



Briefing Report
Serious, Violent, and Chronic (SVC) Offenders:
How Much Crime Are They Responsible For?
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DJJ Research and Planning

Issue:

Less than 10% of juvenile arrests in Florida are Serious, Violent, and Chronic (SVC) offenders, meaning the youth has a history of a felony against-person offense as well as at least four official arrests (Baglivio, Jackowski, Greenwald, Howell, in press). However, two questions have yet to be answered: “What percent of the juvenile crime do these SVC offenders commit?” and “What types of offenses are they disproportionately responsible for?” This brief provides results addressing these questions.

Highlighted Results:

The following bullets provide a brief synopsis of the analyses:

- Serious, Violent, Chronic (SVC) offenders are responsible for a disproportionate share of juvenile arrests in Florida;
- The 8.3% of offenders classified as SVC are responsible for 22.9% of the arrests over the five year period examined;
- Female youth are underrepresented as Serious, Violent, Chronic, and SVC offenders, while males are overrepresented in each classification;
- SVC offenders (8.3% of the youth) are arrested for a disproportionate share of serious and violent felony and weapons offenses, including 35% of the murder/manslaughter, 45% of the attempted murder/manslaughter, and 41% of the armed robberies over the five years;
- SVC offenders receive a disproportionate share of the arrests for escapes, and violations of probation and violations of conditional release/post-commitment probation.

Methodology:

We examined data from July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2013, which encompasses the last five complete fiscal years (FY). We examined every arrest received by the FDJJ that was non-administrative. Contempt of court, non-criminal infractions, pick-up orders, interstate compacts (transfers from other states), re-opened cases, transfers between counties, court ordered detention orders, and administrative “referrals” were excluded. Violations of probation were retained/included in the analysis.

The current study used these arrest data for FY 0809 to FY 1213, and matched them to the corresponding C-PACT assessment closest to the date of the arrest. The C-PACT assessment captures the youth's overall risk to re-offend and rank orders the youth's top risk factors. The C-PACT assessment has been validated across multiple samples of Florida DJJ youth, published in multiple peer-reviewed journals and independent research agency reports (Baglivio, 2009; Baglivio & Jackowski, 2013; Winokur-Early, Hand, & Blankenship, 2012). The closest C-PACT assessment to the arrest date was used in order to capture the youth's risk to re-offend level at time of arrest and to accurately capture whether the youth was a serious, violent, chronic, or SVC offender at the time of the arrest. This process resulted in a final sample of 449,267 referrals/arrests of 190,562 individual youth (many youth were arrested multiple times during the five year period). These arrest numbers may not match those reported elsewhere due to the exclusion of administrative referrals and the necessitation of an available C-PACT assessment.

Each arrest was classified as to whether it was committed by a serious, a violent, a chronic, an SVC (all three categories) offender, or whether it was committed by someone classified as "none" (meaning the youth was not serious, violent, or chronic). Other than the "none" classification, the categories are NOT mutually exclusive. For example, a youth could be both serious and violent, but not chronic. In order to be classified as an SVC offender, a youth must be all three: Serious, Violent, and Chronic. The SVC categories are defined as such:

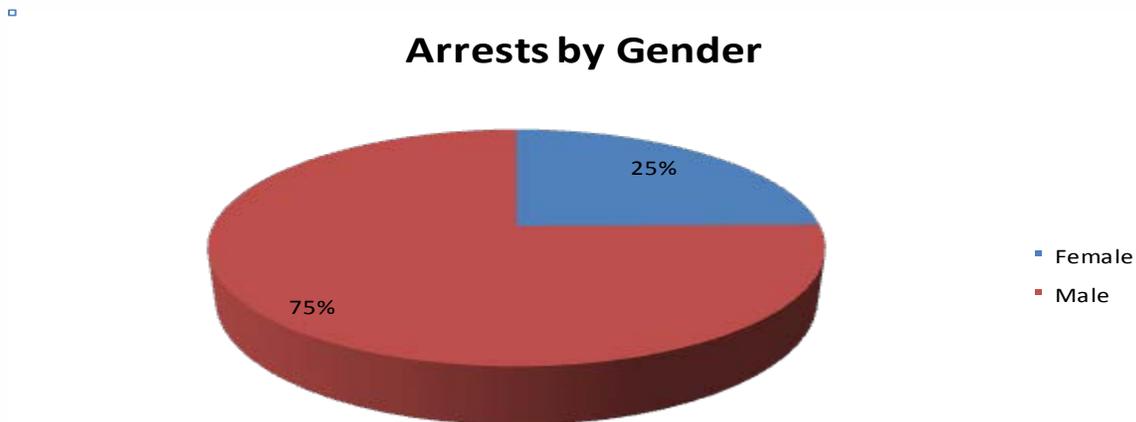
Serious: Any history of a felony offense.

