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NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 12, 2016

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MAYOR DE BLASIO AND STATE COURTS ANNOUNCE “PROJECT FAST TRACK” TO ENSURE SHOOTERS ARE QUICKLY APPREHENDED AND REMAIN OFF THE STREETS

NYPD to launch Gun Violence Suppression Division to enhance evidence gathering

New York State Court System to designate dedicated judges to fast-track illegal gun cases, resolving these cases within six months

NEW YORK—Mayor de Blasio and the State Courts today announced “Project Fast Track,” a strategy to drive down the remaining gun violence in New York City through a targeted, system-wide focus on the limited number of individuals driving gun violence.

Key features of this strategy include a new Gun Violence Suppression Division to intensify the NYPD’s capacity to investigate shootings, gangs and illegal guns, and dedicated judges who will rapidly resolve illegal gun cases within six months.

“New Yorkers in every neighborhood in this city are united in their desire for safe streets,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “To the few individuals responsible for New York City’s remaining gun violence, our message is clear: you will be found and you will be quickly prosecuted to the full extent of the law.”

Quickly apprehending and swiftly sentencing the riskiest individuals is not something that any one part of the criminal justice system can do alone. Today’s announcement represents the first time in New York City history that the Mayor, law enforcement, and the court system have announced a unified plan to concentrate resources on the few street crews and gangs that drive the City’s remaining violent crime. The Mayor made this announcement in partnership with NYPD Commissioner William Bratton; New York State Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence Marks; Richard Aborn, President of the Citizens Crime Commission; the City’s five District Attorney’s offices; the Special Narcotics Prosecutor; the United States Attorneys from the Southern and Eastern Districts; New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman; and the Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, to announce Project Fast Track.

The strategies announced today include:

Enhancing Intelligence-Driven Policing

- **New Gun Violence Suppression Division within the NYPD.** A new division with 200 NYPD personnel within the NYPD will focus on police investigations related to illegal firearms, as well as shootings and gangs. This division will house enforcement efforts related to illegal gun sales, an extensive database that will aggregate forensic evidence from a variety of sources and help the police to track trends and identify offenders and groups, and long-term investigations into the 15 precincts with the highest concentration of gun violence.

- **Expanded investigations into interstate gun trafficking.** Detectives and analysts from the NYPD will expand on its success with the New York Attorney General's Organized Crime Task Force (OCTF), which has successfully investigated and prosecuted some of the largest multistate gun trafficking networks in northeast. The NYPD gang unit, along with the Attorney General's office, will work with the FBI and the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) to share, coordinate, and develop intelligence and investigative leads to better identify illegal gun trafficking networks.

Ensuring Aggressive Prosecution of Illegal Gun Cases

- **Dedicated police officer for duration of every illegal gun case.** For the first time in New York City history, the NYPD will assign a dedicated officer to each gun case from start to finish. These officers, assigned to the new Gun Violence Suppression Division, will work closely with prosecutors to aggregate all relevant intelligence and expedite support for each case. Previously, the NYPD did not have individual officers or a division dedicated explicitly to building strong criminal cases against illegal gun possessors.
- **Feedback loop between prosecutors and police.** To ensure that illegal gun prosecutions are successful, the NYPD's dedicated officers will track illegal gun case outcomes, obtain feedback from District Attorneys' officers about why cases succeeded or failed, and utilize this feedback to improve evidence gathering and inform police training. This new analysis and training will further enhance the NYPD's ability to provide support for illegal gun cases.
- **Expedited prosecution of illegal gun cases.** Prosecutors from each District Attorney's office will work with the NYPD to enhance and expedite the prosecution of illegal gun cases.
- **Expanded capacity to quickly test DNA in gun cases.** The Administration is funding an additional \$2 million a year for the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner – including 21 new staff – dedicated to quickly testing DNA from all guns swabbed for DNA by the NYPD. It will be reflected in the Mayor's FY17 Preliminary Budget.
- **Strategic cooperation with federal law enforcement.** The new Gun Violence Suppression Division will continue the NYPD's strong relationship with federal law enforcement partners, ensuring that federal racketeering and gun laws are used, where appropriate, against the groups and individuals driving crime in New York City. The U.S. Attorney's offices from the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York have worked with the NYPD to dismantle numerous neighborhood-based gangs responsible for countless murders and other violent crimes throughout the city, including the Southern District's conviction of 151 members of the Trinitarios Gang on charges including 11 murders and dozens of attempted murders, and the Eastern District's prosecution of violent crimes committed by the Bloods gang and members of MS-13.

