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U.S. Attorney's
Office
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5400 Federal Plaza
Suite 1500
Hammond, IN 46320
219.937.5500

David Capp
Acting U.S. Attorney

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POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

Drive-by Shootings Escalate with Gang Graffiti in Elkhart

Article published WSBT on April 10, 2008

Elkhart, IN | Throughout the last couple months, WSBT News has told you about an increase in gang graffiti in Elkhart. Now, it looks like it may be escalating into something much more serious — drive-by shootings. There have been three in the last five days.

“There were three shots on Monday and then about six or seven on Tuesday,” one neighbor told WSBT News about what she’s being hearing in the 2400 block of Frances Avenue — bullets striking the home and a car.

“It’s scary because somebody is going to get hurt,” she said. “A lot of the houses look alike in this area, so it’s like what if they get the wrong house, so that’s our biggest concern. So I have two young boys and they stay in the front rooms.”

“There was a suspect, maybe possibly involved in gangs,” Cochran said. “There was mention made that possibly the folks involved in the Frances incident were maybe possibly from Goshen.”

Another drive-by shooting last week took place at a home on Aspenwald.

In that case a 19-year-old woman was shot while standing on the porch, but did not sustain life threatening injuries. She says she heard nine shots. Two of those bullets hit parked cars.



“It does concern me a lot,” said one neighbor. “It just worries me and a lot of these gangs that are together just need to quit, put a stop to it.”

In both neighborhoods, police have noticed an increase in gang graffiti.

“There’s no doubt that you have opposing, rival gangs spraying it around the area, and you also have them living around the area,” Cochran said.

Police say they don't think the separate shootings are related.

Gang Graffiti Has Goshen Residents Afraid

Article published by WSBT

04/8/2008 Goshen, IN | New cases of gang graffiti are stirring up concern in Goshen. Vandals hit more than two dozen signs and buildings in one neighborhood and two apartment complexes. Many residents say they don't feel safe. "This just makes you afraid," one resident told WSBT News. "It is all over."



Many homeowners in a mobile home park on Goshen's west side share those feelings after they found a rash of gang graffiti in their neighborhood. Across the street from the park, several buildings in an apartment complex were also hit.

Several residents said this is the first time they've had to deal with this problem and that they're not quite sure what to make of it.

"It's the talk of the neighbors, it's the talk of whole Goshen," a resident said. "We don't want things like this to happen. So we're afraid to be here." "You don't know who it is, where they are or if they're going to hurt you." "It makes you feel uneasy, that you aren't safe," agreed another resident. "Well we have lived here for 30 years and I've never seen anything like this," another resident said. "In fact it makes me afraid."

"I'm certainly not going to say it's never happened out there," said Goshen Police officer Joe Brown. "But certainly it is rather unusual and certainly it is unusual to the amount of graffiti that they have received." Some residents are hoping it was a one-time occurrence. Others are not so sure.

Source: WSBT



South Bend Looks at Ways to Battle Graffiti

Article published by WSBT

04/07/2008 South Bend, IN | It's a problem that seems to surface every spring. But this year, many say graffiti is worse than ever before, and not just in the "usual" spots. Now, city leaders are working with neighborhoods across to city to clean it up and make those responsible pay. Tim Hudak is one of them.

As President of South Bend's West Side Democratic Club and President of the West Side Neighborhood Association, he's used to the smell of freshly painted walls. He's already painted over graffiti on the Club twice this year. But, he didn't think it would ever hit his home. That is, until it did. Twice. "It's very frustrating," he said while looking at a fresh graffiti "tag" outside the club. "You feel a personal attack there. And then the second attack comes when you get a letter from code enforcement to clean up something that you didn't even do."

And Hudak isn't alone. It's become the new sign of spring across Hudak's West Side neighborhood. "They're looking for new areas and they want to target areas that are visible to the public," he said, showing WSBT on a walking tour of just how much spray paint the area has endured in recent weeks. "They want the public to know they're here."



But it's not just gang signs on garages. There is new profanity on playgrounds, and paint all over local parks. It's certainly nothing new in many of the "usual" spots. But this year, many say the problem has gotten dramatically worse. And it's no longer just in vacant areas on the South Bend's West side labeled as "weed and seed" areas by the city. It's suddenly popping up on occupied homes from the Rum Village neighborhood all the way to Erskine Commons on the south side.

South Bend Common Council member Oliver Davis, who lives in Rum Village says his home has been "tagged" too. It's evidence he said that the problem is spiraling out of control and clean up crews, who often rely on dwindling grants, and a lack of volunteers, simply can't keep up. "We've covered over 60 sites already this year, and in years past that's unheard of for April," said South Bend's Weed and Seed Coordinator Mark Dollinger. "We only covered 290 in all of last year. So, if we have 60 already by the beginning of April when it's just starting to get warm out, we've got a major problem."

Full Story: <http://www.wsbt.com/news/local/17370934.html>

Graffiti Ordinance Showing Results in Lafayette

Article published by the Journal & Courier

04/25/2008 Lafayette, IN | For about a year, Lafayette resident Mike Koning has traveled the city, seeking out graffiti and then painting over it. But he has had a lot less to do in the past couple of months. "I'd almost say I'm struggling to find some graffiti cases to clean up," Koning said.

According to some observations, graffiti in Lafayette is down considerably compared to this time last year. Many people think there's a reason for that: The city's anti-graffiti ordinance is a year old. In April 2007, the Lafayette City Council approved an ordinance requiring property owners to remove graffiti within 15 days of notification by police or face a \$50 fine. The idea was to beautify the city and curb gang-related graffiti.

