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POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

Police: U.S. teens were hit men for Mexican cartel

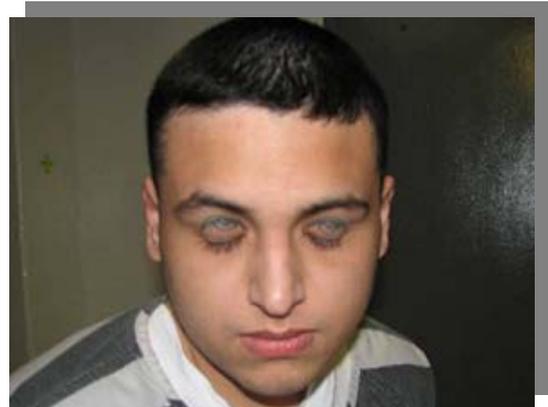
Published by CNN on March 13, 2009

LAREDO, TX| Rosalio Reta sits at a table inside a Laredo Police Department interrogation room. A detective, sitting across the table, asks him how it all started.

Reta, in Spanish street slang, describes his initiation as an assassin, at the age of 13, for the Mexican Gulf Cartel, one of the country's two major drug gangs.

"I thought I was Superman. I loved doing it, killing that first person," Reta says on the videotape obtained by CNN. "They tried to take the gun away, but it was like taking candy from kid."

Rosalio Reta and his friend, Gabriel Cardona, were members of a three-person cell of American teenagers working as cartel hit men in the United States, according to prosecutors. The third was arrested by Mexican authorities and stabbed to death in prison there three days later.



Gabriel Cardona, who shows his tattooed eyelids, worked as a hit man for a Mexican cartel.

In interviews with CNN, Laredo police detectives and prosecutors told how Cardona and Reta were recruited by the cartel to be assassins after they began hitting the cantinas and clubs just across the border.

CNN has also obtained detailed court records as well as several hours of police interrogation videos. The detective sitting across the table from Reta and Cardona in those sessions is Robert Garcia. He's a veteran of the Laredo Police Department and one of the few officers who has questioned the young men.

Continued...

"One thing you wonder all the time: What made them this way?" Garcia told CNN. "They were just kids themselves, waiting around playing PlayStation or Xbox, waiting around for the order to be given."

Over a nearly one-year period starting in June 2005, the border town of Laredo, Texas, saw a string of seven murders. At first glance, the violence looked like isolated, gangland-style killings. But investigators started suspecting something more sinister.



Cops say they're amazed how Cardona and Rosalio Reta evolved into alleged cartel assassins.

Then Noe Flores was gunned down in a clear case of mistaken identity. Investigators found a fingerprint on a cigarette box inside the suspected shooter's get-away car. That clue unraveled the chilling reality and led police to arrest Gabriel Cardona and Rosalio Reta. Prosecutors say they quickly discovered these two teenagers were homegrown assassins, hired to carry out the dirty work of the notorious Gulf Cartel.

"There are sleeper cells in the U.S.," said Detective Garcia. "They're here, they're here in the United States."

The cases against Cardona and Reta -- both are in prison serving long prison sentences for murder -- shed new light into the workings of the drug cartels. Prosecutor and investigators say Reta and Cardona were recruited into a group called "Los Zetas," a group made up of former members of the Mexican special military forces. They're considered ruthless in how they carry out attacks. "Los Zetas" liked what they saw in Cardona and Reta.

Both teenagers received six-month military-style training on a Mexican ranch. Investigators say Cardona and Reta were paid \$500 a week each as a retainer, to sit and wait for the call to kill. Then they were paid up to \$50,000 and 2 kilos of cocaine for carrying out a hit.

The teenagers lived in several safe houses around Laredo and drove around town in a \$70,000 Mercedes-Benz.

As the teens became more immersed in the cartel lifestyle, their appearance changed. Cardona had eyeballs tattooed on his eyelids. Reta's face became covered in tattoo markings. (Prosecutors say during his trial Reta used make-up to cover the facial markings.) And both sported tattoos of "Santa Muerte," the Grim Reaper-like pseudo-saint worshipped by drug traffickers.

