

Police: Gang-on-gang violence caused increase in Fresno homicides

By Jim Guy



Fresno police investigate a fatal shooting near the intersection of Florence Avenue and G Street on Tuesday morning, Feb. 4, 2014.

JIM GUY — THE FRESNO BEE

Gang-on-gang violence fueled a 20% increase in murders in the city of Fresno in 2014 and more of those murders were committed with firearms compared to 2013, the Fresno Police Department reported in a year-end analysis of deadly violence in the city.

Fresno police Chief Jerry Dyer said a renewal of old disputes between gangs raised the number of murders and said the widespread availability of guns ensured more of the confrontations ended with someone dead.

"I can't remember a time when we've seen so many firearms in the hands of the wrong people," the chief said on New Year's Eve. Officers seized more than 650 of those guns during the year.

Among the findings released by the department:

- There were 48 murders in 2014 and 40 in 2013. Thirty-seven of the 2014 murders (77%) were committed with a gun compared to 26 (65%) in the previous year. (By comparison, the murder totals went down in two neighboring counties. In Tulare County, there were 15 murders in 2014 and 19 in 2013, and in Madera County, there were three murders in 2014 and eight in 2013.)
- In 24 of the slayings, either the victim or the suspect was a gang member and in contrast with previous years, much of the gang violence was motivated by retaliation between gangs. In past years, gang violence was more frequently driven by personal feuds between gang members or sparked by disputes over a female.
- Gun violence is turning more deadly. Dyer said gang members appeared to be more intent on hitting their targets in 2014 compared to past years, when the object of the shooting was more likely to be intimidation. In drive-by shootings, more rounds were fired. This was true even though overall shootings were down, from 319 in 2013 to 283 in 2014.
- The good news for the department is that 96% of the killings ended with an arrest, up from 90% in 2013. Dyer credited Lt. Mark Salazar and his Street Violence Bureau for the high clearance rate. The clearance rate in Chicago in a recent year, for example, was less than 30%, according to the Huffington Post.
- Gang violence is citywide. Some of the 2014 disputes involved Asian gangs against Hispanic gangs, Hispanic gangs against other Hispanic gangs and black gangs against one another. There were 17 murders in southwest Fresno, 14 in southeast Fresno, 11 in northwest Fresno and six in northeast Fresno. Black males comprised a majority of both victims (17) and suspects (18) in 2014. In 2013, Hispanic males comprised both the majority of victims (19) and suspects (15).

Fresno police expended a major amount of their resources in an effort to tamp down the violence during the year, Dyer said. Special units, including the Violent Crime Impact Team and the Street Violence Bureau, were heavily focused on the effort, launching 119 gang operations, including a recent three-week effort.

“We have been in a constant gang operation mode all year,” Dyer said.

Driving the operation was an effort to thwart retaliation in the wake of an intergang shooting. Police served 331 warrants to that end in a search for weapons that might be used in a payback shooting. The chief said gangs often make it known to officers that they will give police a couple of days to make an arrest after a shooting before they take matters into their own hands.

Dyer, while proud of efforts by his department to quell the violence, admitted the end was not in sight.

“Is it enough?” he asked rhetorically. “The answer is no.”

But, he added, “gangs are not a police problem. They are a community problem. We need the community to intervene (through) churches, parents and community-based organizations.”

Contact Jim Guy: jguy@fresnobee.com, (559) 441-6339 or [@jimguy27](https://twitter.com/jimguy27) on Twitter.

Copyright

© 2015 www.fresnobee.com and wire service sources. All Rights Reserved. <http://www.fresnobee.com>