Violent: Any history of a felony against-person offense or weapon/firearm offense.

Chronic: A history of four or more official arrests.

Comprehensive Results:

Figure 1.



Gender breakdown of the roughly 450,000 arrests is shown in Figure 1. Over the five fiscal years examined, the percent of arrests for offenses committed by males slowly increased from a low of 74.6% in FY 0809 to a high of 75.7% in FY 1213.

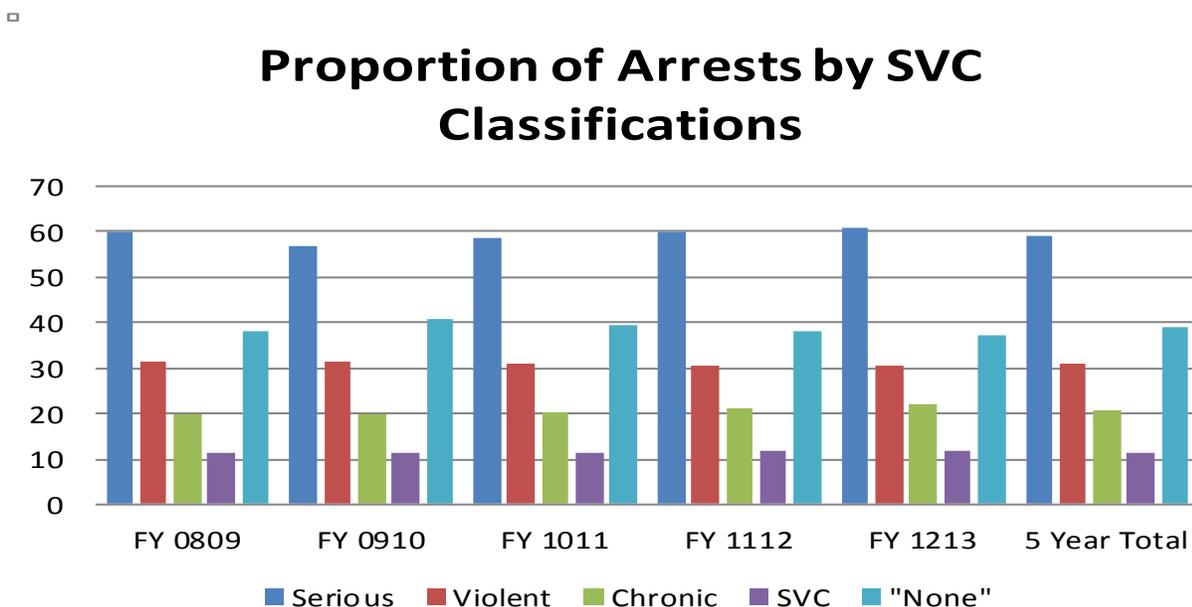
Table 1 documents the percent of arrests for offenses committed by youth classified as serious, violent, chronic, SVC, or “none” **at the time of the referral** to the Department for each fiscal year. The table also includes the number of arrests encompassed for each year (labeled as “N”) to provide context to the results.

Table 1. Percent of Arrests Committed by SVC Classifications per Fiscal Year

	FY 0809	FY 0910	FY 1011	FY 1112	FY 1213	5 Year Total
N	112,406	98,979	88,978	79,214	69,690	449,267
Serious	59.8	56.8	58.5	60	60.9	59.1
Violent	31.6	31.3	30.8	30.6	30.4	31
Chronic	19.8	19.7	20.4	21.3	21.9	20.5
SVC	11.4	11.4	11.4	11.8	11.8	11.5
"None"	38.2	40.9	39.4	38	37	38.8