"These organizations, these cartels, they function like a Fortune 500 company," Webb County, Texas, prosecutor Uriel Druker said. "We have to remember that the United States is the market they are trying to get to."

In Cardona's interrogation tape, there are clues that "Los Zetas" are reaching deeper and deeper into the United States. Cardona is asked, "Where else are the Zetas?" And Cardona responds, "I've heard in Dallas and Houston."

And that's why the cartel recruited these young Americans. Cardona and Reta could move freely and easily back and forth across the border with Mexico.

Just hours before they were arrested, federal authorities taped a phone conversation between them in which Cardona brags about killing 14-year-old Inez Villareal and his cousin, a Cardona rival. Cardona laughs as he describes torturing the two boys and dumping their bodies in large metal drums filled with diesel fuel. He says he made "guiso," or stew, with their bodies.

As the call ends, Cardona says, "There are three left to kill, there are three left."

County, schools fighting 'online generation' of gang activity

Officials say tracking, awareness, anti-gang programs are crucial.

Published by the News-Sentinel on March 19, 2009

FORT WAYNE, IN | Gang activity is moving from the streets to the World Wide Web, as younger members create rivalries through posted messages and photos on social networking sites.

“Being in a gang for these kids is partially about the show,” said Allen Smith, Allen County Juvenile Center counselor, who said photos of guns and gang signs have been appearing on kids' MySpace and Facebook pages. “It's an online generation.”

Members of Allen County Juvenile Probation Department's gang team, located within the juvenile center, track these sites to help steer kids from gang activity.

“When we confiscate pages, then we have access to all their friends,” said Smith, who acquired a page where a known gang member had 1,500 friends, 80 percent of whom were in Fort Wayne. “You could spend eight hours a day on these pages.”

When a juvenile is placed on probation through the court system, those with known gang affiliations enter the ICE program. The Involvement in the Community Education program was developed about a year ago to wean kids off gang activity. So far, about 150 kids have gone through the program, and Smith says it's been a success.

“A lot of them I haven't heard back from,” he said. “The biggest thing I know is the kids know we're watching them now.”

Once a juvenile enters ICE, all gang-related material is removed, including Web sites; community involvement is mandated either through community service or a job; counseling is required; no-contact orders are issued by the court for those who would be a bad influence on kids; and the parents are asked to attend an awareness class. The hour-long presentation alerts parents to known gangs in Fort Wayne, what insignias they may be carrying and how to recognize those signs in their own children.

“It's not necessarily about bad parenting. It's just about being aware,” Smith said.

A similar presentation also is given to schools to help them recognize gang activity within their walls. Local school districts say they have seen graffiti on bathroom walls, students' notebooks and book bags and even on playground equipment, but wanted to know what is just vandalism, and what could be dangerous for their students.

“We recognize in the community there is an issue. We see graffiti and gang tagging in the schools sometimes. We wanted to know what it was,” said Jeff Studebaker, East Allen County Schools' behavioral specialist.

The probation department comes in with a PowerPoint that runs through local gang insignias - pitchforks, crowns, 13s and such - and explains which gangs may be in their areas. The probation department also meets monthly with school officials to keep them apprised of the ever-changing gang activity. Nate Mendill, an Allen County juvenile probation officer, says it changes weekly, however, and no corner of Allen County is left untouched by gangs.

Schools generally perceived as safer, such as Carroll and Homestead, have seen gang activity.

“It's everywhere. Maybe not as prevalent in the fringe of the county, but it's everywhere,” Smith said.

“It's just like drugs. No one wants to say, ‘Yes, we have a drug problem. Yes, we have gangs.’ I guarantee you if you look, you'll find drugs. If you look, you'll find gangs,” said Sam DiPrimio, Carroll High School assistant principal.

Schools say they handle the issue the best they can: Recognize it and get it out of the building.

“The message that we have to get out is ‘you're not going to do this at school,’” DiPrimio said.

But it's more than just the schools. People want gangs out of the community.

“The whole idea wasn't to label these kids and say they're bad,” Smith said. “It was to identify it and stop it.”



Gary man dies of gunshot wound

Published by the NWI Times on March 17, 2009

GARY, IN | A 25-year-old Gary man was shot and killed Sunday in an apparent gang-related homicide, Lake County authorities said.

