



CITY OF EAST PALO ALTO
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POLICE DEPARTMENT TO IMPLEMENT “OPERATION CEASEFIRE” – NEW VIOLENCE INTERDICTION TEAM (VIT) FORMED

The Police Department has partnered with numerous law enforcement, government, community and faith organizations to implement a progressive violence and drug market reduction strategy known as *Operation Ceasefire*. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger just announced that the East Palo Alto Police Department has been selected to receive approximately \$200,000, in grant funds to assist with Operation Ceasefire.

This evidence-based strategy uses crime-intelligence to identify those involved in gangs, drugs and violence; partners law enforcement with the community to sit down with these individuals and offer them services that provide alternatives to their destructive behavior, and uses strategic enforcement programs (also known as “levers”) to hold accountable those who fail to take advantage of the services and continue to victimize our community.

Violence Interdiction Team (VIT)

As a part of Operation Ceasefire, the Department has formed a new crime-fighting team called the *Violence Interdiction Team (VIT)*. The VIT will be comprised of 1 Sergeant, 2 Detectives, 1 Parole Reentry Officer, 1 Crime Analyst, and 1 Civilian Investigator.

The VIT will:

- Implement a data-driven, problem-solving approach focused on reducing gun violence and shutting down open air drug markets.
- Collaborate with the San Mateo County Gang Task Force and local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to conduct comprehensive investigations and enforcement programs designed to “disrupt and dismantle” gang activity in East Palo Alto and throughout San Mateo County.
- Collaborate with state and federal law enforcement agencies to target illegal gun sales, purchases and firearms possession.
- Develop a unified message that will be communicated directly to members of targeted gangs that violence will not be tolerated, and backing up that message by “pulling every lever” legally available (including the use of lengthy incarceration in state and federal prison) when violence occurs.
- Scheduled “call-ins”. This is where gang members likely to be involved in violence are brought into a room with Task Force members and offered a choice to either stop the violence and take advantage of job training and other services offered, or face the full force of the community and law.

- Work with the Task Force to conduct home visits of those on probation and parole for drugs and/ or violence and offer services to provide viable alternatives.
- Coordinate with Parole and Probation monthly to put pressure on gang members to change their behavior or face incarceration.

Ceasefire Advisory Council

The East Palo Alto Crime Reduction Task Force (Task Force) will serve as the coordinating and advisory council for this strategy. The Task Force was established in 2004 in response to an escalation of violence in the City. The Task Force includes more than 25 representatives from the city, county, state, school districts, faith-based agencies and local nonprofit organizations.

As a part of this strategy, the Task Force will:

- Create an explicit message for gang members and at-risk youth that violence will not be tolerated.
- Work with law enforcement and community and faith-based organizations to visit known gang members and drug dealers and offer services and assistance.
- Work with community and faith-based agencies to provide intervention programs to include afterschool recreation programs, tutoring, mentoring, anti-gang education and counseling, job training and employment counseling.
- Coordinate city and regional law enforcement efforts with community efforts.
- Meet monthly to evaluate the strategy and ensure our efforts stay on track.

National Best-Practices

The Police Department is a member agency of the **National Network for Safe Communities**. The Network is a coalition of police chiefs, prosecutors, community leaders, service providers, mayors, street-workers, scholars and others concerned about the impact of crime and current crime polices on communities.

The primary purpose of the Network is to support jurisdictions around the country in implementing two highly effective crime reduction strategies – the group violence strategy (Operation Ceasefire) first launched in Boston, Massachusetts, and the drug market strategy first launched in High Point, North Carolina.

The Police Department has been invited to attend a national conference next week in San Francisco where agencies throughout the United States that are implementing Operation Ceasefire will meet to discuss their programs, challenges, and successes. Members of the VIT and Task Force will attend this conference.