

Erik Forestal

Jeremy Messer, Michael Gibson, and Robert Chappell

A Specialized Team

STALKING EVIL AND STOPPING VIOLENT CRIMINALS

The Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department's Violent Crimes Unit (VCU) is a specialized investigative and enforcement team dedicated to identifying, locating, and apprehending some of the city's most violent and dangerous offenders. Detective Sergeant Erik Forestal has served with the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department for over 20 years. Throughout his career, he has gained extensive experience across multiple specialized roles, including uniform patrol, proactive uniform units, robbery coordinator, and covert plainclothes detective work. He has also been assigned as a U.S. Marshals Task Force Officer, working closely with federal partners on complex investigations and high-risk fugitive apprehensions. Currently, he serves as a Detective Sergeant and a supervisor of the IMPD Violent Crime Unit. This specialized team is tasked with locating and apprehending some of the most violent and dangerous offenders while advancing homicide and non-fatal shooting investigations. The VCU is recognized for their ability to think outside the box, applying unique investigative techniques and innovative approaches to safely bring violent offenders into custody. This unit's experience, leadership, and dedication to public safety provide invaluable insight into the strategies and challenges of modern violent crime investigations. Detective Jeremy Messer is a 24-year veteran of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD), where he has built a distinguished career serving the citizens of Indianapolis. Over the course of more than two decades, he has served in a wide range of assignments, gaining valuable experience in both patrol operations and specialized investigative and proactive units. Detective Messer is a Task Force Officer with the U.S. Marshals Task Force and is an integral member of the IMPD Violent Crime Unit. Detective Michael Gibson is a 16-year veteran of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department. Throughout his career, he has served in a variety of capacities across the department, gaining extensive experience in both patrol and investigative assignments. Detective Gibson is a seasoned member of the Violent Crime Unit, where he has played a key role in locating and apprehending some of the city's most dangerous offenders. In addition to his investigative work, he is a certified drone pilot for the unit, providing critical aerial support that enhances officer safety and operational effectiveness. Detective Robert Chappell has over 30 years of law enforcement experience, having served in patrol, vice investigations, child abuse investigations, and as a violent crimes detective. He brings decades of real-world investigative experience to his instruction, providing practical, experience-driven training for today's law enforcement professionals. The VCU is recognized for their ability to think outside the box, applying unique investigative techniques and innovative approaches to safely bring violent offenders into custody. These instructors, with experience, leadership, and dedication to public safety, will provide invaluable insight into the strategies and challenges of modern violent crime investigations.

This course provides experienced law enforcement professionals with an in-depth look at the mission, structure, and operations of a small unit tasked with locating and apprehending violent offenders. Participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of how the team function, their responsibilities, and the unique approaches they employ to locate and safely apprehend high-risk violent offenders. The class will explore real-world case examples to highlight successful outcomes and lessons learned. Emphasis will be placed on team dynamics, interagency collaboration, and the creative, outside-the-box techniques used to track down individuals involved in homicides, non-fatal shootings, and other violent crimes. Attendees will also be introduced to specialized resources and tools leveraged by members to enhance operational effectiveness. By the end of the course, participants will have a clearer understanding of the unit's methodology and be equipped with practical insights to apply to their own investigations.

Offered Twice on Thursday
February 19, 2026