

City of Fresno Anti-Gang efforts

In the month of April, the City of Fresno's Anti-Gang efforts resulted in an overall 17.9 % crime drop. The drop in crime is the lowest level in about 35 years, compared with the same period last year. In the violent crimes category, aggravated assault is down 17.5%, robbery 12% and rape 31.1%. In the property crimes category, all of the reported crimes are down; burglary is down 15.9%, larceny 18.3%, vehicle burglary 25.3%, and auto theft 19.7%. This success is due largely in part to the crackdown efforts on the city's largest street gang—the Bulldogs. The Fresno Bulldogs are a Hispanic gang with 4,000-plus documented members and 6,000 “wanna-bes” and associates who wear red Fresno State clothing as their trademark. There are more than 500 validated and another 500 associate Bulldog gang members in prisons statewide. Another 650 validated Bulldogs occupy the local jail, representing 65% of the gang population.

In November 2006, Operation Bulldogs was launched to wipe out the Bulldog street gang. The operation involved suppression units such as the newly formed Bulldog Tactical Team, the Multi Agency Gang Enforcement Consortium (MAGEC), and the District Crime Suppression Teams. Operation Bulldogs has led to 2,422 felony arrests of Bulldog gang members and associates. Of those arrested, 1,052 were on parole and 1,443 were on probation. A total of 1,517 parole and probation searches were conducted which resulted in 79 weapons seized. The Fresno Police Department's gang suppression efforts is one of the five core components of the Mayor's Gang Prevention Initiative (MGPI) and the enforcement arm of the initiative.

In an attempt to reduce the amount of gang-related crime, the City Council allocated \$1,145,300 to the Mayor's Gang Prevention Initiative for fiscal year 2006-2007. The MGPI, under the Support Division of the Fresno Police Department, has created a process for assisting gang-affiliated individuals remove themselves from the gang lifestyle. The goal of the MGPI process is to incorporate five core components—Prevention, Intervention, Suppression, Rehabilitation, and Economic Development—to create a successful and effective means of assisting both validated gang members wishing to leave the lifestyle, as well as preventing associates and “wanna-be's” from escalating into full gang membership. As of May 4, 2007, the MGPI has received 800 gang referrals, and there are 177 gang members or associates who are currently receiving services in the areas of substance abuse, anger management, youth activity service, tutoring, obtaining a GED, parenting, mental health, job training and placement, and tattoo removal.

Fresno's multi-pronged approach through suppression of gangs by police and prevention and intervention through the Mayor's Gang Prevention Initiative has quickly become a model for other cities. The war on gangs can never be won but must be continually fought. It is also premature to proclaim “mission accomplished” on the goal of eliminating the Bulldog street gang from Fresno city streets. However, the mission is being accomplished. Mayor Autry and the police department are committed to the singleness of purpose of eliminating the Bulldog gang. Their message for Bulldogs in Fresno is simple. There are three options: drop out of the gang and join the Mayor's Gang Prevention Initiative, leave the city, or go to jail.