Lafayette Police Capt. Bruce Biggs said 118 graffiti cases were reported from Jan. 1 through April 23, 2007. In the same period this year, only 42 cases were reported. "I think the ordinance has worked even better than we had hoped," said Lafayette Mayor Tony Roswarski. Not a single property owner has been fined as a result of the graffiti ordinance. "I've been keeping track of that," Roswarski said. He and others credit Koning, other volunteers and affected property owners with ensuring the city is graffiti free.



Koning was recently honored by the city for his work. Several times a week, the retired Eli Lilly employee drives throughout the city in a pickup truck with cans of paint in the back. If Koning sees graffiti, he'll stop and knock on the door, asking the property owner if he can paint over it right then. If nobody is home, he comes back. If someone phones him with a graffiti report, he can usually have it painted over within an hour.

"You've got to get it down as soon as it goes up," Koning said. Otherwise, people who do the graffiti will see it up there for a long time, encouraging them to do more and encouraging copycats.

Before the ordinance went into effect, people could call police and report graffiti, said Phyllis Hunt, president of the Historic Centennial Neighborhood Association. Police would then come out and take a picture of it. "But they couldn't do anything else," Hunt said. Now neighbors have hope, Hunt said. "It's good to have the ordinance as a back-up."

Source: The Journal & Courier



Two Shot in Gang Incident Outside School

Article published by the Times

04/29/2008 Hammond, IN | Two local men are facing attempted murder charges over the Thursday shootings of two pedestrians near the Hammond Area Career Center. Mark Olszewski, 27, of the 900 block of Greenbay Avenue in Calumet City, and Joseph Shell, 26, of the 1000 block of Cherry Street in Hammond, have each been charged with two counts of attempted murder and one count of resisting law enforcement. Both men could be sentenced to 53 years in prison if convicted on all the felony charges in Lake County Superior Court.



One victim was shot in the shoulder and lower back and was reported in stable condition at a local hospital on Monday after weekend surgery, police said. The other victim declined treatment on Thursday for a superficial wound to his arm.

Police said Olszewski and Shell opened fire on the pedestrians from their Chevrolet Tahoe shortly before 1 p.m. at the corner of Sohl Avenue and Carroll Street because the men were allegedly making gang-related hand gestures toward the vehicle. Olszewski and Shell were apprehended just blocks away a few



minutes later, and a .38-caliber revolver with six spent shell casings -- believed by detectives to be the weapon used in the assault -- was found nearby. "Shooting two subjects four blocks from the police station in broad daylight is incredibly stupid," said Police Chief Brian Miller.

Source: The Times

Concerted Effort Urged to Deal with Local Gangs

Article published by the Fort Wayne News Sentinel

04/22/2008 Fort Wayne, IN | Not calling them gangs didn't make them go away. Before the Fort Wayne gang unit was formed in July, police typically referred to gangs as “cliques,” a term that conjures up images of the cool kids at high school more than a group of thugs terrorizing neighborhoods. Officials with the unit still refuse to identify Fort Wayne's gangs by name, saying publicity encourages them, and Allen County Prosecutor Karen Richards has said calling criminals gang members makes it harder to convict them because of the strict legal definition of a gang.

Euphemisms, however, don't reduce gang violence. “It's organized crime,” said Robert L. Rinearson, Fort Wayne Community Schools' supervisor of safety & student management. “A clique? Give me a break.” Rather than downplaying their presence, Rinearson, who works to keep students out of gangs, said he believes residents, city and school officials and police must all respond with a coordinated effort to gangs. “The longer we allow it to go, they'll only get stronger,” he said.

Rinearson and Neil Moore, Indiana Criminal Justice Institute executive director and former Fort Wayne Police chief, said gathering and sharing intelligence is crucial. “Once you have a subculture of violence or gang activity in a city, it doesn't go away,” said Moore, police chief from 1989 to 1997. “The question becomes then, ‘How are the young people going to be influenced by that culture or subculture?’ ”

Moore noted homicides spiked while he was police chief, with highs of 41 in 1994 and 42 in 1997, many of them gang-related. In response, Moore said police made a detailed study of the victim-victimizer relationships to reduce the death toll, which dropped substantially in subsequent years. They also emphasized gathering intelligence on gangs under the same principle that sixth-century Chinese philosopher-general Sun Tzu advocated to his military leaders: “Know your enemy.”

While stressing he wasn't speaking specifically about Fort Wayne, Moore said police leaders often try to save money by reducing specialized units, such as gang units, when gang violence subsides. “If you have to disband some of your enforcement effort, do what you have to do, but the one person or group you never disband is your gang intelligence group,” Moore said. “They're going to be your eyes and ears and the link to the uniformed patrol officers. ... The men and women in the field are there every day, so they start to see the little signs of gang activity much faster than police administrators will.”

Rinearson applauds the formation of the gang unit but wishes it had been formed sooner. In the 1990s, after gang violence spiked, he said agencies shared more information. “That's been lacking,” Rinearson said. “If you don't have a format that regularly brings people into the same room together, that information often stays in the dark.”

Fort Wayne Police Chief Rusty York insisted his department did not drop the ball after gang violence subsided. He cited the seizure of about 300 guns in 2006 and another 300 last year, some of which belonged to gang members. And York said police have good information on gangs. “Officers are not being told, ‘Get in your cars (and) go out and solve a gang problem,’” York said.