Torrence A. Scott, of the 1100 block of Gerry Street, died of a gunshot wound to the chest, the Lake County coroner's office reported.

He was transported from 2400 Morton St. to Methodist Hospitals Northlake Campus emergency room in Gary where he was pronounced dead at 5:53 p.m., the coroner's office reported.

Gary police were not available during repeated calls seeking comment about the case.

The Lake County coroner's office listed the death as gang related.



Regional 

Gang members in custody in death of Kenosha teacher

Published by the Journal Sentinel on March 3, 2009

KENOSHA, WI | Kenosha police on Tuesday announced the arrest of a 20-year-old reputed gang member in connection with the death of a teacher who was punched in the face and whose head struck the ground outside a bar last month.

Colin Byars, 24, and some women were leaving Big Shotz Sports Bar & Lounge, 3000 Roosevelt Road, about 2 a.m. Feb. 21 when a group of men began to bother the women outside the tavern, police said. Byars intervened and was punched by one of the men, causing him to fall to the ground, witnesses told police. Byars, a special education teacher at McKinley Middle School in Kenosha, suffered a significant head injury and died later that day at Froedtert Hospital in Wauwatosa.



Martin L. Walker, 20, of Racine, was arrested that day on a probation violation, Kenosha Police Chief John Morrissey said during a news conference Tuesday.

Martin L. Walker

Walker also was wanted on a warrant for possession of marijuana and carrying a concealed weapon, Kenosha police Detective John Peterson said in an interview.

A bouncer at the bar provided the license plate number of the vehicle the men had been using, and police arrested Walker at a Racine residence after tracing the vehicle to that address, Peterson said.



Jeremy S. Powell

Police have recommended first-degree reckless homicide charges against Walker, who is suspected of punching Byars, Morrissey said during the news conference. The case against Walker was sent to the Kenosha County district attorney's office Tuesday, Morrissey said.

A second man turned himself in to authorities in Racine on Tuesday, Morrissey said. Police are still searching for a third man, 18-year-old Racine resident Jeremy S. Powell, Morrissey said.

Morrissey said all three men are members of the Vice Lords gang and are suspected of being involved in a series of vehicle break-ins that took place shortly after Byars was punched.

Police also suspect the three men may have robbed a gas station after Byars was punched, Kenosha police Sgt. Hugh Rafferty said in a news release.



Shooting victim is 29th Chicago student to be killed this school year

Woodlawn boy fatally shot near corner caught up in gang turf war

Published by the Chicago Tribune on March 26, 2009

CHICAGO, IL Chicago police are investigating the fatal shooting of a 15-year-old boy who died Monday evening after he was shot near his Woodlawn home earlier in the day.

Lee Ivory Miller was standing in the 1500 block of East 65th Place about 4:30 p.m. Monday when a shot fired in his direction hit him in the shoulder, Sgt. Antoinette Ursitti said. He was taken to University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital, where he later died.

Miller attended Chicago Vocational Career Academy, said Monique Bond, a spokeswoman for the Chicago Public Schools. He is the 29th city schools student to be killed this school year. None of the killings occurred on school grounds, Bond said.

The shooting is believed to be part of gang turf war in Woodlawn that resulted in three killings, including Miller's, in recent months, said Ulysses "U.S." Floyd, a program director for the CeaseFire anti-violence group in Woodlawn.

Floyd, who is serving as a spokesman for Miller's family, said activists have been trying to stop the violence. They are planning a march and rally in the neighborhood Wednesday. "It's senseless. We are losing all these young lives before they reach their potential."

Nefertiti Clark, 28, who works at WeCan, an after-school program at 65th Street and Stony Island Avenue, said the program calls the police every day to report gang activity.

"Every day, we call the police about the two opposite crews fighting for the corner of 65th Street and Stony," Clark said.

She said Miller would hang out on the street every day. Clark said she would try to give him encouraging words and warn him about hanging out on the corner. Clark said her cousin was killed on the corner less than a year ago.

"Almost a whole year later, and it's not over," said Clark.

She said that she did not believe Miller was in a gang. He was the type of boy who would apologize when he was caught cursing around adults, Clark said. She chastised parents in the area who are not taking responsibility for their children. "I'm disappointed ... They are calling out for attention but where can they get it?" Clark said.



