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SPECIAL ISSUE

Gangs in the United States

OVERVIEW

This report presents an overview of significant criminal gangs in the United States. Criminal gangs are present in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and pose a serious threat to many communities. Street gangs, prison gangs, and outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMGs) are the primary retail distributors of drugs in the country. In 2004 law enforcement agencies in 1,479 U.S. jurisdictions responding to the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS) reported gang involvement in drug distribution. The threat is further magnified by the large number of gang members and high levels of violence associated with the gangs' attempts to control and expand drug trafficking operations, as well as their increased cooperation with international drug trafficking organizations (DTOs)—particularly Mexican DTOs. In addition, law enforcement authorities throughout the country report that gangs are responsible for most of the serious violent crime in the major cities of the United States. Gangs

engage in an array of criminal activities including assault, burglary, drive-by shooting, extortion, homicide, identification fraud, money laundering, and robbery.

STREET GANGS

According to the U.S. criminal code, street gangs are ongoing groups, clubs, organizations, or associations of five or more individuals that have as one of their primary purposes the commission of one or more criminal offenses. Street gangs are located throughout the country, and their memberships vary in number, racial and ethnic composition, and structure. Large national street gangs pose the greatest threat because they smuggle, produce, transport, and distribute large quantities of illicit drugs throughout the country and are extremely violent. Local street gangs in rural, suburban, and urban areas pose a low but growing threat, transporting and distributing drugs within very specific areas. These gangs often imitate the larger, more powerful national gangs in order to gain respect from rivals. The following are some of the more prominent street gangs in the United States.

18th Street

Formed in Los Angeles, 18th Street is a group of loosely associated sets or cliques, each led by an influential member. Membership is estimated to be 30,000 to 50,000. In California approximately 80 percent of the gang's members are illegal aliens from Mexico and Central America. The gang is active in 44 cities in 20 states. Its main source of income is street-level distribution of cocaine and marijuana and, to a lesser extent, heroin and methamphetamine. Gang members also commit assault, auto theft, carjacking, drive-by shooting, extortion, homicide, identification fraud, and robbery.



Figure 1. 18th Street tattoo.

Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation

Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation (ALKQN) was formed in the 1970s by Luis Felipe. The gang shares a common culture and structure with the Chicago-based Latin Kings but does not report to Latin Kings. Membership is estimated to be 2,200 to 7,500, divided among several dozen chapters operating in 15 cities in five states. A primary source of income is the distribution of powdered cocaine, crack cocaine, and marijuana. The gang is also involved in various criminal activities including assault, auto theft, burglary, and homicide.

Asian Boyz

Asian Boyz is one of the largest Asian street gangs operating in the United States. Formed in southern California in the early 1970s, the gang is estimated to have 1,300 to 2,000 members operating in at least 28 cities in 14 states. Members primarily are Vietnamese or Cambodian males. Members of Asian Boyz are involved in producing, transporting, and distributing methamphetamine, as well as distributing MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine, also known as ecstasy) and marijuana. In addition, gang members are involved in other criminal activities including assault, burglary, drive-by shooting, and homicide.

Black Peace Stone Nation

Black Peace Stone Nation, one of the largest and most violent associations of street gangs in the United States, consists of seven highly structured street gangs with a single leader and a common culture. It has an estimated 6,000 to 8,000 members, most of whom are African American males from the Chicago metropolitan area. The gang's main source of income is the street-level distribution of cocaine, heroin, marijuana and, to a lesser extent, methamphetamine. Members also are involved in many other types of criminal activity including assault, auto theft, burglary, carjacking, drive-by shooting, extortion, homicide, and robbery.