York said the gang unit - comprising five city police officers and two Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives agents - communicates well with the Allen County Sheriff's Department and Indiana State Police. The state agency occasionally works with local police in gang intervention, but due to a lack of troopers, its role is primarily to share intelligence, spokesman Sgt. Rodger Poppewell said.

Gang unit members said gang violence was down until the deaths of Contrell L. Brown, 18, and Randall D. Paris, 17, on March 24 and March 31. Their slayings are believed to be the result of a gang feud between the D-Boyz and the PAC, two black street gangs.

Unit supervisor and Fort Wayne Police Sgt. John Shank said suspects charged federally by the unit are averaging 19-year prison sentences. “The unit itself is still in its infancy,” he said. “We've had some very good, quality cases.”

Last week's conviction of Melvin Taylor on federal charges of dealing cocaine is a good example of cooperation among Fort Wayne Police, the ATF and the gang unit, said ATF agent James D. Cronin, a member of the unit. Taylor was one of eight men, some belonging to the 5th Avenue Vice Lords, who moved to Fort Wayne from Gary to deal cocaine. The investigation began in October 2005, prior to the formation of the gang unit, which joined the probe later.

It has identified 240 gang members in the city and about another 250 "associates" — people connected to gangs but not official members - according to Deputy Police Chief Nancy Becher who works closely with the unit. Between July 15 and Dec. 31, the unit made 73 drug arrests and seized 29 guns.

But unit members caution against basing performance solely on statistics. Making a case against major players can take months of surveillance, wiretaps, controlled drug buys and use of informants as opposed to netting little fish in a series of quick raids to rack up statistics. "When you try to do a bigger case, sometimes it doesn't pan out. So you take a risk," said Cronin. "It's a balance."

Unit members don't work directly with other agencies or groups and are not part of initiatives such as Operation Ceasefire, a collaborative effort among police, community members and social-service agencies that reduced gang violence in several cities around the nation, including Indianapolis, in the late 1990s and earlier this decade. Unit members, however, said they have a good working relationship with civic and religious groups and neighborhood associations.

Becher said the all-white unit would like to add minority officers and is interested in prevention as well as enforcement. She cited a \$35,000 federal taxpayer grant that police recently received for gang intervention and prevention to be used in conjunction with the Boys and Girls Clubs and Urban League. "There's a good cross-section of the community that works with us in both our efforts to conduct enforcement efforts regarding gang activity and the prevention and intervention strategies," Becher said.

Source: The Fort Wayne News-Sentinel



Bosnian Link Worries Police

Article published by the Fort Wayne News-Sentinel

04/22/2008 Fort Wayne, IN | Three disturbing images were confiscated from the cell phone of a Fort Wayne Community Schools student. In one, a young man cradles an assault rifle. In another, a youth holds a pistol, and in the third, three brandish guns in the parking lot of a Fort Wayne school. Two are believed to be members of a gang of Bosnian immigrants, the third a member of a local black street gang.

The Bosnians are believed to be supplying weapons to local street gangs. The young men are believed to be current or former students, according to Robert L. Rinearson, Fort Wayne Community Schools' supervisor of safety & student management



Authorities also are investigating the Bosnian gang, which they say is structured like the Eastern European mafia, where corruption is more overt than in the United States. "The Bosnian kids are running guns to the PAC," said Detective Sgt. Carl Moore, head of the Fort Wayne Police Department's robbery/homicide unit, referring to a black street gang. "In Bosnia, the gangs are more Mafia-oriented." Police Chief Rusty York said the Bosnian gang is more structured than most of Fort Wayne's homegrown gangs, such as the D-Boyz and the PAC, and is believed to be more violent because of conditions in its members' homeland.

Bosnian immigrants fled the Balkanization of the former Yugoslavia in a civil war, which was essentially an ethnic gang war on a grand scale. While the gang members were mostly infants during the war, authorities believe the violence has influenced their outlook.

Full Story: <http://www.news-sentinel.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080422/NEWS/804220314>

Community Combats Gang Lure, Violence

Article published by the Fort Wayne News Sentinel

04/22/2008 Fort Wayne, IN | Thug life can be short. Some gang members and their associates grow out of it, but some - like Fort Wayne homicide victims Contrell L. Brown, 18, and Randall D. Paris, 17, both gunned down in the past month - don't get to grow up. Brown's family said his death was the result of a feud between the gangs D-Boyz and the PAC.

"I don't know a whole lot of retired gang members," Robert L. Rinearson said he tells youth. "They're either dead, they're smoked up or they're locked up in prison for the rest of their lives." Rinearson, Fort Wayne Community Schools' supervisor of safety & student management, said he saw thousands of gang members while working as a gang information collector for the state Department of Correction from 1979 to 1996. Part of his current job is working to keep FWCS students out of gangs.



Power, protection and partying are their primary lure, Rinearson said. "They oftentimes use terminology like 'we have a lot of love for each other,' so it becomes a newfound family," Rinearson said. "It's just kind of thumbing your nose at the system."

Most violence is personal. While many gangs deal in and use drugs, Rinearson said local gangs aren't as heavily involved in them as they were in the 1980s and 1990s when bodies and dollars were piled high, courtesy of the crack cocaine explosion. "There's a lot more hybrid gangs," Rinearson said. "Structure is a lot ... looser." Despite their sophisticated practices — clothing, graffiti, initiations, hand signals — experts said gangs are often a lot less structured than portrayed in movies and on television.

