



# G.A.I.N.

GANG ACTIVITY INFORMATION NETWORK



Volume 5, Issue 3

March 2009

United States  
Department  
Of Justice



U.S. Attorney's  
Office  
Northern District of  
Indiana

5400 Federal Plaza  
Suite 1500  
Hammond, IN 46320  
219.937.5500

David Capp  
United States Attorney

### Inside This Issue

Headline News	
Regional News	Page 1
National News	Page 2
International News	Page 7
	Page 12



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**POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS**

## Bill targets gang tattoos

Published by the Times on February 13, 2009

**SPRINGFIELD, IL** Illinois lawmakers hope to blot out inked criminals with legislation cracking down on tattoo parlors. Tattoo artists who draw gang symbols could be stuck with a fine and see their licenses revoked.

The bill's author, state Sen. Martin Sandoval, D-Chicago, wants to cross out the growing influence of street gangs across Illinois. But already the measure is drawing the ire of civil libertarians.

"The notion we're going to do anything serious in reducing gang violence in limiting a tattoo artist is somewhat ludicrous. There isn't a street in Illinois that will be safer if this bill were to become law," said Ed Yohnka, a spokesman for the American Civil Liberties Union.

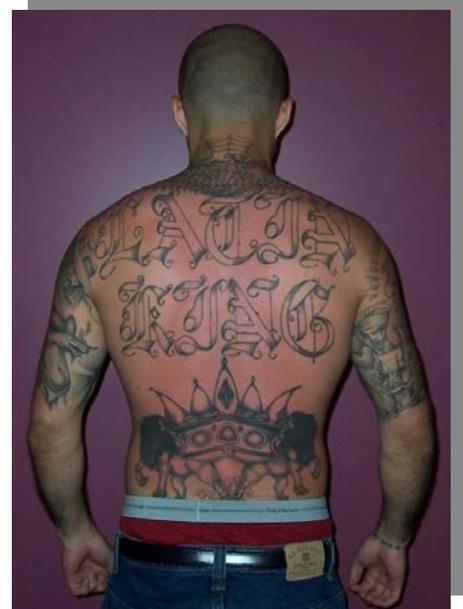
Sandoval acknowledged concerns the legislation could infringe on the right to free speech protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

"I don't think there's a way someone can rationally reach the conclusion that a tattoo of some symbol — seemingly vague and undefined in this case — can be figured out in terms of any sort of threat," Yohnka said.

Sandoval hopes to soon retool the legislation to address those concerns.

"I have all the confidence in the world that we do not want to abridge anyone's constitutional rights. But we also want to take a very hard position on deterring crime and gangs," he said.

*Continued...*



Latin King tattoo  
Source: gangink.com

Dawn Jagers, owner of Wolf's Fine Lines in Ottawa and Joliet, said she doesn't often get requests to do gang tattoos, but refuses them when she does.

"Most times gangs tattoo within their own club. They really don't go to tattoo studios for them," she said.

Jagers wasn't concerned about possible First Amendment violations, saying "upstanding citizens" wouldn't be applying gang tattoos to people anyway.

"We have all the symbols on file, so we know which ones are which. It's updated about every month. We self-police basically," she said.



Juggalo tattoo  
Source:  
[rankmytattoos.com](http://rankmytattoos.com)



## Dayton hopes to learn from Cincinnati gang bust

Published by the Dayton Daily News on February 1, 2009

**DAYTON, OH** In the days following a barrage of arrests that rounded up 50 people, Cincinnati police had to start making confession appointments. The November 2008 roundup halved the free membership of the Northside Taliband, a 92-member gang highly organized into branches that focused on various types of crime.

In the aftermath of the mass arrests, other members felt they would be caught so they voluntarily walked into police stations to give themselves up. The message, police said, was out.



Dayton Police Chief, Richard Biehl, talks about community policing before the Priority Board meeting at the community center on Leland Avenue.

