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# Department of Public Safety

## Responding to Gang, Drug and Related Violent Crime in Minnesota

A Report to the Minnesota Legislature



January, 2004

**RESPONDING TO GANG, DRUG AND RELATED VIOLENT CRIME IN MINNESOTA  
A REPORT TO THE MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE  
JANUARY, 2004**

**INTRODUCTION**

The 2003 Minnesota Legislature directed the Commissioner of Public Safety to provide a report on a plan to combine the operations of the Minnesota Gang Strike Force and the Narcotics Task Forces. To accomplish this directive, the Commissioner of Public Safety convened an advisory committee to provide input on how to best accomplish this directive. The advisory group met from August through December of 2003 and continues to meet. The advisory committee includes representatives from the Criminal Gang Strike Force, Narcotics Enforcement Coordinating Committee, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the federal departments of Drug Enforcement Administration and Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and other law enforcement and county attorney representatives from throughout the state.

**BACKGROUND**

The Minnesota Gang Strike Force was created by the Minnesota Legislature to identify, investigate, arrest and prosecute gang members involved in criminal activity in the state of Minnesota. The Gang Strike Force has a legislatively mandated oversight council, a statewide commander and five regional task force operations including a command center. As of February 2003, the state general fund dollars provided to the Criminal Gang Strike Force totaled \$1,867,000 per year. During the 2003 legislative session, these dollars were reduced to \$352,000 per year beginning in state fiscal year 2004.

There are 22 multi-jurisdictional narcotics task forces in operation throughout Minnesota. Additionally, a grant is provided to the Minnesota Attorney General's Office for the provision of prosecution assistance on narcotics cases to rural counties. The purpose of the task forces is to identify and arrest narcotics law violators; develop agreements among law enforcement agencies regarding joint investigation of narcotics cases; increase law enforcement expertise for investigation of narcotics cases; and increase the availability of intelligence on narcotics activity. The funding for these efforts totals \$2,750,000 per year and is provided through the federal Byrne Memorial Law Enforcement Formula Grant administered by the Department of Public Safety Office of Justice Programs. The Commissioner of Public Safety established a Narcotics Enforcement Coordinating Committee. This is an advisory committee that makes recommendations regarding task force funding and operations.

**LEGISLATIVE MANDATE**

Under Minnesota Special Session Laws, Chapter 2, Article 1, Section 9, Subdivision 7 the Commissioner of Public Safety must submit a report by January 15, 2004 on a plan to combine the gang strike force and the narcotics task force to the senate and house chairs of committees with jurisdiction over criminal justice.

**PROPOSAL**

The Commissioner of Public Safety established an advisory committee to make recommendations as to how to combine the operations of the criminal gang strike force and the narcotics task forces. The committee began meeting in August of 2003 and has continued to meet to discuss and further refine the proposal to combine these operations. Although all of the details regarding the proposal have yet to be established, the main elements of the plan include the following:

**ELIMINATE GANG STRIKE FORCE OVERSIGHT COUNCIL AND NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE AND REPLACE THEM WITH A NEW, LEGISLATIVELY MANDATED OVERSIGHT COUNCIL**

- Eliminate the Gang Strike Force Oversight Council and the Narcotics Enforcement Coordinating Committee.
- Replace both with a new, yet to be named, Council established in Minnesota Statutes.
- Structure & leadership will be determined by the new Council.
- Membership would include one representative each from the Departments of Corrections, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Minnesota Attorney General's Office, U.S. Attorney's Office, U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, U.S. Department of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, Metro Gang Strike Force, Drug Task Force, six chiefs of police selected by the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association, six sheriffs selected by the Minnesota Sheriffs Association, two county attorneys selected by the Minnesota County Attorneys Association and two undesignated seats to be filled by the Council.
- The duties of the Council will include:
  1. Implementing and overseeing a statewide strategy to combat illegal gangs, drugs and related violent crime;
  2. Approving the selection of the Statewide Coordinator to support local efforts and provide coordination;
  3. Guiding the development of a drug database that builds on the existing gang data base;
  4. Assisting the Department of Public Safety Office of Justice Programs in developing funding criteria for competitive grants;
  5. Assisting in the development of an objective application review process that is free of conflicts of interest;
  6. Making funding recommendations to the Commissioner of Public Safety.

**TASK FORCE OPERATIONS AND FUNDING**

- Funding will be made available on a competitive basis for task forces throughout Minnesota that address gangs, drugs and related violent crime. The Metro Gang Strike Force will be maintained as well as the gang strike force commander.
- Jurisdictions wishing to receive funds must prepare an application detailing how funding will be utilized to address gangs, drugs and related violent crime. Eligible applicants must be multi-jurisdictional and meet the criteria established by the oversight council in cooperation with the Office of Justice Programs.

**STATEWIDE COORDINATOR TO BE SELECTED**

- Coordinator will be a state employee, selected by the Council.
- The Coordinator will:

Monitor activities of Gang Strike Force and Drug Task Forces;

Facilitate local efforts and ensure statewide coordination;

Develop training and ensure proper protocols are being employed;

Implement evaluation and data quality control;

Complete reports as appropriate for Council, legislature and federal agencies and;

Oversee the development of a drug data collection system.

#### ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- The development of a comprehensive statewide strategy for drugs, gangs and related violent crime investigations.
- The development of a shared gang/drug database.
- Strengthened state and local partnerships.
- Emphasis on local autonomy.
- A structure that is responsive and flexible to changing local needs.
- Increased accountability and flexibility.
- Increased coverage and cooperation.
- A significant increase in funding dedicated to fighting gangs, drugs and related violent crime.

#### SUMMARY

The plan proposed by the advisory committee and submitted for legislative review is intended to blend the best features of both the criminal gang strike force and the narcotics task forces. It replaces the Criminal Gang Strike Force Oversight Council and Narcotics Enforcement Advisory Committee with one, legislatively mandated council. This council will be charged with the task of establishing a statewide strategy for addressing gang, drug and related violent crime in Minnesota and for overseeing the operations of task forces that address these issues. The plan allows local jurisdictions to apply for grants on a competitive basis. The plan calls for the establishment of a drug data collection system that will enhance law enforcement efforts statewide. The operation of the metro gang strike force and commander will be retained while improving coordination efforts statewide through the addition of a statewide coordinator of gang and drug investigative efforts. The proposed plan maximizes the use of available state and federal dollars to best address gang, drug and related violent crime in Minnesota.