"Gangs themselves shouldn't be viewed as these corporate entities that only exist for the purpose of drug dealing," said George Tita, a University of California-Irvine associate professor of criminology who has interviewed hundreds of gang members in Pittsburgh and Los Angeles during the last decade. "Quite often you'll see that the violence in a city has nothing to do with fighting over drug markets and has everything to do with more expressive violence: fighting over issues of respect, or territory (as in) 'This is my neighborhood, not your neighborhood.'" Tita said gang violence frequently occurs in poor black and Hispanic neighborhoods where households headed by single mothers proliferate, although white gangs do populate more affluent neighborhoods.

Full Story: <http://www.news-sentinel.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080422/NEWS/804220316>



Police Patrol Local High Schools

Article published by WANE

04/08/2008 Fort Wayne, IN | Police amped up security at some local high schools Monday, in the wake of all the violence in the past week. Police say threats have been between battling cliques in Fort Wayne. One of the shootings last week and another the week prior were both gang related shootings.

Police were dispatched to three area schools Monday morning in an effort to prevent kids from acting on any of those threats. Students headed to North Side, South Side and Snider High Schools were greeted with a strong police presence. Each school has one, "resource officer" assigned to them.

With the violence of the past week, though, police say it's even more important to be visible not only to deter would-be criminals, but to ease the minds of innocent students.

Officer Michael Joyner of the Fort Wayne Police Department said, "we took our resources, our uniformed officers and had them work with school officials. We just want kids to know that we are here and we will not tolerate the continued violence. Police are hoping to work with parents in this effort.

Source: WANE



Racial Slur Sparks Teens Attack in LaPorte

Article published by WBBM 720

04/19/2008 LaPorte, IN | A racial slur apparently touched off a stabbing in which the victim was attacked by alleged gang members, police said. All five suspects were in court, including the 16-year-old boy accused of wielding the knife.

Jordan Harradon of Rolling Prairie stabbed the victim at least four times in the chest, a police investigation states. Harradon is charged as an adult with Class B felony aggravated battery and Class D felony criminal gang activity.



Prior to the April 12 attack, the victim, James Hullinger, told police that gang signs were flashed at him and the suspects were yelling "LTB," court documents state. LTB stands for Latin Touch Boyz, a local gang with a presence in LaPorte for nearly two decades.

Hullinger was near death when flown to Memorial Hospital in South Bend, where he is recovering, police said. Charged with Class B felony aiding, inducing or causing aggravated battery, a Class B felony, along with Class D felony criminal gang activity: Joseph Ukonga, 17, Oscar Arzate, 21, Michael Lehman, 19, and Robert Wisniewski, 18, all of LaPorte. Lehman was also charged with Class A misdemeanor false informing for allegedly obstructing evidence from police during the investigation.

Source: WBBM 720



Possible LaPorte Gang Violence Continues

Article published by the News-Dispatch

04/22/2008 LaPorte, IN | Another possible act of gang violence in less than a week is being investigated by police in La Porte. La Porte Police Detective Sgt. Paul Brettin could not explain the recent rise in gang outbursts, which included a stabbing. "It won't be tolerated. That's the stance we're going to take," he said.

Friday about 10:30 p.m., police responded to Kmart at Indiana 2 and Indiana 39 where a 20-year-old man and several teenage boys, were attacked. According to police, several individuals dressed in red stepped out of an SUV and a four-door sedan flashing gang signs. They were also yelling "LTB" which stands for Latin Touch Boyz, a local gang in existence for about two decades.

One of the teens was on the ground being hit and kicked by the suspected gang members when several friends came to his aid. The man, a 16-year old boy and three 14-year-old males sustained injuries including cuts, swelling and bleeding from a pierced ear. Officers could not locate the suspects.



On April 12, James Hullinger was stabbed in the chest allegedly by five suspected LTB members in the 300 block of Maple Avenue. The suspects were arrested.

Brettin said there's often a turf war among local gangs and one possibility is the warmer weather has increased their activity. He asked anyone who notices suspected gang activity to call police.

Source: The News Dispatch

Final Conviction in Fake Drug Plot

Article published by the Journal Gazette

04/22/2008 Fort Wayne, IN | A conviction in U.S. District Court for the sixth and final defendant brings an end to a nearly 2-year-old case involving gangs, drugs and guns. A jury in U.S. District Court's Northern District of Indiana convicted Melvin Taylor on Friday afternoon of conspiracy to distribute cocaine and armed drug trafficking. He could receive a sentence of more than 15 years.

Taylor, 25, of Gary, along with Theodis Armstead; Marlyn Barnes, 23, of Gary; Vernell Brown, 25, of Orland Hills, Ill.; Michael D. Alexander, 29, of Fort Wayne; and Herbert Hightower, 24, of Gary were arrested in May 2006 in connection with a plan to hijack a fictitious powder cocaine shipment they believed to be en route from Texas to Fort Wayne.

Barnes, a known Vice Lords gang member from Gary, had come to Fort Wayne in 2005, along with members of his "crew," said James Cronin, special agent in charge for the U.S. Department of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives' Fort Wayne field office. Two other men – Clarence Bibbins and Devon Matthews – were part of the group, but they committed an armed carjacking in October 2005 and are serving prison sentences on charges related to the crime, according to the ATF.

Agents with the ATF and Fort Wayne police officers were investigating Vice Lords' activities in Fort Wayne, such as dealing narcotics and committing violent crimes while armed, according to the ATF. The investigation became more intense when Barnes learned of the possible delivery of the drugs and brought others from Gary to help plan and participate in the hijacking of the drugs, according to the ATF.

