



As Numbers of Violent Crime Continue to Increase, Senator Feinstein Calls on FBI to Make Fighting Crime a Top Priority

December 22, 2006

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif) today announced that she has sent a letter to Federal Bureau of Investigations Director Robert Mueller urging the FBI to make fighting domestic crime a top priority after new crime statistics indicate a national trend of increasing violent crime.

Senator Feinstein called on Director Mueller to make fighting domestic crime a top priority, and not to leave the issue solely to state and local law enforcement, which face many challenges and are often in need of federal assistance.

The following is the text of Senator Feinstein's letter:

December 21, 2006

Dear Director Mueller:

I was disappointed to learn today that the FBI's latest crime statistics show that violent crime, again, rose at a dramatic rate – 3.7% for the first six months of 2006. This increase is even higher than the previous increase in 2005 of 2.5%, which itself represented the largest increase in violent crime in the United States in the previous 15 years.

I'm sure you agree, these alarming statistics are disconcerting, and demand more than a business-as-usual response. As we discussed at the Judiciary Committee hearing on December 6, 2006, the FBI currently lists combating violent crime last on its list of 8 priorities for the agency. As I mentioned at the hearing, "violent crime has to be raised on the FBI's priority list." Now with these new statistics demonstrating a continued rise in violent crime, I believe the need for the FBI to re-evaluate its priorities is even greater.

I am also concerned about what these new statistics mean for gang activity and its contribution to the rise in violent crime. As many criminologists have noted, the rising violent crime numbers are linked to the spread of gang violence, especially in mid-sized cities and suburbs. With the spread of gangs into areas once isolated from their reaches, it has become clear that gang violence is no longer a problem that is limited to isolated areas; rather, it is a national problem that deserves a national solution.

I am concerned that your responses at the hearing indicate that you see this issue as more of a priority for state and local law enforcement, and therefore you have concluded that the FBI does not need to do more in this area. However, as you know, state and local agencies face their own challenges from the Administration's drastic cuts to the Community Oriented Policing Systems (COPS) and Byrne/JAG Grants programs. Additionally, State and local law enforcement agencies often lack dedicated funding and interstate jurisdiction needed to investigate sophisticated cases involving gang-related or other forms violence. Given these challenges, as well as the FBI's unique capabilities, I am concerned that the FBI not abdicate its important role in fighting violent crime and assisting state and local law enforcement.

In your recent testimony, you stated that the FBI's overall goal is to "[keep] America safe." I believe this goal includes domestic crime as well as homeland security and terrorist threats. Yet, the Department of Justice's Inspector General recently identified a "gap" in violent crime investigations that no one is filling. With all of these factors pointing to a need for the FBI to raise domestic crime in its priorities rather than lower it, please let me know what the FBI plans to do to reevaluate its priorities and increase its efforts to turn these statistics around.

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