As seen, the number of arrests has been declining substantially over the five year period (from 112,406 to 69,690). The percent of these arrests that are offenses committed by a youth classified as serious at the time of the arrest declined initially, but has since returned to earlier levels at roughly 61% in FY 1213. The percent of arrests for offenses committed by youth classified as violent has declined in each of the five fiscal years. The percent of arrests for offenses committed by youth classified as chronic offenders (a history of four or more priors) has increased each year, with an average of 20.5%. The proportion of arrests for offenses committed by SVC youth has remained relatively stable at just under 12% over the five years. Youth that are not serious, not violent, and not chronic (the “none” classification) has averaged being responsible for 38.8% of all arrests. Trends and fluctuations in each of the S, V, C classifications can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2.



As we illustrated in Figure 1, female youth made up approximately 25% of the sample of arrests. We next examine the percent of each classification (S, V, C, SVC, none) by gender. Figure 3 illustrates female arrests to be substantially underrepresented (based on being 25% of the arrest sample) in the serious, violent, chronic, and SVC classifications. Female arrests are overrepresented as being classified in the “none” category. While female arrests make up ¼ of the sample, they are over 39% of the arrests for offenses committed by a youth classified neither as serious, violent, nor chronic.

Figure 3.

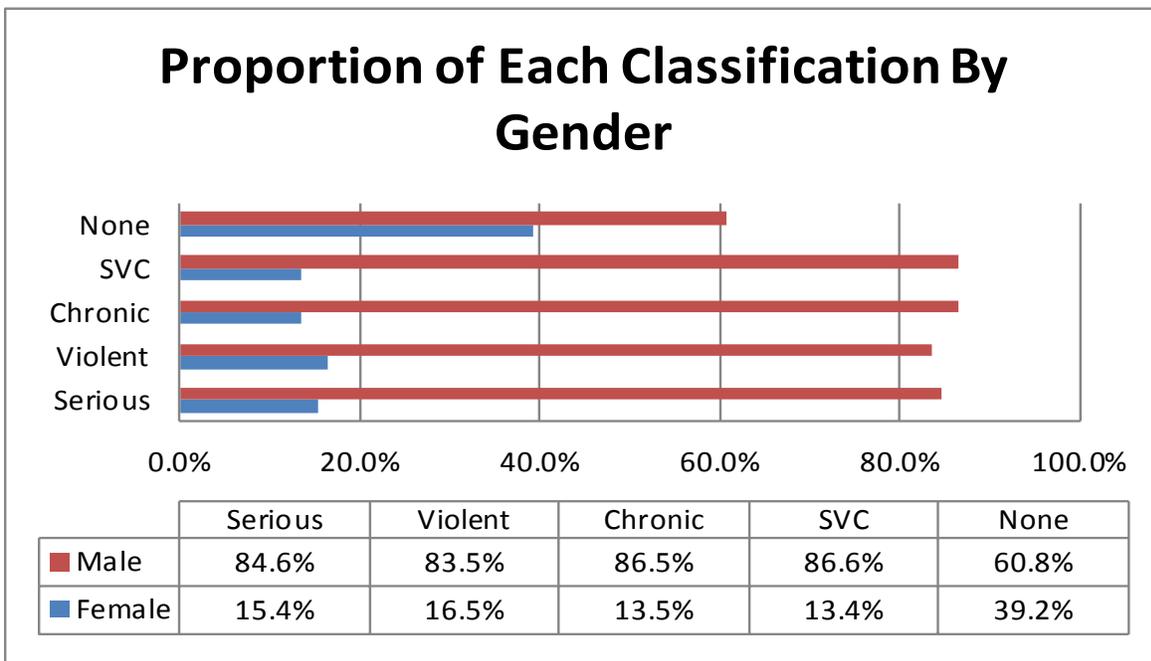
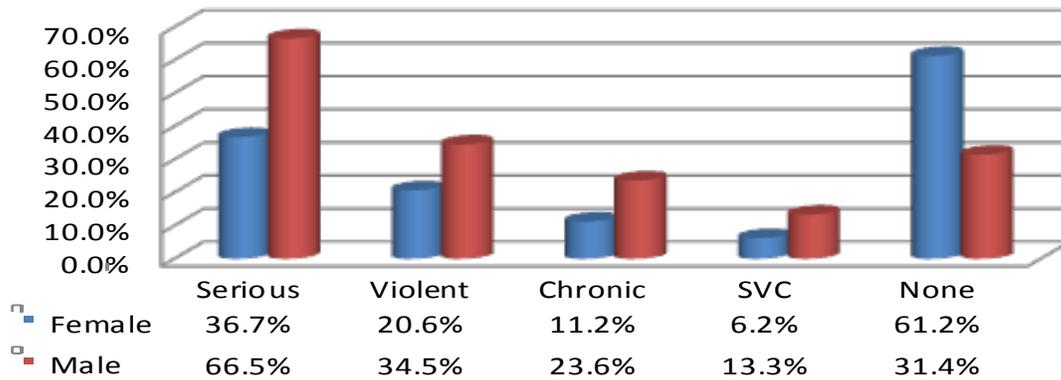


