

WASHINGTON (AP) — Violent crime in America rose in 2016 for the second straight year, driven by a spike in killings in some major cities, but remained near historically low levels, according to FBI data released Monday.

The Trump administration immediately seized on the figures as proof that the nation is in the midst of a dangerous crime wave that warrants a return to tougher tactics like more arrests and harsher punishments for drug criminals. But criminologists cautioned the new numbers may not indicate the start of a long-term trend, noting that violent crime rates remain well below where they were a quarter-century ago.

Still, the FBI said it was the first time violent crime rose in consecutive years in more than a decade.

percent in 2015, while killings jumped by more than 10 percent.

"This is a frightening trend that threatens to erode so much progress that had made our neighborhoods and communities safer - over 30 years declines in crime are being replaced by increases," Attorney General Jeff Sessions said last week during a speech in Boston. "We cannot accept this as the new normal."

On Monday, he called upon law enforcement to "confront

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RESIDENTS OF PETER SANBORN PLACE IN READING (L-R) PEGGY COX, MARGE HERY, AND MARION DOUCETTE SENT OFF BEAUTIFUL HANDMADE BLANKETS for children affected by the recent Hurricane Harvey which devastated parts of Texas and displaced many families. (Courtesy photo)

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