to put violent criminals behind bars. SSTFs will continue to do so as long as they are supported by police administrators from State and local law enforcement agencies, the Director of the FBI, and the Attorney General. ♦

**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Louis J. Freeh, FBI Director, "Resolution of the National Anti-Violent Crime Initiative," March 1, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> *Crime in the United States—1993*, Uniform Crime Reports, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, DC, 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Terri Likens, "Teens Charged in Death of 11-Year-Old Murder Suspect," *Chicago Tribune*, September 3, 1994, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Unpublished document, Violent Crime and Major Offenders Program, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, DC, October, 1994.

<sup>5</sup> *Safe Streets: FBI Violent Crimes Initiatives* (unpublished document), Violent Crime and Major Offenders Program, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, DC, September 1994.

<sup>6</sup> Annual Report of the Clifton, New Jersey, Police Department, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> Supra note 2.

<sup>8</sup> FBI communication to the Attorney General, Washington, DC, August 30, 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Safe Streets Fellowship Project, *Safe Streets Initiative Questionnaire*, September, 1994.

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