Such is the goal of anti-gun violence initiatives in the Queen City, Dayton and other areas throughout the country, which uses Cincinnati's investigation and crippling of the Taliband as proof that the psychology of gang violence can be altered, officials said.

"They need to know something has changed in their environment," said Dayton police Chief Richard Biehl, himself a former Cincinnati police officer familiar with the methods used in fighting gang and gun violence.

The Taliband investigation included customized databases, speedy education on social networking Web sites, and thousands of pieces of evidence. It all led to an eight-hour grand jury session and 95-count indictment. Several Taliband members are facing life in prison. Cincinnati police Capt. Dan Gerard is fielding phone calls

about the investigation as other law enforcement agencies — including Dayton and international departments— study the particulars and the effect of the Taliband bust.

"I think it's as good a model as there is," Biehl said.

The shooting death of Michael Grace on Dec. 28, 2007, which produced one of two bodies left over from the violence on that winter Friday night, earned two sentences in the Sunday paper. Police, in the ensuing weeks, formed this account: Grace, 19, a Taliband gang member, became entangled in an argument with two men from a rival neighborhood-based gang — the Hawaiian Village Posse. They pulled handguns and fired. The killing

occurred during a unique time for Cincinnati police, which had recently jump-started the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence — a concerted effort, basically, to stop gang members from killing one another.

Grace's death, while not major news at the time, began a police investigation into the Taliband that has become a worldwide model for taking down gangs.

In six months, police used business research computer software, 6,000 pieces of evidence, 1,600 surveillance photos, a database of 92 members, University of Cincinnati graduate students, five years of tedious daily records and an eight-hour session with a Hamilton County grand jury.

The effort produced a 95-count indictment that has crippled a gang once feared even by the criminals of Hamilton Avenue, the main drag in the Northside neighborhood.

On Nov. 17, 2008, police mobilized. They made 50 arrests dressed in T-shirts bearing the Taliband's skull-and-crossbones logo — modified to include handcuffs.



Taliband gang members  
Source: ABC 9 News Cincinnati; wcpo.com

Considered a major victory and a leap in using technology and community involvement in law enforcement, other cities — including Dayton — hope they can mimic the success.

"I got a call about this the other day from Scotland Yard," said Gerard, who helped lead the investigation. "It helps make this all very rewarding."

### **Connecting the Dots**

In a dim classroom at the Cincinnati Police Academy, officials from several law enforcement offices throughout the state watched a screen and the shadow cast by Gerard. The next PowerPoint page appeared.

"This," Gerard said, "is Eric Gibson."

The mugshot staring back showed one of southwest Ohio's most dangerous criminals and a main cog in the Taliband operation, which was vast by any comparison. The group, which operated in the city's Northside neighborhood, had divisions specializing in drugs, burglary, carjacking, enforcing for the gang and other crimes.

The gang's organization also made de-constructing the structure complicated for law enforcement. Gerard and colleagues originally set aside 30 days for the job. It dominated six months.

Once police looked at the large, erratic amount of evidence piling up, they called for reinforcements. UC was connected with the department through CIRV, the anti-gun violence program, and one of the professors put her students to work. They modified a database program to connect the dots of the Taliband web. They used the business research software to map crime locations and flesh out gang leadership.

One night, a drunken Gibson — a leader in the gang — stopped two police officers and told them, among other things, that he was the biggest drug dealer in town and that they couldn't touch him.

"Two days later," Gerard said, "we kicked in Eric's door with a SWAT team."

Police found 11 ounces of crack cocaine, a loaded .44-caliber handgun, an assault rifle, body armor and pictures of Gibson in possession of various illegal substances. He bragged to officers that he could easily handle whatever

time in prison he was given. Then, at arraignment, the judge told Gibson the maximum sentence for his crimes — life without parole.

"At which time Eric started to faint in a federal courtroom," Gerard said. "You think the message got through?"

