

Bristol County District Attorney's Office
C. Samuel Sutter
District Attorney

Press Release
July 24, 2008

Bristol County District Attorney Sam Sutter's office will be holding its landmark 150th illegal firearm-related dangerousness hearing Friday morning in New Bedford District Court. Assistant District Attorney Robert DiGiantomaso, who is the office's Shannon Grant prosecutor, will be handling the hearing for Sutter's office.

Sutter, who handled the first, 25th, 50th and 75th such dangerousness hearings, will be available to the media after the hearing concludes to answer questions, highlight the success of the policy he implemented upon taking office last January and discuss some concerns he has about public safety in Bristol County.

Since instituting the dangerousness hearing policy, Sutter's office has held 149 illegal firearm-related dangerousness hearings in all four of the county's district courts. He and his prosecutors have prevailed in 110, or 74 percent, of these hearings.

Assistant District Attorney DiGiantomaso will be prosecuting Lisboa Vasco's dangerousness hearing. Mr. Vasco, 35, of 335 Pleasant St. in New Bedford, is charged with possessing a large capacity firearm, possessing a firearm without an FID card, distribution of marijuana-subsequent offense, receiving stolen property worth over \$250, use of a firearm in commission of a felony, possession of a class C drug and possession of a class B drug-subsequent offense.

Mr. Vasco was arrested by New Bedford Police on Monday, July 21, during the execution of a search warrant inside his Pleasant Street apartment. Inside the apartment, police found a Smith & Wesson 9 mm handgun with a high capacity magazine, loaded with 17 bullets. Police also seized 267 grams of marijuana, three tabs of valium, two tabs of OxyCodone and \$400 in cash. He was arraigned in New Bedford District Court on Tuesday morning, and was ordered held in jail pending the outcome of Friday's dangerousness hearing.

Since implementing his office policy to request a dangerousness hearing every time a defendant is charged with an illegal firearm crime and a felony, Bristol County has seen a sharp decline in illegal gun violence.

In New Bedford, where Friday's 150th dangerousness hearing will be held, reports of shots fired declined 40 percent from 73 in 2006 to 44 in 2007. The City of New Bedford also witnessed a 66 percent reduction in the number of shooting victims during the same

time period. In 2006, there were 38 shooting victims in New Bedford, compared to just 13 in 2007.

The City of Fall River, where in 2006 the police chief said the illegal firearm problem was the worst he had seen in his decades as a law enforcement officer, has also seen a dramatic decline in the number of shootings. Shots fired calls documented by Fall River Police dropped 34 percent from 140 in 2006 to 92 in 2007. Reports of shots fired for the first six months of 2008 are currently on par with the reduced numbers from 2007.

The same kind of statistics are also being seen in Taunton, where shots fired calls declined 20 percent from 119 in 2006 to 95 in 2007. Taunton has also seen that trend continue in 2008. During the first six months of 2008, reports of shots fired have declined another 26 percent from the same time period in 2007.

The state's Dangerousness Statute allows for a defendant who is deemed by the court to be a danger to the community to be held without bail for 90 days. District Attorney Sutter's office has been just as aggressive about concluding these cases within 90 days in the district court, or indicting the case and concluding it within 90 days at the superior court.

The District Attorney has also taken his fight against illegal gun violence to the state Legislature. He has co-sponsored legislation with Sen. Mark Montigny, which calls for an expansion of the amount of time a defendant found dangerous can be held without bail from 90 days to 120 days. The legislation also establishes clearly into law that the statute covers any case involving illegal firearm possession.

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