



News Release



Boston Field Division

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For Immediate Release
September 21, 2022
www.atf.gov

ATF and the Burlington Police Department Announce the Formation of the Chittenden County Gun Violence Task Force

(Burlington, VT) The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) announces the formation of the Chittenden County Gun Violence Task Force. The Chittenden County Gun Violence Task Force was developed, in conjunction with the Burlington Police Department and partnerships with numerous other local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, to address the rapid and disturbing increase in firearm-related violent crime in Chittenden County.

The Chittenden County Gun Violence Task Force is a team of investigators from several partner agencies who will utilize various investigative techniques and leverage their collective resources, including Crime Gun Intelligence (CGI), to target individuals who are actively involved in, or associated with, firearm-related violence in Chittenden County. The Burlington Police Department's statistics from the past several years show an alarming trend. From 2012 through 2019, the average number of gunfire incidents in Burlington was two per year. In 2020, the number of gunfire incidents was 12. In 2021, the number of gunfire incidents was 14. In 2022, to date, there have been 23 gunfire incidents, including several violent homicides involving firearms. Many other communities in Chittenden County have experienced increasing and concerning gun violence over the past few years as well.

The Chittenden County Gun Violence Task Force has been convened to address this trend. It will pool investigatory and technological resources, facilitate information sharing, and create shared strategies around pursuing the perpetrators of gun violence. Individuals identified as being involved with firearm-related violence (and its associated criminal activity) will be referred for prosecution to the United States Attorney's Office or the Chittenden County State's Attorney's Office, both of which are also members of the task force.

Additionally, the ATF Burlington Field Office is slated to receive a National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) acquisition station to facilitate the timely entry of ballistics evidence. The NIBIN Program automates ballistics evaluations, and it is the only interstate ballistic imaging network in operation in the United States. The Burlington acquisition station will be the first of its kind in Vermont and will directly support the Chittenden County Gun Violence Task Force, as well as the greater Vermont law enforcement community, by linking firearm-related crime scenes together and providing actionable investigative leads in a timely manner.

For more information on ATF's NIBIN Program, please refer to the link below:

<https://www.atf.gov/firearms/national-integrated-ballistic-information-network-nibin>

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"The formation of the Chittenden County Gun Violence Task Force is an important step in addressing the concerning increase in firearm-related violence in Burlington and its surrounding communities," said James Ferguson, Special Agent in Charge of the ATF Boston Field Division. "We know that collaboration is an extremely effective tool in the fight against violent crime, and we have already started to see tangible results in Burlington. The deployment of a NIBIN acquisition station to the local ATF field office will aid investigators in quickly linking shooting scenes together, and we believe that the continued use of ATF's NIBIN Program will make a dramatic impact in the efforts of the task force. ATF is dedicated to combatting firearm violence in our communities and we will provide all available resources to our local, state, and federal law enforcement partners as we collectively work to reduce the number of shootings in Burlington, as well as the rest of Vermont."

"Tackling the unacceptable gun violence we've seen over the past three years will take a unified strategy," said acting Chief of the Burlington Police Department Jon Murad. "The BPD's patrol officers respond to these incidents, and they and our detectives often make great arrests, but there's more to do if we want to take back the initiative. We and all our law enforcement partners need to aggregate forensic evidence. We need to identify offenders. We need to track trends and develop intelligence. We need to investigate crimes that relate to and sometimes lead to gun violence, like trafficking in narcotics and illegal guns. We need to follow up on gun-violence cases after arrest, and get prosecutor feedback about what's making strong cases so we can improve what we put forward. When we do that, our prosecutorial partners need to expedite and double down on these cases. We need precision policing *and* precision prosecutions. And we need to do all this because over the past three years we have been to too many incidents, seen too many victims, comforted too many survivors, and watched too many neighbors and neighborhoods be affected by this scourge. Driving down this violence is our mission."

"Combatting violent crime has been and will continue to be a top priority for the U.S. Attorney's Office. Each day prosecutors from our office are working closely with our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners to bring impactful federal cases to address and reduce violent crime in Vermont," said U.S. Attorney Nikolas P. Kerest. "Firearms traffickers, straw purchasers, and those who possess firearms illegally enable violence throughout Vermont. The formation of the Chittenden County Gun Violence Task Force represents a strong and proactive step by its participants to increase cooperation and collaboration as all levels of law enforcement work to hold accountable those who illegally traffic, possess, or discharge firearms in Chittenden County and all of Vermont."

"Gun violence is a public health crisis, and we need commonsense and proactive solutions for gun safety and violence prevention to help save lives," said Chittenden County State's Attorney Sarah George. "This is a shared responsibility, and I am committed to being a part of a joint effort to address the gun

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violence in our community head on, and from all angles. This task force will help address the violence in our community and aid in our ability to hold those responsible, accountable.”

“I am committed to ending the spike in shootings we have seen this year through the swift arrest and prosecution of anyone who commits a gun crime in Burlington,” said Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger. “Thanks to the hard work of the Burlington Police Department and partners we are making steady progress on this commitment, and the creation of this task force expands the law-enforcement capacity and tools being dedicated to this effort. I am grateful for the ATF’s partnership in creating this task force, and for the participation of many local, state, and federal agencies in ensuring Burlington’s safety.”

Chittenden County Gun Violence Task Force

Local Partners: Burlington Police Department; South Burlington Police Department; Milton Police Department; Winooski Police Department; Colchester Police Department; Williston Police Department; Essex Police Department; Shelburne Police Department; Chittenden County State’s Attorney’s Office.

State Partners: Vermont State Police; Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, Warden Service Division; Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles Investigations Unit; UVM Police Services.

Federal Partners: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF); Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); United States Marshals Service (USMS); Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); US Customs and Border Protection, Air and Marine Operations (CBP-AMO); United States Attorney’s Office (USAO), District of Vermont.

ATF is the lead federal law enforcement agency with jurisdiction involving firearms and violent crimes, and regulates the firearm industry. More information about ATF and its programs is available at www.atf.gov.

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