### **Round up**

At 6 a.m., Nov. 17, 2008, 80 law enforcement officials gathered at the Oak Ridge Lodge, part of the 1,500-acre, picturesque Mt. Airy Forest. It was the staging area for the round-up day, and the nearly unprecedented organization of the investigation had officers zeroed in.

Police had connected Taliband members through bail records, associated names printed on incident reports and surveillance photos. They knew where members stayed based on months of nightly license plate checks. They had listened to the Taliband's rap song featured on MySpace, the social networking Web site, and viewed hundreds of Taliband photos on the personalized pages. One included two members standing on the steps of City Hall, flashing gang signs. The quote above them read, "We Own the City."

Police were still growling about that one as they moved throughout Northside, collecting Taliband members by the dozens with the assistance of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms agents, UC students, probation officials and county prosecutors. Once arrested, the suspects were taken back to the lodge, where they were handed a four-page questionnaire. That was considered a last chance to cooperate with police. The basement for plea bargains, after all, is now five years in prison.

The Taliband was decimated. In the months since, numerous law enforcement agencies have studied the investigation from its identification of the target, the technology in connecting its members, the evidence collection, the agency cooperation and execution of arrests.

That night, a Northside neighborhood meeting gave police a standing ovation.

"Truly," Gerard said, "an amazing effort."



## **Lake County puts out most-wanted list for gang members**

### **Most-wanted list is part of a bigger crime-fighting effort throughout county**

Published by the Chicago Tribune on February 13, 2009

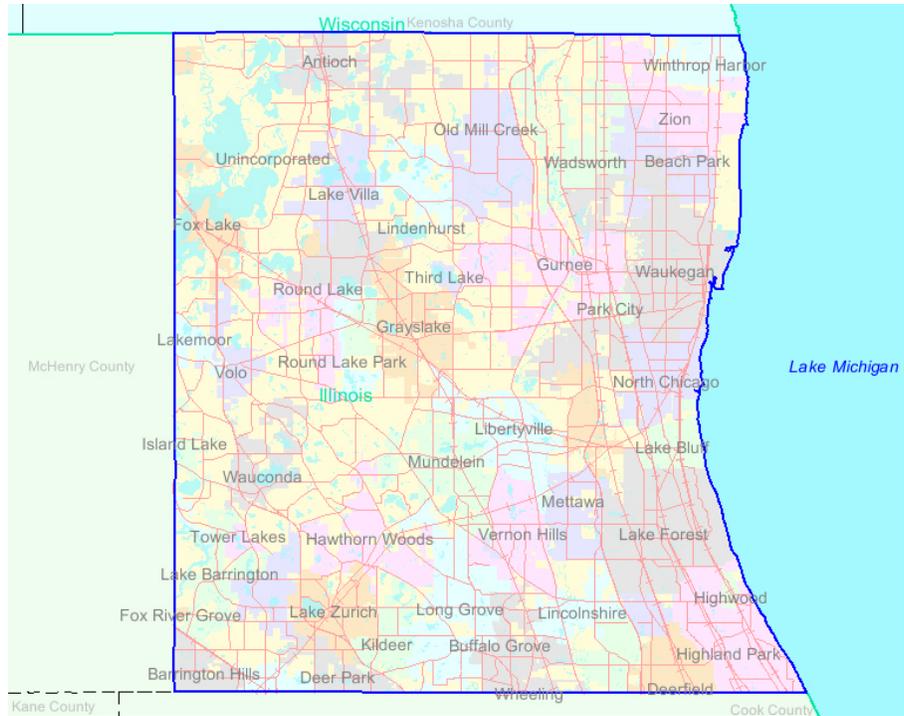
**WAUKEGAN, IL**| Gang members on the "most wanted" list include two men charged with first-degree murder. Another is charged with criminal sexual abuse. Others face weapons or drug possession charges.

Since state and federal officials began targeting gang activity in the northern suburbs roughly one year ago, 17 people wanted for similar crimes have been arrested. Now local authorities are adding 10 more suspects and are seeking the public's help in tracking them down.