Bloods

Bloods is an association of structured and unstructured gangs that have adopted a single gang culture. Large, national-level Bloods gangs include Bounty Hunter Bloods and Crenshaw Mafia Gangsters. Bloods membership is estimated to be 5,000 to 20,000; most members are African American males. Bloods gangs are active in 123 cities in 33 states. The main source of income for Bloods gangs is street-level distribution of cocaine and marijuana. Bloods members also are involved in transporting and distributing methamphetamine, heroin, and PCP (phencyclidine), but to a much lesser extent. The gangs also are involved in other criminal activity including assault, auto theft, burglary, carjacking, drive-by shooting, extortion, homicide, identification fraud, and robbery.

Crips

Crips is a collection of structured and unstructured gangs that have adopted a common gang culture. Crips membership is estimated to be 30,000 to 35,000; most members are African American males from the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Large, national-level Crips gangs include 107 Hoover Crips, Insane Gangster Crips, and Rolling 60s Crips. Crips gangs operate in 221 cities in 41 states. The main source of income for Crips gangs is the street-level distribution of powdered cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, and PCP. The gangs also are involved in other criminal activity such as assault, auto theft, burglary, and homicide.

Florencia 13

Florencia 13 (F 13 or FX 13) originated in Los Angeles in the early 1960s; gang membership is estimated to be more than 3,000 members. The gang operates primarily in California and increasingly in Arkansas, Missouri, New Mexico, and Utah. Florencia 13 is subordinate to the Mexican Mafia (La Eme) prison gang and claims Sureños (Sur 13) affiliation. A primary source of income for gang members is the trafficking of cocaine and methamphetamine. Gang members smuggle multikilogram-quantities of powdered cocaine and methamphetamine obtained from sources of supply in Mexico into the United States for distribution. Also, gang members produce large quantities

of methamphetamine in southern California for local distribution. Florencia members are involved in other criminal activities including assault, drive-by shooting, and homicide.

Fresno Bulldogs

Fresno Bulldogs is a street gang that originated in Fresno, California, in the late 1960s. Bulldogs is the largest Hispanic gang operating in central California, with membership estimated at 5,000 to 6,000. Bulldogs is one of the few Hispanic gangs in California that claim neither Sureños (Southern) nor Norteños (Northern) affiliation. However, gang members associate with Nuestra Familia (NF) members, particularly when trafficking drugs. The street-level distribution of methamphetamine, marijuana, and heroin is a primary source of income for gang members. In addition, members are involved in other types of criminal activity including assault, burglary, homicide, and robbery.

Gangster Disciples

The Gangster Disciples street gang was formed in Chicago, Illinois, in the mid-1960s. It is structured like a corporation and is led by a chairman of the board. Gang membership is estimated to be 25,000 to 50,000; most members are African American males from the Chicago metropolitan area. The gang is active in 110 cities in 31 states. Its main source of income is the street-level distribution of cocaine, marijuana, and heroin. The gang also is involved in other criminal activity including assault, auto theft, fraud, homicide, and money laundering.

Latin Counts

Latin Counts is a violent Hispanic street gang that originated in Chicago in the mid-1960s. It is composed of at least five structured factions with an estimated 400 to 600 members and associate members. Most members are Mexican national or Mexican American males. The gang is most active in the Great Lakes region. The street-level distribution of crack cocaine, powdered cocaine, heroin, and marijuana is a primary source of income for the gang. Members also are involved in other criminal activity including assault, auto theft, carjacking, drive-by shooting, home invasion, homicide, and weapons trafficking.

Latin Disciples

Latin Disciples, also known as Maniac Latin Disciples and Young Latino Organization, originated in Chicago in the late 1960s. The gang is composed of at least 10 structured and unstructured factions with an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 members and associate members. Most members are Puerto Rican males. Maniac Latin Disciples is the largest Hispanic gang in the Folk Nation Alliance. The gang is most active in the Great Lakes and southwestern regions of the United States. The street-level distribution of powdered cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and PCP is a primary source of income for the gang. Members also are involved in other criminal activity including assault, auto theft, carjacking, drive-by shooting, home invasion, homicide, money laundering, and weapons trafficking.

