



G.A.I.N.

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U.S. Attorney's
Office
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Indiana

5400 Federal Plaza
Suite 1500
Hammond, IN 46320
219.937.5500

David Capp
United States Attorney

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POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

Feds: Latino gang targeted blacks

Nearly 150 alleged members, associates indicted in Southern Calif.

Published by MSNBC on May 21, 2009

HAWAIIAN GARDENS, CA | A Latino street gang waged a racist campaign to eliminate the city's black residents through attempted murders and other crimes, according to federal racketeering indictments unsealed Thursday.

Five indictments charged a total of 147 members and associates of the Varrio Hawaiian Gardens gang, and federal and local agencies arrested 63 of them by early Thursday, U.S. Attorney Thomas P. O'Brien said at a news conference.

Another 35 defendants were already in custody on unrelated charges. Weapons and drugs worth more than \$1 million also were seized in what O'Brien called "the largest gang takedown in United States history."

The indictments detail attempted murder, kidnapping, firearms, narcotics and other charges related to attacks by the gang, which is predominantly Latino and mainly operates in Hawaiian Gardens, a city of about 15,000 in southeastern Los Angeles County.

"(Varrio Hawaiian Gardens) gang members take pride in their racism and often refer to the VHG Gang as the 'Hate Gang,'" the main indictment said. "VHG gang members have expressed a desire to rid the city of Hawaiian Gardens of all African-Americans and have engaged in a systematic effort to achieve that result by perpetrating crimes against African-Americans."



A Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputy carries weapons confiscated in raids aimed at dozens of gang members and associates charged with racially motivated attacks on African-Americans.

Continued...

Shots fired into home

The indictment alleges a string of attacks on black residents, including a shooting into a home with eight people inside. The indictment does not say if anyone was hit.

In another instance, two gang members allegedly chased a black man, yelled a racist epithet at him and then beat him with a garden rake. The same man was later repeatedly stabbed by two gang members, according to the indictment, which charged them with his attempted murder.

According to 2000 census data, the latest available, Hawaiian Gardens was roughly 73 percent Hispanic and 4 percent black.

Hawaiian Gardens Mayor Michael Gomez welcomed the crackdown, saying: "Honest residents should not have to live in fear of lawless thugs who act like it's high noon at the OK Corral."

The indictments mark at least the second time in less than two years that federal authorities have accused Latino gang members of attacking black residents because of their race. Local officials have tried to downplay racial tensions.

Deputy's murder prompts investigation

The investigation of the Varrio Hawaiian Gardens gang began in June 2005 after the murder of Los Angeles County sheriff's Deputy Luis Gerardo "Jerry" Ortiz. Jose Luis Orozco, a member of the gang, was sentenced to death in 2007 for the killing.

Ortiz, 35, died as he searched for Orozco, who had shot and wounded a man while he did yard work. Orozco was later found guilty of attempted murder in that case.

"It was this hatred of African-Americans that may have spurred the attack on Deputy Jerry Ortiz, who was killed trying to arrest a gang member suspected of trying to shoot an African-American man in the back," O'Brien said.



Ex-boxer gets life for drug trafficking

Published by the Post Tribune on May 27, 2009



Charles "Duke" Tanner, 2003

HAMMOND, IN | Gary boxing phenom Charles "Duke" Tanner was sentenced Tuesday to life in prison on federal drug trafficking charges.

Tanner, 28, who had made a tearful plea to U.S. Judge Rudy Lozano asking for leniency, showed little emotion as the judge read the former light middleweight his sentence, craning his neck backward to look at the throng of weeping relatives and friends gathered in the gallery.

"It's obvious to me that a lot of people like you and feel close to you," Lozano said. "That disappoints me, because you have betrayed, in large part, their trust in you."

The concurrent terms of life in prison were the maximum on each of the two counts for which Tanner was convicted in 2006.

Prosecutors said Tanner, who maintained his innocence in remarks he choked out to the courtroom, and his older brothers were head of the Renegades, a Gary street gang that trafficked thousands of kilograms of cocaine, crack and marijuana in that city and as far away as Indianapolis.

Witnesses against Tanner at his trial, all of whom had negotiated plea agreements with prosecutors, said they bought and sold drugs from Tanner or other members of the gang on numerous occasions, and a hidden camera videotaped Tanner taking a duffel bag and cooler holding what he thought held bundles of cocaine in 2004 sting operation.

"Those guys, they lying on me," Tanner said. "I'm asking you to have mercy on me. I ain't told you everything that happened. I ain't no drug dealer."