The effort to reduce gang activity is funded by an \$846,000 U.S. Department of Justice grant that Waukegan received three years ago, the only grant of its kind in the state, said U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.). The money has been used by law enforcement and social service agencies, and on efforts to prevent 4th and 5th graders from drifting toward gangs.

"So many of them are without dads or other support systems," Kirk said.

Many of the estimated 2,000 gang members who live in the northeastern part of the county came from Chicago, where police have more training in gang monitoring than in smaller suburban police departments, he said. In Illinois, Lake County is behind only Cook and Will Counties in the number of gang members, according to the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. "I think it's been fairly steady, but it's starting to spike again," Lake County Sheriff Mark Curran said of local gang activity. He estimated that one-third of his jail population has a gang affiliation. "Virtually all the illegal narcotics out on the street are attributable to gangs," Curran said.



Source: Lake County Division of GIS and Mapping website

The county put out its most-wanted list for gang members this week, the second year it has done so.

"It motivates the public," Kirk said. "They don't want these gang members in their communities."

On the list are:

- Germaine Bess, 27, last known to be living in Waukegan, charged with failure to register as a sex offender.
- Jose Delgado, 30, last known to be living in Waukegan, charged with first-degree murder.
- Arturo Hernandez, 24, last known to be living in North Chicago, charged with a weapons offense.
- Javier Maldonado, 28, last known to be living in Waukegan, charged with aggravated discharge of a firearm.
- Alex Coleman, 37, last known to be living in Kenosha, charged with violation of sex registration law.
- Keaney Parks, 30, last known to be living in Zion, charged with criminal sexual abuse.
- Edward Perez, 21, last known to be living in Gurnee, charged with first-degree murder.
- Alejandro Ramirez, 28, last known to be living in Mundelein, charged with aggravated discharge of a firearm.
- Jerald Spivey, 27, last known to be living in North Chicago, charged with drug possession.
- Osvaldo Wence, 27, last known to be living in Waukegan, charged with unlawful use of a weapon.



## Suspect in drug crackdown tries to rob officer

Published by Indystar.com on February 18, 2009

**INDIANAPOLIS, IN** | An undercover police officer faced an attempted robbery while a police crackdown Tuesday night patrols led to at least seven drug arrests in a Near Northside area known for drug dealing.

Reports from the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department said that complaints from the area around 30th Street and Clifton Street led to increased patrols and arrests.

The initial arrests happened from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday, around 29th and Annette Streets, 29th and Clifton Streets and 35th Street and Schofield Avenue. A combination of street patrols and undercover investigations led to the arrests of two men for marijuana possession and dealing, and a third man for possession of drug paraphernalia.



Four arrests happened at a house in the 800 block of West 30th Street that was being watched by officers. When a loud group of a dozen men left the house, flashing gang signs, police kept track of them. A short distance away, one of the men in a group of four pointed a gun at an officer who had been watching in an unmarked car in what police thought might have been an attempt to rob one of the officers. When police turned on the emergency lights in their cars and tried to stop the man with the gun, the group of four ran back into the house on 30th Street.

Police tried to kick in the house's front door but found the door had been barricaded by wooden blocks. After calling for backup officers, police ordered the men out of the house and they surrendered. Inside the house, police found marijuana, scales, a 12-gauge shotgun, a Winchester 22-caliber rifle and a probation appointment card.

The men arrested face preliminary charges of intimidation, criminal gang activity, visiting a common nuisance, resisting law enforcement and marijuana possession.



## 2 charged with teen's slaying in Pilsen

Published by ChicagoBreakingNews.com on February 17, 2009

**PILSEN, IL**| A 20-year-old man and a teen, who prosecutors said went out with the specific intention of sending a rival gang member--any rival gang member--to the hospital have been charged in connection with the slaying of a teen late Saturday in the Pilsen neighborhood.

