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Updated FBI Response to Congressman Wolf's Inquiry of Gang Activities in Northern Virginia, State of Virginia, and USA

Gang Activities in Northern Virginia

The FBI's Washington Field Office (WFO), with jurisdiction for Northern Virginia Counties, is working as a member of the Northern Virginia Gang Task Force with intentions of fully developing gang intelligence from this task force through value added from all FBI field office analyses to pro-actively initiate investigations. Additionally, the FBI has initiated federal criminal enterprise investigations targeting various gangs operating in Northern Virginia.

While MS-13 remains a significant threat, other gangs also have been reported in Virginia. Information reported through the National Alliance of Gang Investigators Association (NAGIA) indicates that the Latin Kings, the Bloods, the Crips, 18th St, the Gangster Disciples, and several Asian gangs are present. Hells Angels, Outlaws, Pagans and Bandidos motorcycle gangs are reported to be increasing in numbers. Northern Virginia gang investigators are also reporting an increase of activity from homegrown or "neighborhood" gangs such as the Latin Homies and South Side Locos. Children as young as elementary school age are now targets of gang recruiting.

Gang Activities in State of Virginia

Criminal activities of MS-13 have been actively pursued within the Northern Virginia area. As a result, numerous subjects are currently in custody on state charges and federal charges. The Northern VA Gang Task Force is a multi-agency task force (13 participating agencies) with a mission to enhance and coordinate investigative/intelligence efforts among state, local and federal agencies. The task force is engaged in tactical operations and the utilization of state gang participation statutes in an effort to suppress criminal activities associated with gang.

In coordination with the U.S. Attorney's Office, WFO initiated monthly meetings to coordinate investigations and intelligence among federal, state and local law enforcement. In attendance are the USAO and Commonwealth Attorney's Office anti-gang prosecutors as well as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (BICE), and local law enforcement gang unit supervisors. This working group is currently identifying the top 15 leaders of MS-13 in Northern Virginia as targets for federal and local prosecutions.

WFO has initiated proactive operations with BICE to identify and arrest illegal gang members within the community. This is not limited to MS-13 members, but addresses all illegal gang members operating in the region.

Coordination/information sharing with local law enforcement has led to the initiation of investigations as well as the identification of crimes associated with gangs which support federal prosecutions.

- Brenda Paz Murder: This case involved the murder of a federal witness for her cooperation with law enforcement against MS-13 clique leader, Denis Rivera. The investigation resulted in the conviction of two MS-13 gang members for Murder in Aid of Racketeering, a federal Violent Crime in Aid of Racketeering (VICAR) statute. Both were sentenced to life imprisonment.

- Jose Sandoval Murder: This case involved the murder of a rival gang member, and the shooting injury of his female relative, by two MS-13 gang members in Herndon, VA. The investigation revealed that the subjects targeted Sandoval because he was a member of a rival gang. The suspects subsequently fled to California in order to evade law enforcement. Coordination of federal, state and local agencies resulted in the arrest and conviction of the suspects. Federal VICAR statutes were used to convict both MS-13 gang members for Murder in Aid of Racketeering. Both were sentenced to life imprisonment.

- Generally, the Central and Northern Virginia areas have seen an increase in Hispanic gang activity over the last several years. Like most areas, there is a large legal and illegal Hispanic population. Law enforcement efforts in Northern Virginia have resulted in reduced MS-13 activity in the Fairfax area and an increased reporting of members traveling to other areas of Virginia, Maryland and West Virginia to avoid law enforcement efforts in the Northern Virginia region. The FBI and other federal law enforcement agencies have been working with the surrounding communities to help identify and address the movement of gang members from one jurisdiction to another.

- The FBI's Richmond Office, in conjunction with several local law enforcement agencies, uncovered the existence of a Hispanic prostitution ring. As a result, a White Slave Traffic Act investigation, which has a significant multi-jurisdictional and interstate nexus, was initiated. Hispanic prostitutes are being brought into the area from other states by Hispanic subjects in order to conduct their prostitution business in the Richmond metro area. Two violent double homicides have been associated with the activities of this prostitution ring and are believed to be the result of the victims encroaching on the territory of one of the subjects who established the prostitution ring. Two of the suspects were arrested in North Carolina and extradited to Virginia. One of the suspects pled guilty to homicide, another was charged with possession of child pornography. Two other suspects are being sought as fugitives and may have fled the country.

- Fairfax County Gang Unit has reported that Bloods (United Blood Nation), and Latin Kings are showing some increased activity in the Fairfax region. South Side Locos have been active in the Prince William area, 18th Street is active in the Herndon area, and the Crips continue to have members active in Northern Virginia.

- WFO has had a successful RICO prosecution on the Oriental Play Boy's gang. They are also pursuing RICO charges on other Asian gangs operating in Northern Virginia and Maryland.

Gang Activities in America

- The National Gang Strategy, initiated in 1993, is the FBI's framework for addressing gangs and combating violence in America. The FBI's immediate focus is on the violence perpetuated by those gangs characterized as local street drug crews and national/regional groups, claiming association and alliance with gangs using the same identification, creed, and operations including the Bloods, Crips, and the Vice Lords.
- Long-term focus is placed on gangs such as outlaw motorcycle gangs (Hell's Angels, Outlaws, and the Pagans) and ethnic gangs (Mara Salvatrucha or MS-13, 18th Street, and the Mexican Mafia) because of their impact on the economy through underworld enterprises of prostitution, drug trafficking, extortion, and other racketeering activities.
- Currently, all 56 FBI field offices support gang investigations with squads, task forces, or Field Intelligence Groups (FIGs). The Safe Streets Task Force Program has been used for more than ten years to leverage the resources of federal, state, and local law enforcement, resulting in a more effective and efficient investigation of violent gangs in urban and suburban communities.
- In addition to the FIGs, the FBI developed and implemented an Intelligence Program at the headquarters level to effectively address gang violence and gang migration. Intelligence is collected, analyzed and disseminated from three distinct perspectives--strategic, tactical, and programmatic. The focus is to provide information that will assist in developing cases, as well as identify emerging trends, migration patterns, and related criminal activity.
- The Enterprise Theory of Investigation is utilized by the FBI as an intelligence-driven, proactive approach to disrupt/dismantle gangs through the use of sophisticated techniques (wiretaps/undercover operations) generally not available at the local and state levels; investigations are similar to organized crime investigations with use of RICO and Continuing Criminal Enterprise statutes.
- In 2005, the FBI spearheaded the creation of the National Gang Intelligence Center (NGIC) to integrate gang intelligence from federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement. The mission of the NGIC is to support law enforcement agencies through timely and accurate information sharing and strategic/tactical analysis focusing on the growth, migration, criminal activities, and associations of gangs that pose a significant threat to communities throughout the United States. By leveraging the assets of multiple agencies, the NGIC will be a centralized intelligence resource for gang information and support.
- In furtherance of the mission to integrate the assets of the federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement, the NGIC will house an analytical cadre of 24 FBI analysts, as well as representatives from NDIC, DEA, ATF, USMS, and ICE. Additionally, a technology infrastructure is being developed that will enhance the sharing of information, including the development of partnerships with RISS, LEO, GangNet, and I-CLEAR.