Kirk act targets gang-tied illegals

Published by the Sun-Times on March 24, 2009

SPRINGFIELD, IL | New legislation that would make it easier to deport illegal residents with gang ties is being proposed by U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-Highland Park.

Citing Illinois' high street gang population, Kirk said Monday he wants law enforcement nationwide to take a tougher stance against illegal aliens who are members of gangs. Locally, the legislation would combine with efforts already being taken in Lake County to deport illegals in the criminal system.

"While most gang members are American citizens, we are seeing the rise of transnational drug gangs that are bringing new levels of violence and criminal activity to our communities," Kirk said at a Chicago news conference attended by various community leaders, including Lake County Sheriff Mark Curran.



U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-Highland Park

Kirk proposed the Alien Gang Removal Act, which would amend federal immigration law to include membership in a street gang as a disqualifying criterion for entry into the United States. The legislation also creates new grounds for deportation after a member of an officially designated criminal gang is found to have been convicted of any felonies or criminal misdemeanors involving weapons, ammunition, child pornography or illegal narcotics.

In proposing the Act, Kirk cited statistics from the Government Accountability Office, which state that illegal aliens in prisons have been arrested an average of eight times each.

"The national statistics on repeat offenders are staggering, and these gangs are backed by weapons and resources that can easily overwhelm suburban law enforcement," Kirk said.

In Lake County, Curran has already begun programs that accelerate the deportation process for illegal aliens housed in the Lake County Jail who are convicted of crimes. Curran said he hopes Kirk's proposal will eventually be enforced nationwide.

"I'm glad he's addressing it," Kirk said. "The bottom line is, these issues have to be addressed. I'm getting really frustrated with people telling law enforcement not to do its job across this country."



Police take aim at street gang 'recruiters'

Published by the Republican on March 25, 2009

SPRINGFIELD, MA | Two brothers, self-professed members of the Latin Kings street gang, were arrested for disorderly conduct on Monday afternoon near the Forest Park Middle School as police moved in to question them about openly recruiting students.

By Tuesday afternoon, hours after their arraignment in District Court, David Reyes, 18, and Tomas Reyes, 21, both of 95 Cliftwood Ave., were again spotted in the vicinity of the school at dismissal time. But they fled when officers approached them, police said.

School and police officials say the two incidents reflect the grim reality that it is becoming more common for gangs to look for new members outside schools or wherever young people assemble.



Forest Park Middle School
Source: sps.springfield.ma.us

"Basically, these guys were recruiting middle school students into joining a violent drug-dealing gang," said Sgt. John M. Delaney, aide to Police Commissioner William J. Fitchet, of the first incident. "They stated to one youngster that it's cool to be a Latin King because you get to carry guns."

David and Tomas Reyes were spotted on Monday approaching students walking home from school, Delaney said. Riding in a green Volkswagen with chrome wheels, the pair approached groups of students and boasted about what they could gain by joining their gang, he said.

Some students reported the incident, and provided a description to police. They also told police they thought one of the gang members had a gun, Delaney said. He praised the students for alerting police.

Officers spotted the Reyes brothers about an hour later near the school, and stopped to question them, Delaney said. He said that both admitted they were members of the Latin Kings, and became loud and abusive when officers had their car towed because it was unregistered and uninsured.

Both threatened Sgt. Dennis M. O'Connor with their fists, and said that fighting him would be worth the \$40 clerk-magistrate fee to be released from jail, said Delaney. While confronting O'Connor, the pair also called friends on a cell phone to come to their aid. O'Connor did the same over his radio, and several officers arrived to back him up, Delaney said.

The two suspects were arrested when they continued to make threats and refused to calm down, he said.

The two Reyes brothers pleaded innocent to charges of disorderly conduct on Tuesday morning in District Court. They were released on their personal recognizance and ordered to return to court on May 6 for pre-trial hearings.

A few hours after their court appearance, the pair was again spotted in the vicinity of the Forest Park Middle School, prompting police to issue an alert. They did not make contact with students, and fled on foot when police approached, said Capt. John R. Barbieri.