An undercover agent with the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives met with Barnes, and eventually the other men, to arrange the theft of the drugs, which did not exist. As the plan to hijack the shipment unfolded, the ATF agent slipped away and police arrested the men, seizing weapons, including an AK-47 with a 75-round drum magazine, a .40-caliber pistol and more than 80 rounds of ammunition, as well as bullet-resistant vests.

Armstead, Brown, Hightower and Alexander pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute cocaine. Armstead also pleaded guilty to armed drug trafficking. Barnes was convicted of conspiracy to distribute cocaine and armed drug trafficking. All are awaiting sentencing.

The investigation included the ATF, Fort Wayne police, Garrett Police Department, DeKalb County Sheriff's Department, the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Allen County Prosecutor's Office.

Source: The Commercial Appeal



Lansing Man Gets Six Years in Shooting

Article published by the Times

04/09/2008 Hammond, IN | A Lake County judge sentenced a Lansing man to six years in prison Tuesday in connection with the shooting of two rival gang members. Christopher Diaz, 29, pleaded guilty March 12 to aggravated battery, a Class B felony.

The charges stemmed from a Feb. 18, 2007, incident in which Diaz encountered a rival gang member in a gas station on Indianapolis Boulevard in Hammond, Lake County Prosecutor Bernard Carter said. Moments later, while Diaz was a back-seat passenger in an SUV, he fired his handgun into the victims' vehicle, Carter said.

One victim was struck in the head and chest, while another was shot in the back. The victims were not fatally wounded, said Diane Poulton, a spokeswoman for the prosecutor's office.

The driver of the SUV, Alex Guerrero Jr., 19, of Chicago, has pleaded guilty in December to assisting a criminal. Guerrero is scheduled to be sentenced April 18, Poulton said.

Source: The Times

In Chicago, Fears of a Long, Bloody Summer

Article published by CNN

04/22/2008 Chicago, IL | Nine people were killed in 36 shootings over the weekend in Chicago, reflecting what some community leaders say is a deadly breakdown in discipline among gang members after a crackdown over the past few years put many of their leaders behind bars. "The older guys, in the past, looked out for the little ones. Now they're all locked up," said Nick Stames, a social studies teacher at Crane Tech High School on the city's gang-ridden West Side. "There's no sense of discipline in the projects," he added. "Everybody's doing their own thing."

Now there is growing fear that Chicago could be in for a long, bloody summer. "If this happened on this weekend, what is ahead of us when it gets to be 85, 90 and when the schools close in June?" asked the Rev. Michael Pflieger, an activist on the South Side. "A lot of kids out there are running their own game, trying to one-up each other for respect."

The shootings included drive-by attacks and one case in which someone shot up a plumbing supply store with an AK-47. At least 14 of the shootings were gang-related, according to police. As for the rest, the only thing they can say for sure is that three had nothing to do with gangs.

Police spokeswoman Monique Bond would not comment on the breakdown-in-discipline theory. She and others said they were not surprised the spike in shootings happened on one of Chicago's first spring-like weekends. "When the warmer weather comes, more people come out of doors," Bond said. "More crime can occur."

In the past few years, federal and local law enforcement authorities have taken dozens of gang leaders and members off the streets in and around Chicago. In December, for example, federal authorities broke up a drug-dealing ring at Chicago's notorious Cabrini-Green housing project, arresting 16 people, including a leader of the Gangster Disciples. Six months earlier, in Kane County, authorities arrested 31 members of the Latin Kings in 22 slayings, some dating back two decades.

Tio Hardiman, executive director of CeaseFire, an anti-violence group that uses former gang members to mediate conflicts, said that with the gang leaders behind bars, rank-and-file members have decided it's every man for himself and are fighting over turf and money. "It used to be a guy had to get an order before he could shoot somebody," Hardiman noted. Now, "guys go off on their own. Nobody has to answer to nobody."

Full Story: <http://www.cnn.com/2008/CRIME/04/22/chicago.violence.ap/index.html>



37 Shot in City Over Weekend

Article published by the Sun-Times

04/21/2008 Chicago, IL | In gang-related drive-bys, an attempted robbery and other flashes of violence, some 37 people were shot in Chicago over the weekend -- seven of them fatally. A 26-year-old was killed in his home, two teens on the same South Side street, another man as he sat in the office of his plumbing business.

Chicago Police officials acknowledged that the nearly three dozen shootings were high for a short time frame but not unusual when the mercury starts rising. "Although our recent crime data released on Friday showed that murders and shootings are slightly down, as you all know, one shooting, one murder is one too many," Chicago Police Supt. Jody Weis said Sunday. "We know that warmer temperatures are a contributing factor. More outdoor activity [means] more opportunities for crimes to occur. No city is immune from the proliferation of illegal guns, gangs and drugs."

There were 22 shootings between midnight Friday and midnight Saturday, and four more between midnight and 7 a.m. Sunday, Weis said. Four of the 26 shootings were fatal, and at least three were not gang-related. Seven victims were juveniles. Last year, during the same 24-hour period in April, there were 19 shootings.

Full Story: <http://www.suntimes.com/news/24-7/905988,CST-NWS-shoot21.article>

SWAT will go on Patrol to Combat Violence

Article published by the Sun-Times

04/22/2008 Chicago, IL | A spike in Chicago shootings that made national news over the weekend was caused in part by a gang war that flared on the South Side, police said. And police plan to respond with gun, tactical and gang teams -- even SWAT officers in battle gear. Police Supt. Jody Weis planned to deploy SWAT as part of summer patrols, but the department is accelerating the plan because of the weekend's shootings.