Tanner's attorney, Andrea Gambino, sobbed as she hugged Tanner's relatives, and walked from the courtroom to the clerk's office to file a motion for appeal of a sentence she called "excessive, unjust and unreasonable."



Tanner has been imprisoned since his arrest nearly five years ago, and his sentencing dragged over four hearings during a two-month span, as Gambino called some 20 witnesses that testified to the fighter's kindness and generosity. Gambino had asked that Tanner be sentenced to just 10 years in prison, well below federal guidelines that called for a minimum term of 25 years. Gambino, who has complained about the defense mounted by Tanner's attorney at trial, would not say on what she would base Tanner's appeal.

"This shows everything that is wrong with the criminal justice system," Gambino said. "There is no reason a man who has no prior criminal record should go to prison for the rest of his life. This makes the whole system look bad."

Gambino noted during the sentencing hearings that Tanner's time had been consumed with training for his professional boxing career. At the time of his arrest, Tanner had a 19-0 record and was just a few months removed from a nationally televised bout.

But Assistant U.S. Attorney David Nozick said Tanner's boxing skills and bright future were reasons for a tougher sentence.

"A guy like Charles Tanner had no excuses," Nozick said. "He had this God-given talent to support his family."



Old cases have gang member in city court

Published by the Post Tribune on May 7, 2009

GARY, IN| Victor "Little Vic" Young, former leader of "The 22nd Avenue Boys," one of the city's most notorious gangs, appeared in City Court on Wednesday on some mundane traffic charges.

Released from federal prison in November after serving a 10-year sentence on drug charges, Young, 31, appeared muscle-bound but subdued in an oversized white T-shirt and chunky gold bracelet for the brief court hearing to have six cases dating back 13 years dismissed.

Attorney Sonja Dix told Judge Pro Tem Barbara Spotwood an agreement had been reached between Lake County Deputy Prosecutor Laura Morrison and Young's lawyer, Adam Tavitas, to drop all the old cases. Bonds posted from some of the arrests were used to pay all fines and court costs, Dix said, explaining Young conducted the business while he was incarcerated.

Young is attempting to obtain a valid driver's license and wiping out any old cases is part of the process.

Young and two of his brothers were leaders of a drug operation based at 22nd Avenue and Connecticut Street in the mid-1990s. A federal investigation finally brought the gang and drug activity to a halt. Young cooperated in the investigation and obtained a lesser sentence than others charged with similar crimes.



Felony gang charge not used a lot

Published by the Columbus Dispatch on May 24, 2009.

COLUMBUS, OH Three tattooed dots on a man's hand that officers noted six years ago during a routine booking for a gun charge tipped off Columbus police to another potential investigation.

Police knew what the three dots -- *tres puntos* in Spanish -- represented: the three words *Mi Vida Loca*. My Crazy Life. The tattoo is often seen on the hands of members of MS-13, the gang known internationally as La Mara Salvatrucha.

The police gang unit began to log its contacts with the man, Jose Adolfo Aldana-Ramirez, an immigrant from El Salvador. Officers noted his clothing and his companions, some of whom were MS-13 members already documented by the unit.



Ceneca Valdez, right, translates for Jose Adolfo Aldana-Ramirez in Franklin County Common Pleas Court.

This month, Aldana-Ramirez pleaded guilty to participating in a criminal gang, a charge that state lawmakers enacted 10 years ago to crack down on gang crimes. Since then, the charge has been used in 116 felony cases in Franklin County, including 25 times against juveniles, a review of court records shows. Though not used frequently, the law has helped lock up some of the 1,000 or so gang members in Columbus, police and prosecutors say. It carries a sentence of up to eight years in prison.

"That's a pretty big hammer to hit somebody with," said James Sandford, a Columbus police detective who specializes in the MS-13 gang.

Defense attorneys, on the other hand, say the law is vague and prejudicial.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio thinks that it unfairly skews enforcement toward urban areas, education director Shakyra Diaz said. The risk for guilt by association is great and could land innocent people on watch lists, she said.

To establish a person as an active gang member, police use criteria such as dress, hangouts, associates and the person's own admissions.

"It starts out as something that simple," Sgt. Chantay Boxill of the Columbus police gang unit said of Aldana-Ramirez's tattoos. After Boxill's unit began keeping track of him, police obtained a threatening voice-mail message that Aldana-Ramirez had left for a rival: "You'll realize the Salvatruchas. No one laughs at the MS-13."

When Aldana-Ramirez was caught with a loaded .38 under his driver's seat in August, the gang unit also charged him with participating in a criminal gang.