Fast-Tracking Illegal Gun Cases through the Court System

- **Dedicated judicial teams to handle illegal gun cases.** Beginning in Brooklyn, the county will have a dedicated court tasked with processing illegal gun cases quickly. For the first time, the court system will match Judicial Hearing Officers with designated trial judges who will work together as a team to adjudicate all cases charging unlawful gun possession. Brooklyn's court will be closely evaluated to determine effectiveness before deciding whether to expand dedicated judicial teams to other boroughs.
- **Expedited adjudication of gun cases.** If a pretrial hearing is required, the Judicial Hearing Officer will conduct the hearing and report the findings and recommendations to one of two designated trial judges. The designated trial judge will then expeditiously either adopt or reverse the recommendation. If the case is not then resolved as a result of the hearing determination, and no plea is agreed to, the designated

trial judge will conduct an immediate trial. This team approach will allow for cases to be fully and finally resolved within six months of their inception while ensuring due process. The program in Brooklyn will be evaluated by the Criminal Justice Agency in the next nine months, with an eye toward expanding to additional boroughs if the program is successful.

Sending a Consistent Deterrence Message to Shooter Networks

- **Broadcasting illegal gun enforcement over social media.** To enhance the deterrent effect of fast-tracking illegal gun cases, the NYPD will strategically target social media content documenting illegal gun case outcomes. Research has shown that consistent reinforcement of the certainty of apprehension and immediacy of punishment can influence behavior, preventing future violence.

The City, working with the Criminal Justice Agency, will closely evaluate Project Fast Track over the next nine months to refine and determine whether expansion is appropriate.

New York State has some of the strongest gun control laws in the country, and New York City has added additional regulations even more rigorous than State law. These laws, combined with evidence-driven policing, have led to shooting incidents plummeting by 78 percent over the last two decades in New York City. Despite these successes, New York City still experiences isolated shooting spikes concentrated in a few neighborhoods and largely committed by a few gangs and street crews. Today's announcement aims to end the remaining gun violence in New York City by adding new deterrence and apprehension tools targeted toward the limited number of individuals driving gun violence in New York City.

Project Fast Track builds upon the successes of the Brooklyn Gun Court announced in 2003 by working to appropriately sentence defendants in illegal gun cases, with heavier penalties for high risk defendants and quicker disposition where the evidence does not support a charge. The former gun court successfully focused on ensuring consistent penalties for illegal gun cases: within its first seven months, jail sentences went up, on average, from 90 days to one year with only 4 percent of defendants receiving no jail time, and average case duration dropped from 131 days to 81 days. Despite the success of this model, the gun court was ended because New York State law changed to mandate consistent penalties. The gun court announced today will focus on processing illegal gun cases quickly through the court system, which will allow for the rapid evaluation of the strength of a case and ensure that the narrow category of dangerous offenders is sentenced swiftly and certainly. Project Fast Track will deploy the effective strategies used by the 2003 gun court in Brooklyn, as well as expand upon the recent progress that Justice Reboot – a City partnership with the state courts, prosecutors, and defenders – has achieved in reducing case delay.

There are currently 203 defendants detained in City jails whose illegal gun case has been pending for longer than six months; for these cases, the average length of detention is 358.6 days. Resolving these cases within six months could safely reduce the average daily population in City jails by approximately 98 inmates.

“The goal of the NYPD’s new Gun Violence Suppression Division and the City’s Project Fast Track is to identify, investigate, arrest and successfully prosecute people with illegal guns. Precision policing – efforts like our violence reduction task forces, gang takedowns, and our Summer All Out – has seen results. But precision policing has to be accompanied by precision prosecution. And that’s what we hope today’s announcement will achieve,” said **Police Commissioner William Bratton**.

“New York City has led the nation in innovative anti-crime strategies for decades, but this is the first time the Mayor, the courts, and law enforcement are pursuing a coordinated plan to enhance the quality of justice and reduce violent crime even further,” said **Elizabeth Glazer, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice**. “Driving down violent crime is a common goal of City, State, and federal agencies and neighborhood residents, and strong prosecution and swift case processing can be lynchpins in getting violent criminals off the street.”

“Gun violence remains a serious public safety issue in New York City and across the State and country. This new program will focus on expediting the adjudication of gun cases, swiftly and effectively bringing these cases to conclusion and helping remove illegal firearms from the streets. The Mayor, the Police Commissioner and the City’s District Attorneys should be commended for their leadership and collaboration on the launch of this important initiative,” said **Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence Marks**.