"We haven't done this in a while," department spokeswoman Monique Bond said. "It's an aggressive message that law enforcement is taking this very seriously. At this point ... we have to take necessary measures to demonstrate that violence will not be tolerated. Sometimes a visible presence sends a louder message."

The unofficial weekend tally of 36 shootings over Friday, Saturday and Sunday was 14 more than the city experienced last year at the same time, police said. Seven people were killed.

Of the 36 shootings, 14 were classified as gang-related, Bond said. Seven juveniles were among the victims, including five who were out beyond curfew. So far this year, 21 Chicago Public Schools students have been shot to death.

One seasoned officer described the three days as "triage" -- with detectives rushing from shooting to shooting. Of the 36 shootings, 19 happened in the Wentworth Area that stretches south of downtown and west along the Stevenson Expy. The rest of the shootings were spread out among the remaining four detective areas of the city.

One law enforcement source said a new faction of Gangster Disciples that moved into the area's Englewood neighborhood is vying for control against longer-established members of the gang. In addition to the shootings, home invasions also have escalated, the source said. On Monday, sources said the Englewood gang dispute was simmering for several months and the warm weather likely sparked the violence.

About 10 of the shootings occurred in Gangster Disciples-controlled areas of the Englewood police district and on the east side of the adjacent Chicago Lawn police district, also in the Wentworth Area. Many of those victims were affiliated with gangs, police said. For instance, Raul Lemus, 28, a Latin Saints member, was fatally shot in an auto shop Sunday while waiting for repairs to a car. The gunman escaped in a getaway car, police said. Lemus was on parole for second-degree murder. Last month, 70 percent of murder victims had arrest records, according to the latest police statistics.

The surge in shootings made national news after Weis addressed the problem at a news conference Sunday, noting the violent toll warm-weather months take.

Murders typically spike in mid-summer and tail off in the winter. In 2005, for example, there were 108 murders in June and July and 47 in December and January, police said. Chicago is not yet on a track to see a huge overall increase in murders. So far this year, murders are down more than 1 percent compared with the same period of 2007.

And last year, Chicago slayings were at a pre-1966 level for the fourth year in a row. Still, Mayor Daley called the weekend violence "unacceptable" and asked parents to pay more attention to their children. "What we're asking parents to do," Daley said, "is know where your children are. It's going to be a long summer, and parents better capture this responsibility."

Source: The Sun-Times



Cops to Get Rifles to Compete with Gangs

Article published by the Sun-Times

04/26/2008 Chicago, IL | Chicago Police officers will soon be equipped with M4 carbines to match the firepower of the street gangs they're up against, under a policy change in the works to stop the bloodshed on the city's

streets. Police Supt. Jody Weis' decision to arm and train his 13,500 officers with more powerful weapons was disclosed as Mayor Daley emerged from a City Hall summit meeting with a plea to every Chicagoan who cares about children.

Chicago Police SWAT teams are already equipped with M4 carbines, but rank-and-file officers are out-gunned. They're only allowed to carry pistols. When you're up against a street gang member armed with an AK-47, that's like taking a BB-gun to a battle. Used by the U.S. Marine Corps, the M4 is an assault rifle that fires more shots in less time than a conventional handgun. The fully automatic version can fire up to 1,000 rounds a minute, although the magazines hold 20 to 30 shots.

Last week, police arrested a man suspected of using an AK-47 during a shoot-out with police just after he allegedly used the gun to kill a man at a South Side plumbing business.

In October 2006, police were in a shoot-out with three gang members they thought were on their way to carry out a gang hit. Police fired at the men after one of the suspects raised an AK-47 at them. Some of the officers were armed with assault weapons and shotguns. Two of the suspects were killed. "That's a good example of why it's important for police to be equally armed," Police Department spokeswoman Monique Bond said.

Fraternal Order of Police President Mark Donahue welcomed the change, as long as the Police Department pays for the weapons and officers are properly trained and given discretion in using the M4. "Many people have made statements that they feel outgunned on the street. In certain circumstances, that has been shown to be true," Donahue said.

New York City police officers recently started patrolling subways with similar assault weapons and bomb-sniffing dogs. In the Chicago area, some suburban police departments have carried assault weapons since the mid-1990s.

Timing and logistics of the change in firepower have not yet been ironed out. First, the weapons must be purchased -- and it's not yet clear who is going to pay. Officers currently chose from a list of authorized handguns and pay out of their own pockets. Second, they must be trained in how to use them. That would be a logistical nightmare that would require all officers to return to the police academy. Finally, the Police Department must determine whether the new weapons would remain in squad cars or be carried by officers.

The firepower change is the latest show of force by Weis. This weekend, he plans to flood South and West Side neighborhoods plagued by violence with SWAT teams and Targeted Response Units in full battle dress, with two police helicopters hovering above.

Source: The Sun-Times



National

Gang Indictments Raise 2008 Count to 100 Charged

Article published by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

04/04/2008 Milwaukee, WI | Twenty-four people accused of belonging to a violent Milwaukee street gang known as the First and Keefe Vice Lords have been charged in federal court, bringing to 100 the number of purported gang members arrested and facing federal charges so far this year, officials said Thursday.

It was the second round of indictments involving this branch of the Vice Lords, following one in 2006. The defendants - charged with dealing crack cocaine, powder cocaine and marijuana - face from 10 years to life in prison if convicted depending on charges, officials said. Two indictments were returned by a grand jury March 25 and unsealed Thursday.