Ramirez pleaded guilty to carrying a concealed weapon and the gang charge on May 13 in Franklin County Common Pleas Court and was sent to prison for four years. When he is released, he will be deported to El Salvador.

Though Aldana-Ramirez pleaded guilty, he got his dot tattoos at age 15 and denies being a member of MS-13 today, his attorney, Joseph L. Mas, said. Mas also questioned whether the gang law is constitutional.

"We usually find a police officer or a task force that studies a community and then brings charges," he said. "Then, they act as their own witnesses to support the existence of a gang. I find that constitutionally suspect. I don't think the appeals courts have had an ample opportunity to study the matter."

Both the Franklin County Court of Appeals and the U.S. Supreme Court have upheld gang statutes. At least 18 states have anti-gang laws.

"It's been helpful," Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O'Brien said. "But often we face a situation where we know he's a gang member, he knows he's a gang member, and the police know he's a gang member, but we can't prove it in a court of law."

Usually, he said, gang members are tied to other crimes so prosecutors don't need to rely on just the gang charge to obtain a conviction.

Read the full story at: http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/local_news/stories/2009/05/24/gangs.ART_ART_05-24-09_B1_6EDV836.html?type=rss&cat=&sid=101



Mundelein arson arrests: Gang set fatal fire, police say

Family moved from Grayslake allegedly because of harassment

Published by the Chicago Tribune May 12, 2009.

MUNDELEIN, IL| A Grayslake family harassed for weeks by gang members moved recently to Mundelein to escape, but a Molotov cocktail tossed through the window of their new home killed a 12-year-old boy and seriously injured his mother and sister, police said Monday as they announced murder charges in the case. An 18-year-old son was the target of the early-morning attack but was away working, Mundelein Police Chief Raymond Rose said.

The attack was plotted Friday, when Manuel Flores, 25, of the 24500 block of West Bronson Avenue, Round Lake, ordered Elver Hernandez, 20, and Edwin Hernandez, 17, both of the 800 block of Lange Street, Mundelein, to carry it out, police said.



Elver Hernandez, Edwin Hernandez, and Manuel Flores (left to right)
Source: Mundelein Police Dept.

All three were charged Monday with first-degree murder, and additional charges are expected, Rose said.

Jorge Juarez, 12, died of smoke inhalation, according to Lake County Coroner Richard Keller. Virginia Estrada, 44, and daughter Virginia Juarez, 11, jumped from a window and were seriously injured, authorities said. Each suffered first- and second-degree burns, fire officials said



Missing Gang Strike Force vehicles found

Published by Minnesota Public Radio on May 27, 2009.

ST. PAUL, MN| Ramsey County Sheriff Bob Fletcher says investigators from his department have tracked down some of the property thought lost by a Twin Cities gang unit.

Last week, the state Legislative Auditor issued a report that was critical of the Metro Gang Strike Force. The audit said the unit didn't have paperwork accounting for thousands of dollars in seized cash and more than a dozen vehicles.



Source:
www.DPS.state.MN.us/StrikeForce

But Fletcher said his own investigators have established what happened to the cars after police towed and seized them. Some were scrapped, others sold off and some actually returned to their owners.

"Clearly the cars were all handled in an appropriate fashion," Fletcher said. "It's just that the investigators had not filed the paperwork in the appropriate place, or in some cases they may not have known that the towing contractor didn't return it to the owner and it had in fact been scrapped or resold."

He said he doesn't know why the strike force didn't track down the cars when the auditor raised questions about them in an early draft of its report.

"There should have been an aggressive effort to track down the vehicles and answer any other questions that were raised," Fletcher said. "I think the two (strike force) investigators that approached us were disappointed that

there hadn't been a full court press to find those cars, and that frankly it didn't take that much work to locate them."

Fletcher and representatives of the other agencies in the strike force, including St. Paul police chief John Harrington, are meeting in St. Paul to respond to that issue and others raised by the Legislative Auditor's report.

Minneapolis Police Chief Tim Dolan has already indicated that his department will be leaving the joint gang fighting effort. The Metro Transit police department is also reportedly pulling out of the strike force.

The strike force board's chairman, Manila "Bud" Shaver, the police chief in West St. Paul, told MPR News that there may be some discussion of potential disciplinary action today, in the wake of the report. But he said personnel issues will be addressed behind closed doors, because they aren't immediately subject to public disclosure.