U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Preet Bharara said, “I commend Commissioner Bratton and the City for tackling the problem of guns and violence head-on. We work closely with the NYPD to investigate and prosecute some of the most violent offenders in Manhattan and the Bronx, and we’re looking forward to prosecuting serious cases identified by Project Fast Track federally. We’re committed to using every available tool under federal law to reduce gun violence and make our community safer.”

U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York Robert Capers said, “We enthusiastically support this initiative, because we know from experience that such initiatives work. My office, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York, is aggressively fighting gun violence in order to keep our communities safe. To that end, this past summer we instituted a firearms prosecution initiative working with the NYPD, ATF, and FBI which substantially increased the number of firearms cases prosecuted federally – a 40 percent increase in firearms charges over the numbers in 2013 and 2014. We will continue to work closely and coordinate with federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies and the District Attorneys’ Offices by bringing federal charges in appropriate cases – in particular, against defendants who possess firearms after having been previously convicted of a felony, or defendants with ties to violent gangs. The stiff penalties available in such federal prosecutions are appropriate, and we hope will serve as a deterrent to others.”

"New York has some of the toughest gun laws in the country, but even the best laws are only as effective as the enforcement tools provided to police officers and prosecutors. I commend Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Bratton for this new initiative and look forward to working with them to do everything possible to keep violent criminals off of our streets," said **New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman**.

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark said, “Senseless gun violence continues to plague neighborhoods in the Bronx. We are already working on the expansion of our Crime Strategies & Case Enhancement Unit, which works directly with the NYPD and its new technologies, including ShotSpotter, to pinpoint gun crimes. We also look forward to the dedicated units within the Police Department, the Bronx DA’s Office, and in the Courts, to make sure that offenders are dealt with swiftly, fairly and efficiently.”

“An Expedited Firearms Court with dedicated judges will help us prosecute gun cases faster and more efficiently in Brooklyn. This is another tool for us in our commitment to fight gun violence and I’m confident that these important additional resources will help keep the public safe,” said **Brooklyn District Attorney Ken Thompson**.

Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr., said: “Illegal gun cases have always been treated as a top priority by my office. Since 2010, more than 3,000 deadly firearms have been seized over the course of prosecutions by the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office, and over a third from a single unit – the Violent Criminal Enterprises Unit – tasked with addressing violent crime and gang violence. We welcome the opportunity for enhanced information-sharing and collaboration across agencies and the courts.”

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown said, "One illegal gun on the streets of our city is one too many. Mayor de Blasio’s plan to strengthen identification and prosecution of illegal gun cases can only further enhance our own committed efforts to combat gun violence, prosecute those who terrorize communities, and protect innocent people from becoming the victims of gun tragedies."

Richmond County District Attorney Michael E. McMahon said, "Gun violence continues to plague Staten Island. Last year, shootings were up 13.5 percent while the number of shooting victims rose 11.9 percent. This year literally, and sadly, got off to a bang with two shootings two days apart. This level of violence is simply unacceptable in civilized society. People need to feel safe in their neighborhoods and for that to happen we need to get the guns and the thugs who squeeze their triggers off the streets. 'Project Fast Track' is an innovative and collaborative effort that will allow all components of law enforcement to work together to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate gun cases more quickly, to the benefit of all law abiding citizens. I want to thank Mayor De Blasio, Commissioner Bratton and the men and women of the NYPD, Judge Marks, my fellow District Attorneys, Council Speaker Mark-Viverito, and all of those involved in creating this unique program. I eagerly await its arrival on Staten Island."

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan said, "I commend the Mayor for his leadership in launching this new initiative and enhancing the ability of law enforcement to remove firearms from the streets of New York City. As the Special Narcotics Prosecutor, I am continually reminded of the link between narcotics and street-level gun violence. I look forward to collaborating closely with the District Attorneys' offices and the Police Department to bring successful gun prosecutions that further reduce violence in the city."

Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Delano Reid said, "This unprecedented initiative will greatly enhance the abilities of ATF and all of our partnering agencies to aggressively address the scourge of illegal firearms and firearms related violence. It will only be through this type of interagency cooperation and continued collective fortitude that we will all stay ahead of the criminal element that seems to constantly look for new and innovative ways to illegally traffic weapons into our city."

"Combatting gun violence requires a targeted, focused effort using every tool we have at our disposal," said **Congressman Eliot Engel**, senior member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. "When the NYPD, the District Attorneys, and the U.S. Attorney combine resources to work together under a program like 'Project Fast Track,' they can streamline the investigation process, focus police resources, and better utilize community outreach to stop the worst actors that are driving illicit gun crime. I will continue to fight for sensible gun safety laws in Congress, but I applaud municipalities like New York City and Mayor de Blasio for taking smart steps to protect our communities from gun violence."