Latin Kings

The Chicago-based Almighty Latin King Nation, commonly referred to as Latin Kings, is a collection of over 160 structured gangs, referred to as chapters, operating in 158 cities in 31 states. The gang's current membership is estimated to be 20,000 to 35,000. Most members are Mexican American or Puerto Rican males. Latin Kings' main source of income is street-level distribution of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana. Gang members primarily obtain drugs from several Mexican DTOs that operate along the U.S.–Mexico border. Members also engage in other criminal activity such as assault, burglary, homicide, identity theft, and money laundering.

Mara Salvatrucha

Mara Salvatrucha, also known as MS 13, is one of the largest Hispanic street gangs in the United States. Traditionally, the gang consisted of loosely affiliated groups known as cliques; however, law enforcement officials have reported increased coordination of criminal activity among Mara Salvatrucha cliques in the Atlanta, Dallas, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and New York metropolitan areas. The gang is estimated to have 30,000 to 50,000 members and associate members worldwide, 8,000 to 10,000 of whom reside in the United States. Members smuggle illicit drugs, primarily

powdered cocaine and marijuana, into the United States and transport and distribute the drugs throughout the country. Some members also are involved in alien smuggling, assault, drive-by shooting, homicide, identification theft, prostitution operations, robbery, and weapons trafficking.



Figure 2. Mara Salvatrucha graffiti.

Nassau County (NY) Sheriff's Department
Gang Intelligence Unit

Tiny Rascal Gangsters

Tiny Rascal Gangsters is one of the largest and most violent Asian street gang associations in the United States. It is composed of at least 60 structured and unstructured gangs, commonly referred to as sets, with an estimated 5,000 to 10,000 members and associates who have adopted a common gang culture. Most members are Asian American males. The sets are most active in the southwestern, Pacific, and New England regions of the United States. The street-level distribution of powdered cocaine, marijuana, MDMA, and methamphetamine is a primary source of income for the sets. Members also are involved in other criminal activity including assault, drive-by shooting, extortion, home invasion, homicide, robbery, and theft.

United Blood Nation

United Blood Nation (UBN) is a loose confederation of street gangs, or sets, that once were predominantly African American but now include Asians, Caucasians, and Hispanics. UBN began in the Rikers Island Jail in New York City in 1993 and spread throughout the East Coast. Membership is estimated to be more than 7,000. UBN derives its income from street-level distribution of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana; robbery; auto

theft; and smuggling of drugs to inmates in prison. UBN members also engage in arson, carjacking, credit card fraud, extortion, homicide, identity theft, intimidation, prostitution operations, and weapons distribution.

Vice Lord Nation

Vice Lord Nation, based in Chicago, is a collection of structured gangs located in 74 cities in 28 states, primarily in the Great Lakes region. Led by a national board, the various gangs comprise an estimated 30,000 to 35,000 members, most of whom are African American males. The main source of income is street-level distribution of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana. Members also engage in other criminal activity such as assault, burglary, homicide, identity theft, and money laundering.

OUTLAW MOTORCYCLE GANGS

OMGs are organizations whose members use their motorcycle clubs as conduits for criminal enterprises. There are more than 300 active OMGs in the United States, ranging in size from single chapters with five or six members to hundreds of chapters with thousands of members worldwide. Hells Angels Motorcycle Club (HAMC), Bandidos Motorcycle Club, and Outlaws Motorcycle Club OMGs conduct the majority of criminal activity linked to OMGs, especially activity related to drug trafficking and, more specifically, to cross-border drug smuggling. Because of their international scope, these OMGs are able to coordinate drug smuggling operations in partnership with major international DTOs.