Read about the breaking of this story at:

http://www.startribune.com/local/stpaul/45485362.html?elr=KArks:DCiU10iP:DiiUiD3aPc:_Yyc:aUU

Or to see related news visit: <http://www.startribune.com/local/stpaul/45867672.html>

'Juggalos' to be tried as a gang in Modesto assault

Published by the Modesto Bee on May 8, 2009

MODESTO, CA | Four young men suspected of assaulting a man in Graceada Park and who share an interest in an underground band called Insane Clown Posse must stand trial as members of a criminal street gang that authorities call Juggalos, a judge said Friday.



Larry Williams, Kurt Petersen, and Brandon Ferrell (from left to right) *Unknown photographer; Source: ModBee.com*

Stanislaus County Superior Court Judge Dawna Frenchie Reeves said defendants Brandon Ferrell, 18, Joshua Huggins, 17, Kurt Petersen, 22, and Larry Williams, 20, will have to return to the county lockup if they cannot post bail when they are arraigned May 22.

Prosecutors allege that the men are gang members, rather than fans of a band whose lyrics are so raw they wouldn't be heard on mainstream radio, because they travel in a pack, share a common sign or symbol -- the cartoon hatchetman associated with the Detroit-based band -- and commit crimes.

Defense attorneys say their clients are just young men who got drunk and behaved badly. The judge said there is enough evidence of gang affiliation to let a jury decide the matter.

"I am disturbed by the level of violence displayed by these young men on March 7," Frenchie Reeves said as she set bail for Ferrell, Huggins and Petersen, who have no records, at \$90,000, and bail for Williams, who was convicted of assault as a juvenile, at \$125,000.

The defendants were released on their own recognizance in the midst of a four-day preliminary hearing last month because of a technicality. They invoked their right to a speedy trial before a prosecutor's scheduling conflict prompted a temporary suspension of the proceedings.

Defense attorneys objected to the bail order, saying the previous custody ruling should not be reversed unless their clients violate the terms of their release. The defendants have come to court as required and have not gotten into trouble since they left jail and Juvenile Hall last month. Huggins, a minor, is being tried as an adult.

The judge said she will order bail as soon as a prosecutor files formal charges, because there was no provocation for an assault on William August, 53, who was strolling in Graceada Park about 9 p.m. on a Saturday with his girlfriend and daughters, ages 17 and 11.

According to witnesses, Petersen ran up to August, asked to shake his daughters' hands, received a rebuff because he made the family uncomfortable, then returned about 10 minutes later with his friends, who toppled August and kicked him, breaking his leg in two places. The defendants, along with another man who has not been charged, were pulled off August by other Juggalos.

A police officer told the court that fans of Insane Clown Posse have been hanging out in the park on weekend nights in recent months.

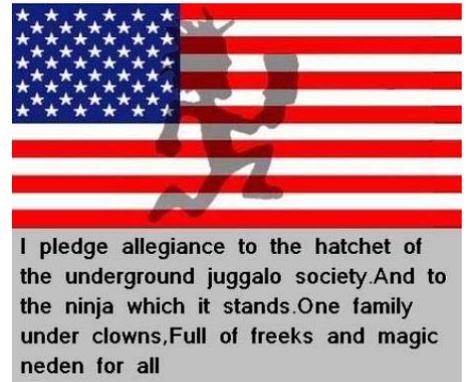
If some of the Juggalos have formed a street gang, their presence remains small. Authorities have documented 38 Juggalos as gang members countywide. The district attorney's office could point to only four juvenile cases since 2001 in which people claiming to be Juggalos committed crimes.

A gang investigator told the court about five local groups associated with a nationwide Juggalo movement: Modesto Family Klowns, Psychopathic Criminal Klowns, Juggalo Rider Bitch, Down 2 Party and Nothing 2 Lose. She could not place the defendants in any of the groups, nor could she say if the defendants' gang had a name other than Juggalo. She said some of the defendants have posted photos of themselves throwing hand signs for WC, or "wicked clown," on social networking Web sites.

The defendants promised not to engage in any Juggalo activities, such as painting their faces in crazy clown makeup or hanging out in the park. They left the courthouse and avoided August, who attended the hearing and declined to comment.

Defense attorneys said the young men have regrets.

"I think he has certainly learned his lesson by this," said attorney Gene Trimble, who represents Petersen.



Juggalo saying and trademark "Hatchetman"
Source: Photobucket.com



14 arrested in raid on Chester gang

Published by the Philadelphia Inquirer on May 22, 2009.

CHESTER, PA | They went by the street names "EZ," "Banks," "Shady," and "La-La," and carried loaded semiautomatic weapons. The circuitous streets where they peddled crack and other drugs were sometimes referred to as the "Circle of Death."