Taylor Hock, 20, and Efrain Becerra, 17, both of Rockford, were charged with first-degree murder in the fatal shooting of 16-year-old Johnny Vasquez.

At the pair's bond hearing today--where bail was denied--Assistant State's Atty. Tene McCoy Cummings said Becerra and Hock drove to Chicago with two friends for a party, but decided before they got there that they would find members of the Two-Six or La Raza street gangs and severely beat them up.



Hock (left) and Becerra (right).

The defendants are members of the Latin Counts, she said.

In the 1900 block of South Loomis Avenue, she said, they spied Vasquez flashing a La Raza gang sign.

Becerra, who was the front-seat passenger, picked up a rifle that was inside the car and began firing at Vasquez, who ran, Cummings said. Becerra got out of the car and chased him, continuing to fire and hitting Vasquez three times, including in the back, she continued. Becerra ran back to the car, and Hock, who was driving, sped away, she said.

But witnesses gave police a description of their 1994 Mercury, and police stopped them a short time later. Police recovered bullets and bullet casings from inside the car and the crime scene, Cummings said. They did not

recover the rifle, which prosecutors said the defendants turned over to someone unknown. A witness identified Becerra as the gunman.

Vasquez, of the 1400 block of West Cullerton Street, was pronounced dead early Sunday at Stroger Hospital. **For related article on this story see: <http://www.suntimes.com/news/24-7/1435300,rockford-gang-held-shooting-021709.article>**



## Authorities fear local gangs competing over cartel work

Published by the Monitor on February 16, 2009

**SOUTH TEXAS** | A recent spike in gang-related activity has some law enforcement officials concerned that local criminal groups may be jockeying for position with the Gulf Cartel.

Several gangs - including the Tri-City Bombers, the Texas Chicano Brotherhood, the Texas Syndicate and the Hermanos Pistoleros Latinos - are believed to be competing with each other to become the designated South Texas enforcers for the Tamaulipas-based drug trafficking organization, according to reports from gang informants fielded by federal and local police agencies.

To earn the job, the gangs need to show they have the infrastructure to stash drugs, an ability to protect them and the prison network to pressure detained smugglers into keeping their mouths shut, law enforcement officials said. More importantly, they need to edge out their competition. Some fear violence could erupt as the gangs try to prove their mettle and exert control over their turf.



Hermanos Pistoleros Latinos gang tattoo  
Source: [gangsorus.com](http://gangsorus.com)



Texas Syndicate gang members  
Source: [prestonhubbard.com](http://prestonhubbard.com)

"It's like a bidding war for a contract," said one local gang investigator. "It's not something you just get. You have to prove yourself."

But other law enforcement officials question those recent reports, saying that while they have tracked a growing relationship between Mexican drug traffickers and

U.S. gangs in recent months, the extent of their connection remains unclear.

"We haven't confirmed anything detailed," said Will Glaspy, head of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency's McAllen office.

### EXPANDED U.S. OPERATIONS

Traditionally, the cartel has relied on local smugglers to move their product north of the border but lacked the control over those routes that it had established within its home country. As recently as last October, however, law enforcement intelligence suggested that top cartel leaders sought to expand their control by taxing traffickers operating in the Rio Grande Valley.

Known in Mexico as "el piso," the taxes serve as a type of toll. Those who pay gain the privilege of moving their product with impunity through cartel-dominated areas. Those who refuse face threats of violence and even death.

Last fall, the reported former head of cartel operations in Reynosa - Jaime "El Hummer" González Durán - reportedly sent out orders to kidnap and extort taxes from U.S. smugglers operating in the Valley, federal and local law enforcement officials said. Two men arrested in connection with a broad-daylight shooting Oct. 3 at a San Juan medical plaza later told police they had been sent by González and opened fire when their intended target resisted. But since González's arrest Nov. 7 by Mexican authorities in Reynosa, authorities have noted an ebb in cartel-related violence on this side of the border.