Bandidos

Bandidos, an OMG with 2,000 to 2,500 members in the United States and 13 other countries, is a growing criminal threat to the nation. Law enforcement authorities estimate that Bandidos is one of the two largest OMGs in the United States, with approximately 900 members belonging to over 93 chapters. Bandidos is involved in transporting and distributing cocaine and marijuana and producing, transporting, and distributing



Figure 3. Bandidos back patches.

methamphetamine. Bandidos is most active in the Pacific, southeastern, southwestern, and west central regions and is expanding in these regions by forming new chapters and allowing members of support clubs—“puppet” or “duck” club members that have sworn allegiance to another club and whose purpose is to do the “dirty work” of the mother club—to form or join Bandidos chapters.

Black Pistons Motorcycle Club

Black Pistons Motorcycle Club is the official support club of Outlaws Motorcycle Club. Established in 2002 with the backing of Outlaws, Black Pistons has expanded rapidly throughout the United States and into Canada and Europe. The OMG has an estimated 70 domestic chapters in 20 states and an unknown number of foreign chapters in Belgium, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Norway, and Poland. The exact number of members is unknown but is estimated to be more than 200 in the United States. Outlaws uses Black Pistons chapters as sources of prospective Outlaws members. Outlaws also uses Black Pistons chapters to conduct criminal activity, especially transporting and distributing drugs. Black Piston members engage in assault, extortion, fraud, intimidation, and theft.

Hells Angels Motorcycle Club

HAMC is an OMG with 2,000 to 2,500 members belonging to over 230 chapters in the United States and 26 foreign countries. HAMC poses a

criminal threat on six continents. U.S. law enforcement authorities estimate that HAMC has more than 92 chapters in 27 states with over 800 members. HAMC produces, transports, and distributes marijuana and methamphetamine and transports and distributes cocaine, hashish, heroin, LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), MDMA, PCP, and diverted pharmaceuticals. HAMC is involved in other criminal activity including assault, extortion, homicide, money laundering, and motorcycle theft.



Criminal Investigative Service Canada

Figure 4. Hells Angels back patch.

Mongols Motorcycle Club

Mongols Motorcycle Club is an extremely violent OMG that poses a serious criminal threat to the Pacific and southwestern regions of the United States. Mongols members transport and distribute cocaine, marijuana, and methamphetamine and frequently commit violent crimes including assault, intimidation, and murder to defend Mongols territory and uphold its reputation. Most of the club's 300 members are Hispanic males who live in the Los Angeles area, and many are former street gang members with a long history of using violence to settle grievances.

Agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) have called Mongols Motorcycle Club the most violent and dangerous OMG in the nation. In the 1980s Mongols OMG seized control of southern California from HAMC, and today it is allied with Bandidos, Outlaws, Sons of Silence, and Pagan's OMGs against HAMC. Mongols also maintains ties to Hispanic street gangs in Los Angeles.

Outlaws

Outlaws has more than 1,700 members belonging to 176 chapters in the United States and 12 foreign countries. U.S. law enforcement authorities estimate that Outlaws has more than 86 chapters in 20 states with over 700 members. Outlaws also identifies itself as the A.O.A. (American Outlaws Association) and Outlaws Nation. Outlaws is the dominant OMG in the Great Lakes region. Gang members produce, transport, and distribute methamphetamine and transport and distribute cocaine, marijuana and, to a lesser extent, MDMA. Outlaws members engage in various criminal activities including arson, assault, explosives operations, extortion, fraud, homicide, intimidation, kidnapping, money laundering, prostitution operations, robbery, theft, and weapons violations. It competes with HAMC for membership and territory.

Pagan's Motorcycle Club

Pagan's Motorcycle Club is a violent OMG whose members distribute cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana, and PCP. It is one of the more prominent OMGs in the Mid-Atlantic region. Pagan's OMG has an estimated 200 to 250 members among 41 chapters in 11 states. The club has been tied to traditional organized crime (TOC) groups in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and New York and engages in criminal activities such as arson, assault, bombing, extortion, and murder.