Figure 3 illustrates the proportion of the S, V, C, SVC, and “none”-classified arrests that were male or female. It is equally as useful to examine what proportion of the arrests for offenses committed by each sex are classified into S, V, C, SVC, and “none” (the former measure was the proportion of each classification by sex, this measure is the proportion of each sex’s arrests that are committed by each classification). Figure 4 shows the percent of arrests for offenses committed by males and the percent of arrests for offenses committed by females that are classified into each category. Figure 4 shows that approximately 37% of the arrests for offenses that were committed by a female were committed by a female classified as a serious offender. Only 6.2% of the arrests for offenses committed by a female were committed by a female classified as SVC. Over 61% of the arrests of females were for offenses committed by a female that was not serious, violent, chronic, or SVC (these youth were classified as “none”). In contrast, 66.5% of the arrests for offenses committed by males were committed by a male classified as serious at the time of the offense. SVC males were responsible for 13.3% of the arrests for offenses committed by males, and only 31.4% (roughly half the proportion compared to females) of the arrests were for offenses committed by males classified as “none”.

Figure 4.

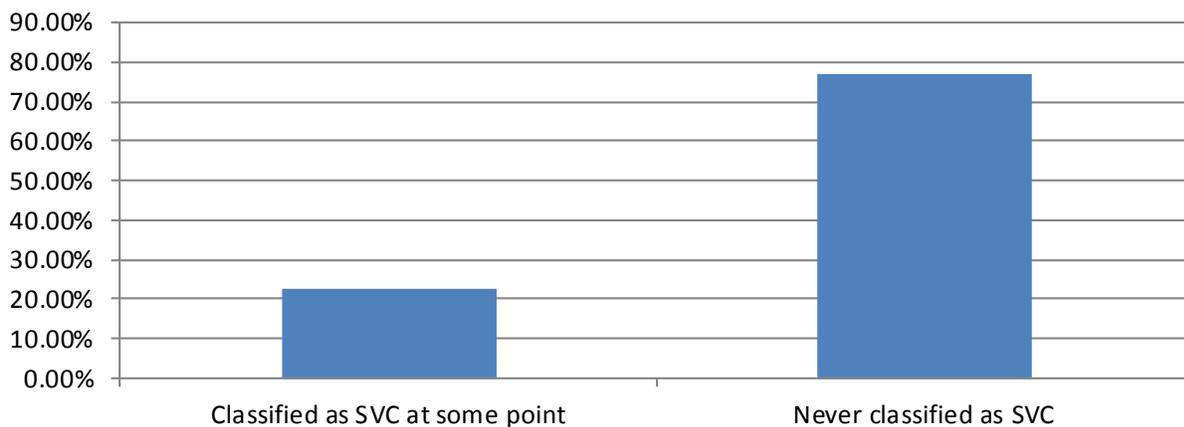
Proportion of Arrests for Each Sex by Classification



Perhaps more informative is to know the proportion of offenses committed by a youth that at some point **became an SVC offender**. Up to this point, this brief has examined the arrests of youth classified as SVC at the time of the arrest. Now, we examine the same arrests, but classify an arrest as SVC if the youth committing that offense eventually was classified as SVC. When we examine the arrests in this way, we see that 22.9% of the arrests were offenses committed by youth that would at some point be classified as Serious, Violent, and Chronic (SVC). This corresponds to over 1 in 5 arrests are offenses committed by SVC offenders (see Figure 5). Over the five year period examined, this percent has steadily decreased from 24.7% in FY 0809 to 17.8% in FY 1213.