Some law enforcement officials believe that new quiet may have more to do with local gangs taking the reins. **See the full article at:** [http://www.themonitor.com/articles/gangs\\_23301\\_article.html/enforcement\\_local.html](http://www.themonitor.com/articles/gangs_23301_article.html/enforcement_local.html)



## Rival gangs rumble inside Manhattan courthouse

Published by NY Daily News on February 17, 2009

**NEW YORK, NY**| A bloody feud between two uptown gangs spread downtown today when a wild melee erupted outside a Manhattan courtroom.

Shooting victim Stephon Isaac had just finished testifying in an attempted murder trial when rivals pounced on him outside Courtroom 1111 at the Manhattan criminal courthouse. Officers rushed out of other courtrooms as more than 20 supporters of the two crews - II Deep and Money Stacked High - screamed and lunged at each other. No one was arrested or injured, though several people were led away in handcuffs, court officers said.

Isaac, who said he is a member of, had just finished testifying against II Deep leader Kahree Frye, a teenager who is on trial for six counts of attempted murder for a Memorial Day shooting spree in Harlem.

Frye is accused of opening fire at 125th St. and Lenox Ave., with one of the bullets striking Isaac, 14, in the thigh. Authorities have charged Isaac's brother, Donald Jackson, with blasting Frye in the buttocks in July as payback for the earlier shooting.

"They think that [Frye] ratted out Donald Jackson, which he did not do," said Herschel Katz, a defense lawyer for Frye. Katz was rejected by Supreme Court Justice Carol Berkman when he asked for a mistrial following the hallway dustup.

"I'm not getting involved in this nonsense," Berkman griped. "Maybe if people would sit here and stay here instead of running out into the hall, these things wouldn't happen."

When the trial resumed, another Money Stacked High member, Shawn Lissone, described seeing Frye pull out a gun and fire nine to 11 shots. Lissone never told police what he saw, but later testified before a grand jury.

"I didn't want to be labeled as a snitch," he said.



## Shrine at shooting site in South L.A. leads to more deaths

**As mourners paid respects to a suspected gang member, gunfire erupted and killed two others. Such violence prompted other cities to regulate the memorials, but L.A. doesn't seem to be on board.**

Published by the Los Angeles Times on February 4, 2009

**LOS ANGELES, CA** | The flowers and candles began piling up Friday at the corner of 104th Street and Budlong Avenue, after a suspected gang member was fatally shot there.

To residents in this rough section of unincorporated South L.A., that killing was bad enough. Then Monday night, a group of mourners were gathered there when a gunman walked by and opened fire, killing two men -- both suspected gang members -- and gravely wounding a third. By Tuesday afternoon, the corner had the grim distinction of hosting a double shrine.

"It's sad, you can't even pay your respects anymore," said former resident Larry Warren, 47. "It's almost like you going to the graveyard to pay your respects and somebody goes there to shoot you."

Violence at shrines and memorials for suspected or known gang members is far from widespread, but it's enough of a problem that a growing number of cities including Oakland, Berkeley, Boston and Hartford, Conn., are trying to regulate them.



Annette Mackey and her husband Darrell Lowery place candles on the blood-stained sidewalk.

"We have to realize there is a new reality here," said Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca, whose department is investigating the shootings. "We've got to understand such street memorials are no longer safe places to go. They are being targeted by gang members. If the victim is a gang member, it isn't safe to be around that memorial."

Despite the concerns, there does not appear to be support for restricting the shrines in Los Angeles County. Some officials who represent South L.A. argue that the street-side memorials are an important tool for healing, not just for gang members but family and friends.

"The larger question is what do shrines mean?" said L.A. County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas. "If they signal respect for the dead, then that's one of the defining features of civility. This is how people pay their respects for the dead."

Councilwoman Janice Hahn agreed, saying the violence at the Budlong Avenue shrine underscored the need for the city to focus more on gang enforcement and helping young people get out of the gang life.