Vagos Motorcycle Club

Vagos OMG has hundreds of members in the United States and Mexico and poses a serious criminal threat to those areas in which its chapters are located. Law enforcement agencies report that Vagos has approximately 300 members among 24 chapters in California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, and three chapters in Mexico. Vagos members

produce, transport, and distribute methamphetamine and distribute marijuana. Members also have been implicated in other criminal activities including assault, extortion, insurance fraud, money laundering, murder, vehicle theft, weapons violations, and witness intimidation. In the United States Vagos Motorcycle Club is most active in the southwestern and Pacific regions.

PRISON GANGS

Prison gangs are criminal organizations that originated within the prison system and continue to operate in the prison system; they can also operate on the street as self-perpetuating criminal entities. A prison gang consists of a select group of inmates who have an organized hierarchy and are governed by an established code of conduct. Prison gangs vary in organization and composition—from highly structured gangs such as Aryan Brotherhood and Nuestra Familia to loosely structured associations such as Mexican Mafia. Prison gangs generally have fewer members than street gangs and OMGs and are structured along racial or ethnic lines. Nationally, prison gangs pose a threat because of their role in the transportation and distribution of drugs. Prison gangs are also an important link between DTOs, street gangs, and OMGs, often brokering the transfer of drugs from DTOs to gangs in many regions. Prison gangs typically are more powerful within state prison systems than within the federal system.

Aryan Brotherhood

Aryan Brotherhood, also known as AB, was originally ruled by consensus but is now highly structured with two factions—one in the California Department of Corrections (CDC) and the other in the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) system. The majority of members are Caucasian males, and the gang is primarily active in the southwestern and Pacific regions. Its main source of income is derived from the distribution of cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine within the prison systems as well as on the streets. Some AB members have business

relationships with Mexican DTOs that smuggle illegal drugs into California for AB distribution. AB is notoriously violent and is often involved in murder-for-hire. Although historically linked to the California-based Hispanic prison gang Mexican Mafia (La Eme), tension between AB and La Eme is becoming increasingly evident as seen in recent fights between Caucasians and Hispanics within CDC.

Barrio Azteca

Barrio Azteca is one of the most violent prison gangs in the United States. The gang is highly structured and has an estimated membership of 2,000. Most members are Mexican national or Mexican American males. Barrio Azteca is most active in the southwestern region, primarily in federal, state, and local corrections facilities in Texas and outside prison in southwestern Texas and southeastern New Mexico. The gang's main source of income is derived from smuggling heroin, powdered cocaine, and marijuana from Mexico into the United States for distribution both inside and outside prisons. Gang members often transport illicit drugs across the U.S.–Mexico border for DTOs. Barrio Azteca members also are involved in alien smuggling, arson, assault, auto theft, burglary, extortion, intimidation, kidnapping, robbery, and weapons violations.

Black Guerrilla Family

Black Guerrilla Family (BGF), originally called Black Family or Black Vanguard, is a prison gang founded in the San Quentin State Prison, California, in 1966. The gang is highly organized along paramilitary lines with a supreme leader and central committee. BGF has an established national charter, code of ethics, and oath of allegiance. BGF members operate primarily in California and Maryland. The gang has 100 to 300 members, most of whom are African American males. A primary source of income for gang members is derived from cocaine and marijuana distribution. BGF members obtain such drugs primarily from Nuestra Familia/Norteños members or from local Mexican traffickers. BGF members are involved in other criminal activities including auto theft, burglary, drive-by shooting, and homicide.



Figure 5. Mexicanemem identifiers.

Hermanos de Pistoleros Latinos

Hermanos de Pistoleros Latinos (HPL) is a Hispanic prison gang formed in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) in the late 1980s. It operates in most prisons and on the streets in many communities in Texas, particularly Laredo. HPL is also active in several cities in Mexico, and its largest contingent in that country is located in Nuevo Laredo. The gang is structured and is estimated to have 1,000 members. Members maintain close ties to several Mexican DTOs and are involved in the trafficking of large quantities of cocaine and marijuana from Mexico into the United States for distribution.