The Cut-Off, a Chester drug gang that has operated in the Highland Gardens neighborhood since 2003, ruled through threats and violence, according to federal law enforcement authorities.

Yesterday, 14 alleged members were arrested during an early-morning raid and indicted on federal drug and weapons charges; seven others were already in custody.

"We've seen this before - a violent drug organization moving cocaine in and around Chester," U.S. Attorney Laurie Magid said in announcing the arrests.

According to the 60-count indictment, gang leader Eddie Lee "Mo" Walker, 31, of Chester, would obtain cocaine from suppliers and would sometimes convert it into crack cocaine for gang members to sell. On occasion, gang members also sold heroin and marijuana, the indictment says. Gang members often stashed the drugs in various neighborhood spots to avoid having it in their possession. They used abandoned houses, trash cans, mailboxes, and even potato chip bags as hiding places. The drugs were usually sold in \$5 to \$20 quantities.

Members of the gang had to be born and raised or be living in the neighborhood. Senior members were "old heads" and younger members were "young bulls." Juveniles were recruited to store, retrieve, and sell the drugs, sometimes within 1,000 feet of a playground, authorities said.

"The people of Highland Gardens deserve a break," said Magid, who pledged with the leaders of state and local law enforcement agencies to maintain a presence in the area.



Delaware County District Attorney G. Michael Green said the gang was destroying efforts to revitalize Chester. He said good cooperation from neighbors aided in the investigation and arrests yesterday.

In 2001, authorities arrested members of another violent drug gang, the Boyle Street Boys, which was also operating in Highland Gardens.

In April 2008, officials announced the indictments of 34 people in a two-year investigation into a violent drug ring in Chester that they said was led by Edward "Pooh" Kaplan.

In August 2008, Alfonso "Fonnie" Caldwell was arrested on federal drug and money-laundering charges for allegedly running a drug-trafficking operation out of Chester.



Update from Volume 4 Issue 11 of the G.A.I.N. Newsletter distributed November 2008

Members of SoCal biker gang plead guilty

Published by MercuryNews.com on May 26, 2009.

LOS ANGELES, CA | A number of Mongol motorcycle gang members have pleaded guilty to charges stemming from an indictment that accused them of drug trafficking, murder and other offenses, prosecutors said.

The revelation came in court documents filed earlier this month by prosecutors, who asked a judge to seal all plea agreements in the case against 79 defendants. Thom Mrozek, a spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office, declined Tuesday to say how many people have pleaded guilty and to what charges.

In October, law enforcement agents served more than 100 arrest warrants in six states after infiltrating the Mongols biker gang, which is based in Southern California and had about 600 members.

A racketeering indictment described a tightly organized criminal organization that engaged in murder, torture and drug trafficking to achieve its goals. The indictment said the group, which is mostly Latino, attacked black people, committed robberies and stole motorcycles. The gang funded itself in part by stealing credit card account information, prosecutors said.

The gang's former national president, Ruben Cavazos, is among those charged. His federal public defender, Angel Navarro, declined to comment about the case.



Ruben Cavazos, former national president of the Mongols OMG.
Source: Mahalo.com

Prosecutors argued the plea agreements should be sealed because the suspects face possible retaliation by other Mongol members or other gangs.

"Defendants and counsel have described specific incidents of threats directed against them in order to deter them from entering a guilty plea," wrote Assistant U.S. Attorney Reema El-Amamy.

John Ciccone, an agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, said in a declaration that some Mongol members were concerned about threats from Mexican Mafia members and rival motorcycle gangs if they cooperate with the government.

"Based on my knowledge of the Mongols gang and the facts learned during the course of the investigation, I believe that the concerns about physical retaliation are credible," Ciccone said.

U.S. District Judge Florence-Marie Cooper granted prosecutors' request, but on Tuesday she ruled any further plea agreements filed with her must show evidence that the defendant faces retaliation or other danger.

Attorneys for 34 defendants opposed the government's position, saying details about the plea agreements are vital to their clients' defense. Cavazos wasn't among those opposing the motion.

"You want to know what deals other defendants are getting," said defense attorney David McLane, whose client David Rivera faces two drug-related counts. "I thought it was inappropriate they (prosecutors) wanted a blanket order to seal."

Besides the indictment, prosecutors were granted an injunction that prohibits gang members, their family members and associates from wearing, licensing, selling or distributing the Mongol trademarked logo.

The Mongols have had problems before. Five members were sentenced last year to Nevada state prison and two got probation for their roles in a deadly casino brawl with rival Hells Angels during a 2002 motorcycle rally in the Colorado River resort town of Laughlin. Three people died in the fight.

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