The alert was called as a precaution because of the brothers' previous run-in with police, their professed membership in a gang, and the possibility that they were armed, he said.

Nicholas Cotto, a gang expert who consults with police in Western Massachusetts, said this type of recruiting activity becomes more common as the weather gets warmer and more teens congregate outdoors. It is not just happening at schools, he said, but anywhere teenagers assemble.

Read the full story at: <http://www.masslive.com/hampfrank/republican/index.ssf?/base/news-19/123796585368120.xml&coll=1>



NYPD arrests 34 suspected gang members

Published by Newsday.com on March 10, 2009

NEW YORK, NY | New York City police say they've arrested 34 suspected members of a notorious street gang, including the citywide leader of the organization.

NYPD captain Gerry Farrell says the suspects are members of the Trinitarios, a Dominican-based gang. He says a grand jury indicted 41 people and police are still looking for seven of them.



Trinitario Graffiti
Source: GangRelated.net

Police say the gang members are accused of selling drugs, possessing illegal firearms and are responsible for at least one slaying.

The investigation began about 20 months ago after a homicide drew investigators' attention to the gang.

Farrell says the gang has more than 200 members in New York City and is also located in other parts of the country. He says they have become more violent in recent years.

Trinitario Street Gang

Identifiers:

3Ni

Trini

7 Poppin' all Droppin' Nation

DPL: Dios Patria Libertad

OT (Original Trinitario)

Green bandana or Green beads

Green clothing

Red, White, Blue (Dominican Flag)

Facts:

They are currently the fastest growing gang in the New York and New Jersey area.

Rivals include: Bloods (Ruff Ryders, Dip Set), Crips (FOLK), Latin Kings, Netas, D.D.P (Dominicans Don't Play), Bones (Mexican), as well as others.

Source: GangRelated.net



Group Edits Graffiti To Shame Gangs

'The Viestas' Risks Ire Of Gang Members

Published by KSBW.com, NBC 8 News on March 8, 2009

SALINAS, CA | A large group of teens and adults fed up with gang violence on the Central Coast is trying to shame, antagonize and ridicule gangs.

Gangs often use graffiti as a way to mark territory. So a stealth group is secretly changing gang graffiti in an effort to make gangsters look foolish and provoke debate among gangsters.

For example, members of the group might change the "XIV" gang tag into "HIV." SEM might be mocked as super ecological morons. VGS might be edited to stand for violent gangsters suck.

KSBW agreed not to identify the members of the group, which members call "The Viestas," and who are inspired by the lore of Mexican folk hero Pancho Villa.

"It's a widespread effort intent on poking fun at gang members who feel violence is the only solution," said one member of the effort. The group's activities come with risk.

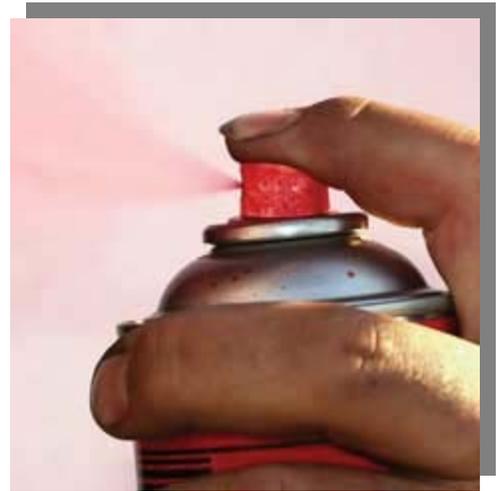
"I'm concerned about their safety. People get hurt over issues as simple as respect," Sgt. Sheldon Bryan of the Monterey County Gang Task Force said.

"What I would ask them to possibly consider is take that same impulse and come side-by-side with more mainstream efforts to clean up graffiti," Salinas Mayor Dennis Donohue said.

But group members said they are resolute in fighting gangs their own way because they do not believe police and politicians are doing enough.

"There's kids from about three counties here that are sick and tired of murders of 15-, 16-, 17-year-olds. And they got mad," one member said.

To be clear, police said vandalism on top of vandalism is still a crime. But his group hopes that the ridicule will spur gang members to realize there is no reason to be proud of their affiliation.



Source: magistrates-association.org.uk



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:

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