Mexikanemi

The Mexikanemi prison gang (also known as Texas Mexican Mafia or Emi) was formed in the early 1980s within the TDCJ. The gang is highly structured and is estimated to have 2,000 members, most of whom are Mexican national or Mexican American males living in Texas at the time of incarceration. Mexikanemi poses a significant drug trafficking threat to communities in the southwestern United States, particularly in Texas. Gang members reportedly traffic multikilogram-quantities of powdered cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine; multiton-quantities of marijuana; and thousand-tablet quantities of MDMA from Mexico into the United States for distribution inside and outside prison. Gang members obtain drugs from associates or members of the Jaime Herrera-Herrera, Osiel Cardenas-Guillen, and/or Vicente Carrillo-Fuentes Mexican DTOs. In

addition, Mexikanemi members maintain a relationship with Los Zetas, a Mexican paramilitary/criminal organization employed by the Cardenas-Guillen DTO as its personal security force.

Mexican Mafia

Mexican Mafia prison gang, also known as La Eme (Spanish for the letter M), was formed in the late 1950s within the CDC. It is loosely structured and has strict rules that must be followed by the estimated 350 to 400 members. Most members are Mexican American males who had previously belonged to a southern California street gang. Mexican Mafia is primarily active in the southwestern and Pacific regions of the United States, but its power base is in California. The gang's main source of income is extorting drug distributors outside prison and distributing methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin, and marijuana within the prison systems and on the streets. Some members have direct links to Mexican DTOs and broker deals for themselves and their associates. Mexican Mafia also is involved in other criminal activities including controlling gambling and homosexual prostitution in prison.

Nazi Low Riders

Nazi Low Riders (NLR) is a violent California-based prison gang that subscribes to a white supremacist philosophy. The gang has 800 to 1,000 members, most of whom are Caucasian males with a history of street gang activity and drug abuse. NLR operates in correctional facilities and communities, primarily in the Pacific and southwestern regions of the United States. The gang's primary

sources of income are derived from the distribution of multiounce- to multipound-quantities of methamphetamine, retail-level distribution of heroin and marijuana, and extortion of independent Caucasian drug dealers and other white power gangs. Members also engage in violent criminal activity such as armed robbery, assault, assault with deadly weapons, murder, and attempted murder; in addition they commit identity fraud, money laundering, witness intimidation, and witness retaliation.

Ñeta

Ñeta is a prison gang that began in Puerto Rico and spread to the United States. Ñeta is one of the largest and most violent prison gangs, with about 7,000 members in Puerto Rico and 5,000 in the United States. Ñeta chapters in Puerto Rico exist exclusively inside prisons; once members are released from prison they no longer are considered to be part of the gang. In the United States Ñeta chapters exist both inside and outside prisons in 36 cities in nine states, primarily in the northeastern region. The gang's main source of income is derived from the retail distribution of powdered and crack cocaine, heroin, marijuana and, to a lesser extent, LSD, MDMA, methamphetamine, and PCP. Ñeta members commit assault, auto theft, burglary, drive-by shooting, extortion, home invasion, money laundering, robbery, weapons and explosives trafficking, and witness intimidation.

Nuestra Familia

NF and its subordinate organization Norteños are highly structured and extremely violent. Originating within California prisons, NF has an estimated 250 members, while Norteños membership is estimated to be over 1,000, primarily Mexican American males who belonged to street gangs in central and northern California. The gangs are active primarily in state and federal prisons and in communities in the Pacific region of the United States. Their main sources of income are distributing cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine within prison systems as well as in the community and extorting drug distributors on the streets. NF is also involved in other criminal activities including homicide and robbery.



Nassau County (NY) Sheriff's Department Gang Intelligence Unit

Figure 6. Ñeta flag.

