

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UNPRECEDENTED FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL STRIKE FORCE LAUNCHES CRACKDOWN ON TALLAHASSEE GUN VIOLENCE

*Multi-jurisdictional effort pledges all available resources to get criminals
off the streets and guns out of the hands of criminals*

TALLAHASSEE – In an effort to curb growing local gun violence, largely fueled by stolen guns and illegal drug activity, Leon County Sheriff Walt McNeil and Lawrence Keefe, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Florida, today announced an unprecedented commitment of federal, state and local resources to get wanted criminals off the streets and illegal guns and drugs out of their hands.

“This community is about to see an unprecedented show of force with a single focus – to make our neighborhoods safer by getting illegally possessed guns and drugs, as well as the criminals who use them off our streets,” Sheriff McNeil said.

As part of the sheriff’s “ALLin LEON” initiative, U.S. Attorney Keefe announced a coordinated effort among federal agencies – including the U.S. Marshals Service, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the U.S. Attorney’s Office, as well as the Office of the State Attorney, 2nd Judicial Court and Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)– to actively collaborate with local law enforcement to put gun criminals away for a long time.

“The considerable tools, resources and expertise of the appropriate federal law enforcement agencies will coordinate with and complement local law enforcement to help this community stem the rising flood of gun violence,” Keefe said. “Criminals be warned: If you commit a crime with a gun, these federal agencies are coming for you, and you’ll be put away in the federal prison system far from Tallahassee for as long as possible.”

It is a federal crime to use a gun in the commission of a drug trafficking or violent crime or for a convicted felon to possess a gun. Those charged with such offenses are usually jailed pending trial, and if convicted are ineligible for probation and face possible mandatory minimum sentences. Under Florida’s 10-20-Life law, anyone who carries a firearm during the commission of a violent felony faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison. Anyone who shoots a firearm during a violent felony faces a mandatory

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minimum sentence of 20 years. Furthermore, anyone who shoots someone during a violent felony faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years and may face life in prison without the possibility of parole.

“With the help of our federal partners, there is nowhere that these violent criminals can hide,” Sheriff McNeil said. “This is a long-term commitment, and the community will see the evidence of it at work very soon.”

McNeil said every resident of our community has a role to play in supporting this effort: If you have a tip about someone criminally possessing a gun or committing an offense with a gun, call Big Bend Crime Stoppers at 850-574-TIPS or go online at bbcsi.org. You can also contact ATF at 1-888-ATF-TIPS or text ATFTAM to 63975.

If you own a gun legally, keep it securely locked up, and don't store it in a vehicle. LCSO says last month alone, 12 guns were stolen from vehicles during car break-ins worked by the agency. “Stolen guns often end up used in the commission of crimes.” McNeil said.

This historic strike force operation follows a spate of gun violence incidents, including one over the recent Memorial Day weekend. Along with the law enforcement and prosecutorial activity, “ALLin LEON” has engaged community volunteers to regularly take at-risk youth to places of worship, activated Neighborhood Crime Watch programs and conducted other activities to target neighborhoods that are perennial hotspots for violence. The effort also aims to help connect individuals who are reentering the community from incarceration with education, job skills and substance abuse treatment.

“The dignity of our neighbors and neighborhoods are at stake with the drug activity that leads to gun violence,” said Southside resident and advocate Christic Henry. “As we meet the needs and give opportunities to those looking to break the cycle of poverty, we must balance that effort with respect and enforcement of the law.”