"In the face of illegal guns flooding many communities throughout Brooklyn, Project Fast Track is a meaningful and welcome step. I commend the Mayor and our District Attorney for their leadership in establishing a Kings County Gun Court, and look forward to working together to ensure its success," said **Congressman Hakeem Jeffries**.

"Project Fast Track is a pointed strategy that unites federal and local law enforcement, the judicial system, and the Mayor's Office in the never-ending fight to keep guns off our streets. This new initiative enables us to pool our resources and coordinate responses at all levels and branches of government to save lives and make our communities safer. I applaud Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Bratton for the introduction of Project Fast Track and look forward to its full implementation," said **Congressman Gregory Meeks**.

"Tackling gun violence requires action at all levels of government – federal, State and local. That's why I was pleased by President Obama's Executive Order. It is why I introduced legislation to harness technology to better determine the origin of guns used in crimes, reduce the flow of guns on the streets and steer resources to anti-violence and mental health programs. In that regard, I applaud Mayor de Blasio for taking these proactive steps at the City level, which will help crack down on gun crimes and, ultimately, save lives," said **Congresswomen Nydia Velázquez**.

"I applaud the Administration's collaborative effort to further reduce gun crime in our city. Project Fast Track, an innovative method to better identify those who fire deadly weapons and keep them off our streets, will help reduce crime, decrease the City's prison population, and make it clear that New York City will not accept gun

violence. I thank Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Bratton, Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence Marks, and our City's DAs for prioritizing gun offenses and for believing every New Yorker is entitled to safe streets," said **Council Member Vanessa Gibson, Chair of the Public Safety Committee.**

"Gun cases need to be built better and move faster, and Project Fast Track can push both needles in the right direction," said **Council Member Rory I. Lancman, Chair of the Committee on Courts & Legal Services.** "When gun charges are lost at evidence suppression hearings for failure to develop strong cases, or delayed to the point where criminals don't see swift justice, a culture of impunity emerges and actually emboldens gun criminals. I'm hopeful that Project Fast Track will usher in a new era in prosecuting gun crimes, and getting guns off our streets."

"In the same way that an unlocked gun in a home places members of the household at risk, illegal guns in our dense city place all of us at risk. We love each other and our neighborhoods too much to allow a few bad actors with guns to continually shock our consciences and break our hearts. We must never return to the bad old days of rampant stop and frisk, but yes, let's deal with legitimate cases fairly, quickly and transparently to give victims' families closure and give New Yorkers' greater safety and more hope for a peaceful future," said **Council Member Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.**

"The Mayor's announcement of an anti-gun-violence initiative is a timely commitment on behalf of the City as communities like Red Hook have suffered in the last days even from gun activity on our streets. Coupled with federal executive action, the Mayor's plan presents our communities the opportunity to once and for all take real control of gun violence, and to curb the number of deaths and injuries we see. I'm proud to stand proudly to denounce the use of guns on our streets," said **Council Member Carlos Menchaca.**

"While crime rates have dropped to their lowest levels in history, gun violence remains a problem in our city and a concern among my constituents. The initiatives announced today have proven successful in other cities, and they send a firm message to those who continue to engage in gun violence that we employ all resources to swiftly find and prosecute them. Ensuring public safety is one of our chief responsibilities, and I commend Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Bratton and our five district attorneys for their leadership on this issue," said **Council Member Debi Rose.**

"As someone who is very committed to ensuring we live in safe and prosperous communities, I know firsthand that we will need an all hands on deck approach to deal with gun violence that plagues too many cities across our nation. As we wait for federal leaders to act, we have to make sure we are doing everything possible at the local level to get illegal guns off the streets and hold criminals accountable. I applaud the Mayor, Police Commissioner, District Attorney's offices, and judges that have agreed to better coordinate their responses to help prevent gun violence. There's no question that more needs to be done, but every step in the right direction is a step worth taking," said **Council Member Mark Treyger.**

"Our city continues to make unprecedented progress in combating crime and the Administration and the NYPD's focus on finding and prosecuting violent criminals has been a central focus in making New York City safer," said **Council Majority Leader Jimmy Van Bramer.** "The de Blasio Administration's 'Project Fast Track' strategy will build on the success of keeping New York City the safest big City in the nation by streamlining the prosecution of violent gun criminals and punishing them to the fullest extent of the law."

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