

PRESS RELEASE

Maryland U.S. Attorney Erek L. Barron Announces Results of Strategies to Reduce Violent Crime

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Maryland

Collaborative Law Enforcement and Community-Based Efforts Making Baltimore Safer

Baltimore, Maryland – Erek L. Barron, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced today that, because of the crime reduction efforts led by his office, homicides and non-fatal shootings in Baltimore are continuing to trend down significantly. As of the half year mark in 2023, homicides are down 22.2% and non-fatal shootings are down 12.6%.

At a press conference on August 24, 2022, U.S. Attorney Barron announced the establishment of a new Violent and Organized Crime Section along with expanded collaboration between federal, state, and local law enforcement. State funds supported the hiring of additional Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys, whose sole focus has been on violent crime, along with investigators, and other legal support personnel. Additionally, U.S. Attorney Barron has encouraged prosecutors to use all available resources and any legal means necessary to investigate and prosecute repeat violent offenders—specifically for any wrongdoing that meets office priorities, especially pandemic-related fraud, and utilizing a federal school zone statute that makes it a crime to possess a gun within 1000 feet of a school.

In August 2022, immediately before implementation of the U.S. Attorney's Office's collaborative violent crime strategy, homicides were up approximately 7% and nonfatal shootings were up more than 12%; the next month (September 2022), however, saw a record-low since 2015 in violence and, since implementation of the office's strategy, homicides are down approximately 20% and nonfatal shootings are down approximately 10%.

“We have much more work to do, but law enforcement and community collaboration, innovation, and evidence-based initiatives are making neighborhoods safer,” said U.S. Attorney Barron. “We will continue to lead a coalition of law enforcement, community and public service partners, as our model of working together at the local, state and federal levels is making a difference in the fight against violent crime.”

Since September 2022, State-funded Special Assistant United States Attorneys have indicted 30 defendants for federal gun crimes, including charging 10 defendants for illegal possession of a firearm within 1,000 feet of Baltimore schools, including Sandtown-Winchester Achievement Academy, Calverton Elementary and Middle School, Green Street Academy, Frederick Elementary School, Cherry Hill Elementary School, Maree G. Faring Elementary School, Curtis Bay Elementary and Middle School and Belaire-Edison Elementary School. Of those school zone defendants nine have pleaded guilty and seven have been sentenced to between six months and 12 years in federal prison. Additionally, every Criminal Division prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney’s Office has been assigned a gun case, marking the most significant officewide investment in combating violent crime in the office’s history.

The office’s “Al Capone” prosecution model for repeat offenders has also been successful in the violent crime strategy. For example, defendants have been charged with CARES Act fraud and gun crimes, including the illegal possession of privately manufactured firearms, often referred to as “ghost guns.” The U.S. Attorney’s Office created a CARES Act Strike Force and, as part of that effort, U.S. Department of Labor - Office of Inspector General Special Agents are now co-located in the office to coordinate and screen all new violent crime and illegal firearms defendants for potential pandemic fraud. The success of this Strike Force’s effort has led U.S. Attorney Barron to also establish the Maryland Financial Intelligence Task Force (“MD FIT”), a coalition of federal, state, and local law enforcement and financial institutions, working collaboratively to uncover financial crimes, including crimes committed by violent repeat offenders.

U.S. Attorney Barron stated, “MD FIT is another tool to add to our arsenal of proactive and innovative measures to combat violent crime. We will do everything we can to remove the violent criminals who wreak havoc in our neighborhoods. I am grateful that our law enforcement partners joined our office’s strategy to try new and innovative ways to reduce violent crime.”

While strategic enforcement is key to U.S. Attorney’s Office’s violent crime efforts, community-based prevention and intervention is a core principle—embraced more than ever—by the office. The U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Attorney’s Office are

especially supporting and teaming up with nonprofits focused on reaching at-risk youth and young adults.

In September 2022, three Baltimore community-based organizations, ROCA Inc., the Living Classrooms Foundation, and the Black Mental Health Alliance, were awarded U.S. Department of Justice grants totaling more than \$5 million to help reduce gun crime and other violence. ROCA Baltimore received \$1,998,807 to expand its violence intervention programming and the U.S. Attorney's Office has instituted monthly community walks with ROCA to reach out to youth and young adults to provide resources and needed services. Since November 2022, this collaboration has directly serviced over 130 individuals and approximately 20 young people have been referred for services, including the job training and education services provided by ROCA.

Since September, the office has also sponsored or cosponsored a variety of other community-based violence intervention and prevention initiatives as part of a comprehensive strategy. Six reentry resource fairs, focused on federal returning citizens and those soon to return, have provided healthcare assistance, employment opportunities, financial literacy services, and more. The office has also participated in multiple meetings with community leaders and serious at-risk individuals, to encourage potential reoffenders to take a better path to success. Additionally, since last November, U.S. Attorney Barron, along with leadership from the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, have participated in "knock and talk" home visits of parolees with teams of probation officers and social workers, to provide resources and services to parolees and their families.

These efforts are part of Project Safe Neighborhood Program ("PSN"), the centerpiece of the Department of Justice's violent crime reduction efforts. PSN combines federal, state, and local law enforcement partners, and community service providers to reduce violent crime and make our neighborhoods safer for everyone. The office is working comprehensively to build trust and collaboration between law enforcement and the community, to support community-based intervention and prevention, and to strategically enforce the law against those most responsible for the violence in our communities.

For more information on the Maryland U.S. Attorney's Office, its priorities, and resources available to help the community, please visit www.justice.gov/usao-md and <https://www.justice.gov/usao-md/community-outreach>.

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