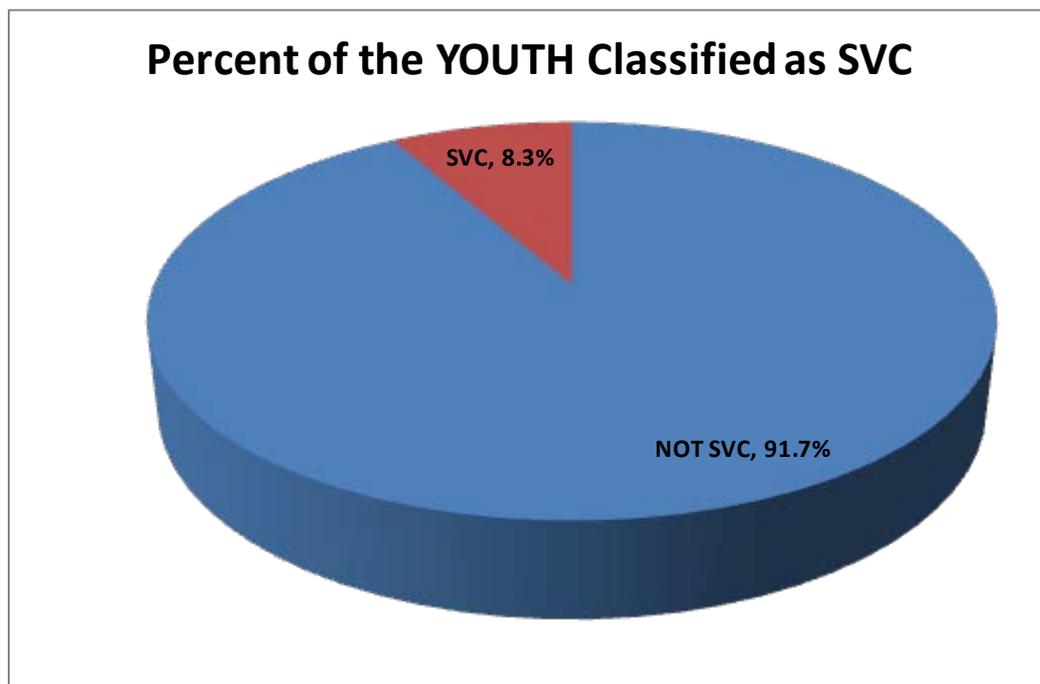
Figure 5.

Proportion of Arrests Attributable to Eventual SVC Offenders



In order to put Figure 5 into context, it is important to know what proportion of the youth that made up the 450,000 arrests being examined are SVC. Figure 5 shows that 22.9% of the **arrests** were offenses committed by an SVC youth, but what percent of all the youth were SVC? The Methodology section above described the sample of arrests of offenses being committed by 190,562 individual youth. Of these 190,562 youth, 15,906 can be classified at some point during the study as SVC. This corresponds to only 8.3% of the **youth** (see Figure 6). This percentage corresponds to those found in prior FDJJ research (Baglivio, et al., in press). Figure 6 illustrates that the 8.3% of offenders classified as SVC were responsible for 22.9% of all arrests.

Figure 6.



With understanding of the proportion of arrests for which youth who at some point become SVC offenders commit, we turn to examining the proportion of various felony offenses for which these youth are responsible. Table 2 shows the proportion of various arrests for felony offenses that were committed by youth who were classified as Serious, Violent, and Chronic (SVC). We know, from Figure 5, that these eventual SVC youth, who are 8.3% of the individual youth, were responsible for 22.9% of all of the arrests examined in the five-year study. Table 2 shows whether these SVC offenders are responsible for a disproportionate share of various felony offenses. The *total* number of each offense during the five year period is also reported to provide context of just how many offenses the table is documenting (the total includes those committed by both SVC and non-SVC offenders, in the column labeled as “N”). Offenses for which the SVC offenders (only 8.3% of the youth) commit over 30% are marked with an asterisk. We see SVC youth committing 34.5% of the murder/manslaughter, 44.6% of the attempted murder/manslaughter, 32% of the kidnapping, 40.8% of the armed robbery, 36.5% of the aggravated assault, 39.8% of the “other” robbery, and 41.4% of the obstruction of justice with violence offenses. SVC offenders were also responsible for 41.4% of all

of the escapes from secure FDJJ programs (residential programs, detention centers) during the five year period. This indicates SVC offenders are disproportionately involved in serious/violent felony offenses. These SVC offenders are underrepresented in the felony sexual offenses (felony sexual battery and “other” felony sexual offenses), committing less than 15% of such offenses. Youth classified as SVC notably also commit 28.7% of the felony weapon/firearm offenses, and 29.8% of the automobile thefts.