"Putting extra protection around memorial shrines is a stopgap measure," Hahn said. "I have always been very hesitant to regulate these memorials because they are part of the culture of these communities and the healing that they have to go through. I'm not going to tell people how to grieve, mourn or remember someone."

The violence on Budlong Avenue began Friday with a shooting that left Gregory Thomas, 37, dead. Then on Monday night as friends and family gathered at the site, an assailant opened fire, killing Keith Orange, 45, and Joe Carl Caver, 26. Baca described the two victims as known gang members. Investigators believe both incidents involved gang rivalries.

In the Westmont area Tuesday, residents said the back-to-back shootings left them feeling unsafe -- but also sad for those who were killed, regardless of their suspected gang affiliation.

"As I told my mother-in-law, these were human beings, let's at least drop flowers off," said Maria Gutierrez, who was in the neighborhood to visit her family.

Quiesha Johnson, the fiancée of Orange, said that she believed there should be more deputies on hand to oversee the vigils -- but that the memorials serve a purpose. Johnson, however, did not object to restrictions at memorial sites as long as limitations were reasonable.

Families should be given "at least a week or two, or until the person is buried," Johnson, 26, said. "Allow the family to at least come pick items up from the site before clearing it off; some of those things have meaning to people."

See the full story at: <http://www.latimes.com/news/print/edition/california/la-me-gang-memorials4-2009feb04,0,6779032.story>



## Pocono teens charged in murder part of Juggalo gang known for violent rap

Published by the Pocono Record on February 19, 2009

**POCONO, NJ** Between the clown face paint and the goofy name, Juggalos aren't always taken seriously. But the Monroe County Gang Task Force considers some Juggalos a dangerous and growing gang.

Juggalos are everywhere, authorities said, but they have been especially prevalent around Cresco, Canadensis and Kunkletown.



Violent rap group Isane Clown Posse is spray-painted on this fence at the Mount Pocono baseball field.

"The Monroe County Gang Task Force has definitely seen an increase in crime from this group, which includes theft, vandalism (graffiti), assaults and now homicide," Detective Emmanuel Varkanis, of the Monroe County District Attorney's Office and the gang task force, wrote in response to questions from the Pocono Record.

The two accused killers in the Michael Goucher case, Ian Seagraves and Shawn Freemore, identify themselves as Juggalos on their MySpace pages, which were removed Wednesday afternoon.

"We recently validated over two dozen Juggalo members into our database who have been arrested by local departments. The task force has been looking into this group for quite some time, but only recently have we seen the group explode in numbers in the county," Varkanis wrote.

Just what is a Juggalo? They are a subculture made up of several subsets. Some are gang members, others are not. It is difficult to tell the difference at a glance. One thing they all have in common is an intense appreciation for the violent music of the rap group Insane Clown Posse, or ICP. For many, music is the only connection. Others live a Juggalo lifestyle and consider ICP's music a religion. Juggalos consider themselves a family, not a gang.



They identify themselves with distinct clothing, often dark and depicting clowns or the gang mascot, the Hatchetman, a dreadlocked character running with a hatchet. Homicide suspect Shawn Freemore was arrested wearing an ICP T-shirt. Juggalos often get ICP-related tattoos. Some carry knives and hatchets, similar to the cleaver found near Goucher's body. Juggalos have a distinct language, much of which is a mixture of teen slang and ICP lyrics. Females are called Juggletts.

"Most of the local police departments are familiar with the Juggalos and have approached members in the same manner they would approach any other street gang, cautiously," Varkanis wrote. "The local departments have been collecting gang paraphernalia, taking pictures of members and their activities, which are then forwarded to the appropriate members of the gang task force and stored in a database. We are collecting as much information about this group as we can, not only to educate our officers, but to learn how to deal with this particular group when we encounter them."



Juggalo "family" members  
Source: [toxiceddies.com](http://toxiceddies.com)

When asked to estimate how many Juggalos are in Monroe County, Varkanis said, "Plenty. There are kids and adults who listen to the music for entertainment only. And then there are the ones who actually believe that there is a "real message" in the vulgar and violent lyrics in these songs. Some of the members are acting out violently, by damaging property and assaulting innocent people.

