

Fresno police expand gun crime unit after surge in violence

By BoNhia Lee
blee@fresnobee.com

Violent crimes are on the upswing in Fresno this year after a decade of decline, prompting police Chief Jerry Dyer to expand the gun crime unit and have officers work harder to target repeat weapons offenders.

On Monday night alone, there were three shootings in Fresno and one stabbing. The shootings sprayed up to 70 rounds of bullets into cars and the walls of homes, with a stray bullet hitting a baby's crib, Dyer said at a Tuesday afternoon news conference.

"These rounds that they are firing are not just hitting the intended target ...there is a potential for innocent people and children to be shot and killed in our city," Dyer said.

Violent crimes in Fresno declined 39% between 2005 and 2014, but have increased 14% this year, Dyer said. Shootings are up 25% and robberies by 31%.

One possible reason for the increase is gang-on-gang violence, Dyer said.

The department's gun crime unit for the last three years only had one detective investigating every gun case — arrests of suspects with weapons. Now, the unit will have one sergeant and five detectives. A violent impact team made up of one sergeant and six officers will also be assigned to help the unit.

We need to do more. There's a lot of these cases that are not being put together in a manner that we need to. We are not effectively removing these individuals from these streets that need to be removed in a timely fashion.

Fresno police Chief Jerry Dyer

Their job will be to serve more search warrants and develop information from residents. The department will create a list of the top 25 most violent offenders in the city. And the team will call on the public's help to identify suspects. Police will offer \$500 rewards to those whose tips lead to an arrest and prosecution.

"My goal is to identify those individuals that are most involved in violent crime, that are armed, and to be able to make sure that we are building cases that will allow for successful prosecution for the purpose of maximizing their prison sentence," Dyer said. "I want to send these gang members that are violent in our city to prison for many, many years."

The police department will work with the Fresno County District Attorney's Office to prosecute repeat offenders. District Attorney Lisa A. Smittcamp attended the news conference.

"It's going to be a comprehensive, strategic approach," Dyer said, "to eradicating violent offenders in our community that we believe are in possession of guns in order to stop the next gang shooting."

BoNhia Lee: [559-441-6495](tel:559-441-6495), [@bonhialee](https://twitter.com/bonhialee)

Monday's violent crimes

8:42 pm: Shots fired into a vehicle at Fillmore and Maple avenues in southeast Fresno, striking the passenger-side door near the side-view mirror. A spent cartridge and two live rounds were found. A second vehicle was struck. No injuries.

11:16 p.m.: Shots fired into an apartment at 1455 E. Yale Ave., near Fresno City College. Several rounds struck the

apartment and one stray bullet hit a baby's crib. Officers located several casings in the street. A preliminary investigation reveals this was a gang-related shooting involving 107 Hoover Crips and Modoc gang members. No injuries.

11:22 p.m.: Stabbing at Fresno and Grant avenues, north of Yokomi Elementary School. A man walking to the store was approached by three men who demanded money. The victim said he didn't have any money and blocked a swing with a knife, cutting his wrist. The suspect swung a second time and stabbed the victim in the abdomen.

12:46 p.m.: Shots fired into two vehicles at a home at Church and Walnut avenues. Officers found rifle casings in the road.

Source: Fresno Police Department