Table 2.

CHARGE	Committed by a Non-SVC Offender	Committed by an SVC Offender	N
Murder/Manslaughter	65.5%	34.5%*	409
Attempted Murder/Manslaughter	55.4%	44.6%*	240
Felony Sexual Battery	85.9%	14.1%	3,493
Kidnapping	68.0%	32%*	928
Other Felony Sex Offense	87.8%	12.2%	2,043
Armed Robbery	59.2%	40.8%*	4,474
Aggravated Assault/Battery	63.5%	36.5%*	31,373
Other Robbery	60.2%	39.8%*	6,417
Obstruction of Justice w Violence	58.6%	41.4%*	1,962
Arson	83.5%	16.5%	1,028
Weapon/Firearm	71.3%	28.7%	8,223
Burglary	77.5%	22.5%	53,875
Auto Theft	70.2%	29.8%	6,914
Grand Larceny	84.4%	15.6%	13,199
Felony Drug Laws	83.0%	17.0%	13,916
Escape from FDJJ Secure Setting	58.6%	41.4%*	331
Note: * indicates SVC offenders make up over 30% of those committing such an offense.			
Reminder: 8.3% of the individual youth were classified as SVC offenders.			

Next, we examined the proportion of misdemeanor offenses committed by youth who at some point are classified as SVC offenders (not shown). SVC offenders were responsible for over 30% of the following charges: Misdemeanor weapon/firearm offenses (35%), violation of probation (32.6%), and violation of aftercare from a residential program (60.9%). Again, we see SVC offenders involved in serious/violent weapon/firearm offenses. We also see SVC offenders being youth who are non-compliant with the conditions of probation/release from residential programs.

Implications:

Knowledge of the proportion of arrests attributable to SVC offenders is essential for allocation of limited resources and targeted matching of interventions to the unique needs of offender groups (Baglivio, et al., in press). It is also critical to know which intervention services SVC offenders participate in, and which services are more successful in reducing subsequent recidivism. Toward

that end, FDJJ has implemented a module in December 2013 in its centralized database, the Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) which tracks which interventions each youth receives, as well as the dosage, intensity, and duration of each intervention. This module will allow for examining how much of a given intervention a youth participates in, and for how long. This will enable analysis of which interventions, at what dosages, are most beneficial to subgroups of youth, including SVC offenders.

SVC offenders commit a disproportionate share of the most serious, violent, and egregious offenses that are the most harmful and costly to victims and society. Mechanisms should be implemented for the identification of these youth (according to the exact parameters used in this brief) in order that juvenile justice professionals working directly with them can provide the services necessary. Interventions should be targeted based on assessment, address those criminogenic needs/risk factors shown to be predictive of SVC recidivism (see Baglivio et al., in press), and be provided at sufficient dosages by trained staff according to fidelity to their respective models (Lipsey, 2009; Lipsey, Howell, Kelly, Chapman, & Carver, 2010). Care should be taken to not expand the “reach” of the SVC classification by relaxing any parameters and “net-widening” the pool of youth classified as such. The purpose is to truly capture the most serious, most violent, chronic subgroup of offenders. A plethora of prior research indicates this subgroup to be 5-10% of the offending population (Baglivio et al., in press; DeLisi & Piquero, 2011; Hawkins, Catalano, and Brewer, 1995; Howell, Krisberg, and Jones, 1995; Vaughn, Salas-Wright, DeLisi, and Maynard, 2013; Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin, 1972). We know that the earlier the age of onset (age at first arrest) the more likely the youth will escalate in serious, violent, and chronic offending, with very few youth not escalating to serious felony offending upon successive offenses after the first few arrests. Further initiatives should be aimed at identified at-risk younger youth in order to shut off the “supply” valve of future SVC offenders.

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