"It's sad that some people cannot distinguish what's real and what is fantasy, which basically ruins it for the rest," Varkanis wrote.

At [juggalofaith.com](http://juggalofaith.com), ICP lyrics are explained as a gateway to God for outcast kids who would not

consider going to church. ICP's collection of albums makes up the "dark carnival": songs that are supposed to be interpreted as what not to do. In the end, people who do the right thing will end up in Shangri-La, Juggalo heaven. Unfortunately not everyone hears the same message.

Seagraves, Freemore and the Juggalo supporters connected to them through MySpace showed a fascination with ICP's violent lyrics and a fierce loyalty to each other. Instead of showing remorse over the death of Goucher, Juggalo friends posted words of encouragement on the accused killer's site until the site was shut down Wednesday.

## Mexico drug gangs threaten cops on radio, kill them

Published by Reuters on February 6, 2009

TIJUANA, MEXICO| Mexican drug gangs near the U.S. border are breaking into police radio frequencies to issue chilling death threats to cops which they then carry out, demoralizing security forces in a worsening drug war.

"You're next, bastard ... We're going to get you," an unidentified drug gang member said over the police radio in the city of Tijuana after naming a policeman.

The man also threatened a second cop by name and played foot-stomping "narcocorrido" music, popular with drug cartels, over the airwaves.

"No one can help them," an officer named Jorge said of his threatened colleagues as he heard the threats in his patrol car.

Sure enough, two hours later the dead bodies of the two named policemen were found dumped on the edge of the city, their hands tied and bullet wounds in their heads.

Cartels killed some 530 police in Mexico last year, some of them corrupt officers who were working for rival gangs. Others were killed in shoot-outs or murdered for working against the gangs or refusing to turn a blind eye to drug shipments.

Violence has hit shocking levels in Tijuana, over the border from San Diego, since President Felipe Calderon launched an army crackdown on traffickers in late 2006, stirring up new wars between rival cartels over smuggling routes. The drug war is scaring tourists and investors away from northern Mexico, forcing some businesses to shutter just as the country heads into recession this year.

Badly-paid Tijuana municipal police, often accused of collaborating with rival wings of the local Arellano Felix cartel, are badly demoralized, senior officers say.

"These death threats are part of the psychological warfare that organized crime is using against officers," said Tijuana police chief Gustavo Huerta.

"Before, the gangs began infiltrating the radio after a police execution, which was bad enough, but now they are doing it beforehand and the force feels terrorized," he said.



A state policeman at a crime scene where two police agents were gunned down inside their truck in the border city of Ciudad Juarez, January 20, 2009.

## **WORN-OUT BODY ARMOR**

Officers in threadbare uniforms and worn-out body armor say they are no match for drug gangs with powerful weapons and state-of-the art technology. Some police cling to religious trinkets and pray for protection, but many others have taken early retirement.

"I and many of my colleagues are thinking our time in the force is over," said Olivia Vidal, a Tijuana policewoman with 15 years in the force. "I have three kids. Two are at university. I would never let them follow in my footsteps."

Drug hitmen are brazenly using pirate radio decoders to flag police murders in advance on the airwave, often playing the brassy accordion-led "narcocorrido" ballads that lionize the escapades of heavily armed, womanizing traffickers. The gangsters use the decoder to access the radio frequency and then use a transmitter linked to a CD player and a microphone to transmit the narcocorrido music and the threats.

In one recent attack, hitmen killed two officers in their vehicle in Tijuana and then blasted drug ballads over police radio while naming their next targets, just as officers were reaching the first crime scene.

Some gangs sarcastically offer their "condolences" over the air after an execution, broadcasting messages like: "We are so sorry."

*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: [rvan.holmes@usdoj.gov](mailto:rvan.holmes@usdoj.gov)