This year, federal and local officials announced charges against 45 members of the so-called 1-9 Nash Street Boys. Also charged this year were 31 people implicated in a ring moving high-grade marijuana from California to Wisconsin and other states.

U.S. Attorney Steven Biskupic said the charges will keep coming as local, state and federal authorities continue joint investigations, but he cautioned that they take time. "We will continue to march through these gangs," he said. Pointing to five years of large-scale gang and drug prosecutions, Biskupic said his office will prosecute drug-dealing gangs anywhere, including in the suburbs. Several of the suspects in the marijuana case from this year grew up in Milwaukee's suburbs. He also noted that efforts are under way to target the flow of suburban money into the city to buy drugs. "It is a regional problem," he said, "not just a city of Milwaukee problem."

During the five years of gang prosecution, no other period comes close to the 100 people charged since January, according to information provided by the U.S. attorney's office. In 2005, 116 people were charged in four different indictments, but those occurred over 10 months. No such large cases were indicted last year, and Biskupic cited the extensive time it takes to investigate and the cyclical nature of gang crime as explanations.

Source: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel



Police: Criminals Use Boarded-up Homes to Stash Weapons

Article published by the Cleveland Plain Dealer

04/27/2008 Cleveland, OH | Boarded-up and abandoned homes have become places for criminals to stash weapons, make drugs and organize crimes, police said. The foreclosure crisis has hit Cleveland hard with thousands of properties abandoned. The vacant, abandoned properties are safe sites for would-be criminals to leave their goods and avoid being caught with them.



"People are simply taking advantage of what's there," said Judy Martin, founder of Survivors/Victims of Tragedy in Cleveland. "Anyone can get into a vacant home, no matter how well it is boarded up."

Robbers in Tremont hid a shotgun in the foundation of an abandoned home last fall, police said. "It was the 'community gun,'" said Cleveland police Lt. Thomas Stacho. "They said it was there for when someone had to 'hit a lick,' or commit a robbery."

Officials don't have definite numbers on how common the problem is. They point to similar situation elsewhere. In Pittsburgh, police found 30 guns from abandoned homes in a gang-heavy neighborhood; a month later, police in Trenton, N.J., found more weapons in boarded-up houses. "We have guys who will hide weapons that they used in crimes in abandoned homes; it happens," said John Hageman, an agent with the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in Philadelphia.

In Summit County, police have found boarded-up homes used as methamphetamine labs. "These homes are a breeding ground for crime," said Lorain Police Chief Cel Rivera. In recent years, the department also has investigated slayings and a rape at abandoned homes.

Cleveland has thousands of vacant and abandoned properties that are damaging neighborhoods and bringing down property values. In January, the city joined lawsuit against 21 large financial institutions, citing the public nuisance created by swaths of empty homes. "These are eyesores and places that people can use to conceal items that they strip from houses, or their drugs or their guns," said Brian Davis, director of the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless. "No one checks on the houses, and they're lost in a bureaucratic shell game of who has to take care of them."

Source: The Plain Dealer



Police: Gang Initiation E-mail is a Mere Rumor

Article published by the Atlanta Journal Constitution

04/16/2008 DeKalb County, GA | The e-mail, circulating for the last several weeks among metro Atlanta parents and teachers, is alarming and scary and, it turns out, to be taken with a grain of salt:

"MS-13 is a NEW GANG going through initiation this week," it reads in bold type. "They are targeting single women as well as single drivers. They will bump the rear of your vehicle...once you get out observing/asset [sic] the damage, they will stab you! Their motive is to KILL an individual in order to gain acceptance into the gang."

But, say local police officials, it is not true. "It's a rumor," said DeKalb County police spokeswoman Mekka Parish, adding that the department's gang unit could not verify the information.

It appears to be a chain e-mail, something that one person receives and then forwards to several more people, who then do the same. No one is sure where it originated. Dale Davis, spokesman for the DeKalb school systemwide, said he had recently talked with someone in Indiana who had seen the same e-mail.

Source: Atlanta Journal Constitution



Parents Fight Over Which Gang Toddler Should Join

Article published by ABC 7 News of Denver

04/10/2008 Commerce City, CO | A couple fighting about which gang their 4-year-old toddler should join caused a public disturbance that resulted in the father's arrest, Commerce City police said Thursday.



On Saturday, Joseph Manzanares stormed into the Hollywood Video store where his girlfriend worked, threatened to kill her and knocked over several video displays and even a computer, Commerce City police Sgt. Joe Sandoval said. After he ran out of the store, police were called and the 19-year-old was arrested at his home.

His girlfriend told police that they had been arguing about the upbringing of their son and which gang he should belong to. The teen mother, who is black, is a member of the Crips. Manzanares is Hispanic and belongs to the Westside Ballers gang, the woman said.

"They have different ideas on how the baby should be raised. Basically, she said they cannot agree on which gang the baby would 'claim,'" Sandoval said.

Manzanares was charged with disorderly conduct, harassment, and domestic violence. He was transported to the Adams County Detention Facility.

On Tuesday, he pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct and was sentenced to a year of probation. The misdemeanor harassment charge was dropped.

Source: ABC 7 News of Denver

Special Feature 

Gangs Rule Prison Life, Same in Jails

Article published by the Herald Bulletin

04/23/2008 Anderson, IN | As you'd expect, just as there are gang members in Indiana's prisons, there are gang members in the Madison County Jail. Vice Lords, Black Gangster Disciples and members of the Aryan Brotherhood can all be found from time to time inside the county's lockup, according to the jail's unofficial gang information coordinator.

