

DEA announces launch of Project Safeguard

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Combats drug-related crime

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Drug Enforcement Administration Acting Administrator Timothy J. Shea announced on Oct. 21 that the DEA will direct resources to help reduce violent crime in communities throughout the country.

Under this initiative, called Project Safeguard, the DEA will identify and prioritize ongoing drug trafficking investigations with a nexus to violent crime.

“Drug trafficking and violent crime are inextricably linked,” Shea said. “From the extreme levels of violence in Mexican cartels, to the open air drug markets in American cities, drug traffickers employ violence, fear, and intimidation to ply their trade.

“Neighborhoods across our country are terrorized by violent drug trafficking organizations that have little regard for human life, and profit from the pain and suffering of our people. Along with our law enforcement partners, DEA is committed to safeguarding the health and safety of our communities,” he said.

“There is no doubt that drug trafficking and violent crime are linked,” Kyle W. Williamson, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration’s El Paso Division, said. “We’ve seen firsthand how Mexican cartels and local street gangs have created a dangerous alliance to distribute some of the deadliest drugs on the planet to every corner of our nation. That is why we will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to deliver a swift, calculated, intel-driven response.”

Working in collaboration with our federal, state, and local partners, including the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the U.S. Marshals Service, DEA’s Project Safeguard will be comprised of three focus areas to address the growing violent crime threat in many cities across the United States:

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Disrupting, dismantling, and destroying the most significant violent drug trafficking organizations throughout the United States;

Increasing collaboration with ATF to ensure effective federal prosecution of firearms traffickers associated with drug trafficking organizations; and

Prioritizing the capture of DEA fugitives who employ violence as part of drug trafficking.

The traffickers that flood communities with deadly drugs, including opioids, heroin, fentanyl, meth and cocaine, are often the same criminals responsible for the high rates of assault, murder, and gang activity in American cities.

These criminals employ fear, violence, and intimidation to traffic drugs, and in doing so, exacerbate a drug crisis that claims more than 70,000 American lives every year. The DEA is committed to treating these crimes as homicides, where appropriate.

In recent months, violent crime has spiked in numerous cities and regions around the country, and drug trafficking is responsible, in part, for this violence.

Since it began in Aug. 2020, Project Safeguard has resulted in nearly 12 cases, more than 29 arrests – including one DEA fugitive, more than 39 seized firearms, nearly \$467,536 in seized assets, and 514.21 kilograms of seized controlled substances in the El Paso Field Division.