Interstate Gun Trafficking Task Force (IGTTF)

Meeting Minutes
August 18, 2010

Opening:

The fourth meeting of the Interstate Gun Trafficking Task Force was called to order at approximately 2:05 p.m., on August 18, 2010 by Chairman Ernest Brown, Chicago Police Department.

A. Roll Call—Chairman Ernest Brown, Chicago Police Department

Members Present:

State Senator Kirk Dillard (via teleconference)

State Representative Andre’ Thapedi

Chief Kevin O’Connell, Attorney General’s (AG) Office for Deputy AG Michael Hood

DuPage County State’s Attorney Joseph Birkett

Cook County Assistant State’s Attorney Tom Mahoney

Illinois State Police First Deputy Director Luis Tigera

Chicago Police Department Deputy Superintendent Ernest Brown

Collinsville Police Chief Scott Williams

B. NRA Presentation – Todd Vandermyde

Mr. Vandermyde indicated 50 percent of crime guns come from out of state sources, many of which are in Indiana and Mississippi. Mr. Vandermyde felt the tracing of firearms used in crimes is the best way to track guns and the individuals using them. In March 2005, Governor Blagojevich announced a new gun unit within the Illinois State Police, but nothing was done after the press conference. Mr. Vandermyde stated if this unit was functional we would have caught many violent offenders who have committed crimes in the recent past. Vandermyde spoke with the Indiana Governor who indicated Governor Blagojevich never reached out to him for a partnership with the creation of the
gun unit. Mr. Vandermyde offered his assistance with looking at cold cases to develop additional leads etc. Mr. Vandermyde stated the firearms industry is willing to help if asked, and would like to be a partner on these types of cases. The industry has different information and resources to use on these cases, which could be helpful in eventually solving firearm related crimes. Mr. Vandermyde indicated he felt the offenders were not being punished at the appropriate level in the courts. The laws currently on the books are not being utilized as they should be to charge and convict the offenders. Project Exile is the federal system that deals with repeat felons and firearms, and set forth an automatic five years in federal prison if a violent offender is in possession of a firearm. Mr. Vandermyde stated if we can get violent offenders off the streets the crime will go down. Mr. Vandermyde feels we need to be more aggressive at the local level because the federal prosecutors don’t want the cases. ‘Project Safe Neighborhoods’ in Cook County doesn’t seem to be working, as gun violence is still rampant in the Chicagoland area. Mr. Vandermyde believes more accurate data is needed and all departments should be tracing their recovered firearms. Violent offenders are violating the terms of their release with possession of firearms and IDOC is not revoking the parole. Mr. Vandermyde sits down yearly with legislators working on firearms law and feels the current laws simply need to be enforced. Mr. Vandermyde was involved in writing the straw purchase legislation. Mr. Vandermyde feels the ISP should reconstitute the Firearms Advisory Board and create a dedicated combination state/federal firearms trafficking task force unit. Mr. Vandermyde also recommended the ISP compile comprehensive statistics with the Chicago Police Department, and the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office should consider strictly prosecuting firearms violations, to include straw purchasers, and compile a report on felony possession and felony possession with aggravated unlawful use of a weapon.

Assistant State’s Attorney Tom Mahoney informed Mr. Vandermyde he had issue with his statement regarding ‘Project Safe Neighborhoods.’ ASA Mahoney stated the project has taken firearms out of the hands of most violent offenders. ASA Mahoney further stated every CPD arrest is reviewed and screened. ASA Mahoney asked Mr. Vandermyde to have his facts straight before speaking to a task force such as this and presenting incorrect information. Mr. Vandermyde apologized if he was wrong and hoped he was in fact wrong, but this was not the information Mr. Vandermyde had seen publically.

First Deputy Director Luis Tigera asked Mr. Vandermyde if the NRA would be the appropriate group to work with law enforcement and the gun manufactures. Mr. Vandermyde believed the NRA could be of assistance, as they used to attend advisory board meetings with the ISP. Mr. Vandermyde stated some gun owners get frustrated when, for instance, their store gets burglarized or a call is made about a large volume of gun purchases and nothing is done by law enforcement.

Mr. Vandermyde stated he would work on getting language added to Article 36 about violent offenders with guns and the forfeiture of their vehicles. State’s Attorney Birkett stated the current forfeiture law involving repeat DUI offenders has been effective in DuPage County.
C. Vote to adopt July 14, 2010 meeting minutes. The vote was taken and the minutes were then adopted.

D. Chairman Brown announced the scheduled guest speaker, Sergeant Kevin Johnson, from the CPD CAGE Unit was unable to attend the meeting due to a scheduling conflict. Chairman Brown indicated a focus to expand the mobility of the CAGE unit is underway.

E. Open Discussion by Membership – Enforcement Task Force/Legislative Initiatives

States Attorney Birkett recommended taking testimony on areas the IGTTF would like to learn more about as we move forward. Some examples provided were GPS units for violent offenders and gang intelligence. Chief O’Connell (AG’s Office) stated he would have funding for the Illinois Department of Corrections to work with CPD. Chairman Brown recommended behavior based legislation. It is currently difficult to prosecute in Cook County when people fail to keep documentation of weapon purchases and or transfers. Brown asked if there was training from the State’s Attorneys to assist law enforcement in producing a good case. Chief O’Connell indicated the Attorney General’s Office has provided training to the CAGE Unit in the past. FDD Tigera reminded the members that this needs to be a statewide focus and not just limited to the Chicagoland area. The IGTTF needs to consider those constituents south of I-80 in the proposed ideas and strategies. Brown also inquired about composing a letter to non-participating E-Trace law enforcement agencies to encourage participation. FDD Tigera stated Executive Director Greg Sullivan indicated the Sheriff’s Association would handle this letter.

G. Anti-Gun Marketing Campaign

Chairman Brown inquired on the thoughts of the IGTTF on the presentation and ideas from Janet Webber. FDD Tigera informed Chairman Brown we can simply make recommendations to the Governor and cannot implement any idea or strategy.

H. Next Meeting/Agenda

Chairman Brown proposed the next meeting be held on September 15, 2010 at 2 p.m., at the same locations. All members present concurred.

I. Adjournment