"We have gangsters, of course," said Civilian Jail Officer Scott Bronner. "But I think they have to get along because of the way the jail is set up. I think it's just an unwritten rule. It's more like, 'I'm just here to do my time. I don't want a new charge.' When they go to prison, it's a totally different world. "They know that jail is radically different from prison," Bronner continued. "There's not as many privileges. There's no yard to go to, (and) everything is pretty intimate. They're in a situation where they have to get along."

Bronner, who attended a two-day law enforcement conference on gangs in Las Vegas in December, said he sees the signs of gang presence behind the jailhouse walls. "I see a lot of tattoos, a lot of hand signs that relate to their set," Bronner said.

Bronner said there's only one real gang operating in Madison County — the Black Gangster Disciples, so there's not much gang conflict in the jail. "I don't see too big of a problem with gangs," Jail Commander Andy Williams said. "We're holding inmates from Madison County. We're not holding a diversity of gangs in the Madison County Jail."

There's also been members of the Aryan Brotherhood and Vice Lords. Williams estimated that, on any given day, about 45 percent of the jail's population is composed of active gang members. In early April, he said, members of the Black Gangster Disciples and Aryan Brotherhood were being housed. Williams said the jail's average daily population was 217 inmates in 2007.

But even with that seemingly large percentage of gang members, Bronner said the average low-level offender, like someone picked up for drunken driven or shoplifting, doesn't have much of a threat of being harmed by a gang member. "The only way they'd be in trouble is if you're a threat to them, or if you've caused a problem," he said. "I don't think the average guy coming in here on a DUI is in danger unless they cross the gangsters."



Bronner said once a gang-affiliated inmate starts acting up, he's generally harder to get under control. He said it's the main difference between gang members in the jail and a non-affiliated inmate. "They're a little harder to contain once they're in that zone," Bronner said. "Once they show out, they really show out. "Really, they only want a little respect," he continued. "It's all about respect. If you treat them with respect, they'll treat you with respect."

Gangs Rule Prison Life

In the Michigan City prison, the black inmates sit on one side of the cafeteria, and the white inmates sit on the other side. Crossing over can result in a brawl, which is exactly what Anderson resident Jeffery Cottrell, who is black, was caught in the middle of while serving time about 10 years ago.

A black inmate walked to where the white inmates were eating, and the white inmates started a fight with the man. This escalated into a massive riot that prison guards rushed to suppress. "I hid under the table when the rubber bullets started flying," said Cottrell, who is now program director of the Urban League in Madison County.

Race-related violence and discrimination are no more or less common in prisons than society as a whole, said Kojak Fuller, an Anderson resident who served time in the Wabash and Plainfield prisons. Fuller was a basketball star at Anderson High School and was Indiana's Mr. Basketball in 1993. He is now doing work in Anderson for Man 4 Man Ministries, which works with convicted felons.

Gangs form in prisons just as they do in cities and towns, mostly because inmates were already part of a gang before being incarcerated, said Lyna Tresley, director of operations and support services for the Indiana Department of Correction. "There's all sorts of groups," she said. "The white supremacists, religious groups, the whole gambit."

Sometimes prison violence occurs because of other perceived differences. For instance, at the New Castle Correctional Facility in April 2007, prisoners who had been transferred from Arizona rioted because they felt they had fewer privileges in the Indiana facility and were not being treated as well as the Indiana prisoners.

Prisons are segregated based on security levels and not race, Tresley said. The lowest risk offenders are placed together, and the highest risk offenders are housed together. But gang members tend to stick around one another just like in society, Fuller said. Members of the same gang will work out with each other, eat together or play cards, he said. They form a support group for security and financial reasons.

But when it comes to making money, race is not important, he said. For example, if a member of the Aryan Brotherhood can make money by selling tobacco to a black man, he will, Fuller said.

Race-related discrimination and race-related violence does happen though. Gangs do not typically target gangs of other races, Fuller said. But an individual might pick a



fight with another individual, and both might be members of different gangs, who would protect their members, he said.

Distinguishing what acts of violence are motivated by race can be difficult, said Bob Blume, executive director of Man 4 Man, a ministry that works with convicted felons. Inmates fight over the same things other people do: Disagreements, greed, selfishness, jealousy and other emotions, he said.

Prison officials do not like to let the public know these problems exist, said Bruce MacMurray, a professor of sociology and criminal justice at Anderson University. A large portion of society wants a prison to take care of its business as quietly as possible, he said. "It's often the informal duty of administrators to keep a lid on those things," MacMurray said.

Gangs are carefully monitored by prison personnel, Tresley said. They are not allowed to recruit. Various prisons, such as the one in Pendleton, use educational programs to try and modify inmates' behavior, Blume said. For example, the Pendleton penitentiary uses the Plus Program, which is a faith-based program designed to help inmates cope with various issues. These programs give inmates an outlet to express themselves so they do not have to resort to violence, he said.

Source: The Herald Bulletin

From the Editors



Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. We are always trying to improve the quality and effectiveness of our newsletters and information.

If you have any comments, suggestions or articles that can be used in the "G.A.I.N." Newsletter, please send them to:

**L.E.C.C. Program
C/O U.S. Attorney's Office
5400 Federal Plaza, Suite 1500
Hammond, IN 46320
Phone: (219) 937-5666
Fax: (219) 937-5537
E-mail: ryan.holmes@usdoj.gov
Or
Jesse.rodgers@sbcglobal.net**

