



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on July 11, 2020

Attorney General Announces Nationwide “Operation Legend” to Combat Violent Crime, Beginning in Kansas City

Kansas City Mayor Quinton Lucas first learned of “Operation Legend” on Twitter on Wednesday:

I learned on Twitter this afternoon that the Department of Justice plans to send federal investigators to Kansas City as support for unsolved homicide and non-fatal shooting investigations.

As I understand the Department’s plan, any outside help will not be used for regular policing or patrol activities [but] solely to clear unsolved murders and shootings.

I plan and hope to learn more about this effort over the days ahead.



Apparently the program was cobbled together at the last minute to respond to the request of Kansas Governor Mike Parson for some help. Parson heard that the president was offering help to any state or city that needed it, and when Parson responded, the operation was assembled.

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On ABC News on Friday Attorney General William Barr (shown) explained: “The president recently said to states and cities that the federal government is ready, willing and able to come in and help. The city of Kansas City — they’ve had a serious spiking in crime, particularly murders. They’re on pace to set all records or murders for that city, so we are going to go in.”

According to the Kansas City Police Department, the city had seen 99 homicides as of Thursday, compared to 74 at the same point a year ago, roughly a 40 percent increase.

Operation Legend is named to honor a four-year-old boy who was killed in his bed in June. The plan is to send in approximately 100 agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Marshal Service, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

The U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, Timothy Garrison, will also be providing “resources” to help with the expected uptick in prosecutions expected to result from the surge of agents.

Garrison attempted to respond to Mayor Lucas’ surprise: “These state and local offices welcomed additional federal resources. Although they may not have been aware of all the evolving details of the operation, they positively responded to our offer of support. That support not only includes federal agents but my commitment to provide the legal horsepower to prosecute as many of these criminal cases as possible in federal court.”



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Kansas City apparently is the test case for the eventual national rollout of Operation Legend. In a press release on Wednesday, Attorney General Barr called it “a sustained, systematic and coordinated law enforcement initiative across all federal enforcement agencies working in conjunction with state and local law enforcement officials to fight the sudden surge of violent crime, beginning in Kansas City.”

He added:

Operation Legend will combine federal and local resources to combat the disturbing uptick in violence by surging federal agents and other federal assets into cities like Kansas City, a city currently experiencing its worst homicide rate in its history.

Details are scant and consequently there are many unanswered questions about the operation. Where does Barr get his authority to descend on a city such as Kansas City? Where will the agents operate? Will they be housed inside the KCPD offices, or will they operate separately? How will communications be set up? Who ultimately will be in charge? How long will the operation last?

With Kansas City as the test case, what other cities will be involved in Operation Legend? Will the program be expanded as requests from state and local officials like Governor Parson come in for assistance? Will all crimes be treated as federal crimes?

What will the public reaction be to federal agents descending on the city? What will it do to public confidence in local law enforcement that now appears unable to control violent crime on its own and must require federal assistance? Is this a harbinger for federal control of local police?

So many questions. So few answers.

Photo: Attorney General William Barr: AP Images

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