Public Enemy Number One

Public Enemy Number One (PEN1) is the fastest-growing Caucasian prison gang, with an estimated 400 to 500 members operating in prisons and communities in California and, to a much lesser extent, in locations throughout the northeastern, Pacific, southwestern, southeastern, and west central regions of the country. PEN1 members espouse a white supremacist philosophy and pose a criminal threat in and outside prison because of their alliance with AB and NLR. Gang members derive their income from distributing midlevel and retail-level quantities of methamphetamine. In addition, members engage in violent criminal activity such as assault, attempted murder, and homicide as well as auto theft, burglary, identity theft, and property crimes.

Sureños and Norteños

As individual Hispanic street gang members enter the prison systems, they put aside former rivalries with other Hispanic street gangs and unite under the name Sureños or Norteños. The original Mexican Mafia members, most of whom were from southern California, considered Mexicans from the rural, agricultural areas of northern California as

weak and viewed them with contempt. To distinguish themselves from the agricultural workers or farmers from northern California, members of Mexican Mafia began to refer to the Hispanic gang members that worked for them as Sureños (Southerners). Inmates from northern California became known as Norteños (Northerners) and are affiliated with NF. Because of its size and strength, Fresno Bulldogs is the only Hispanic gang in CDC that does not fall under Sureños or Norteños, but remains independent.

Sureños gang members' main sources of income are the retail-level distribution of cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine both within prison systems and in the community, as well as the extortion of drug distributors on the streets. Some members have direct links to Mexican DTOs and broker deals for Mexican Mafia as well as their own gang. Sureños gangs also are involved in other criminal activities such as assault, carjacking, home invasion, homicide, and robbery.

Norteños gang members' main sources of income are the retail-level distribution of cocaine, heroin, marijuana, methamphetamine, and PCP within prison systems and in the community, as well as the extortion of drug distributors on the streets. Norteños gangs also are involved in other criminal activities such as assault, carjacking, home invasion, homicide, and robbery.

Texas Syndicate

Texas Syndicate (TS) is one of the largest and most violent prison gangs active on both sides of the U.S.–Mexico border and poses a significant drug trafficking threat to communities in the southwestern United States. The gang is highly structured and is estimated to have 1,300 members, most of whom are Mexican American males between the ages of 20 and 40. Gang members smuggle multikilogram-quantities of powdered cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine and multiton-quantities of marijuana from Mexico into the United States for distribution inside and outside prison. Gang members have a direct working relationship with associates and/or members of the Osiel Cardenas-Guillen Mexican

DTO. In addition, TS members maintain a relationship with Los Zetas, the paramilitary/criminal organization employed by the Cardenas-Guillen DTO.

Four Horsemen, Tangos, and Tango Blast

Texas prison officials first noted the presence of a gang known as Four Horsemen in 1998. Some Hispanic gang members entering the TDCJ from the cities of Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Houston were not interested in joining an established prison gang and established Four Horsemen to protect one another and to engage in illegal activities, particularly drug trafficking, to make money. Four Horsemen became known as Tangos, because its members wore tattoos that reflected the town (or *tango*) in which they resided prior to incarceration. As interest in Tangos grew among Hispanic gang members entering TDCJ from other areas of Texas, Tangos from West Texas, the Rio Grande Valley, San Antonio, and El Paso were accepted. Of the eight groups now recognized as Tangos, only six are part of Tango Blast, also known as Puro Tango Blast. Tango Blast includes Tangos from the four original cities as well as the West Texas and Rio Grande Valley areas. Tango Blast differs from Tangos in that separate Tango Blast gangs sometimes band together to help one another. The gang's rapid growth poses a significant new security threat, and elements of Tango Blast within TDCJ appear to be challenging TS for control of illegal prison activities. Tango members appear to return to their local street gangs when released from prison, rather than continue their prison-based affiliation.

OUTLOOK

Criminal gangs will continue to pose a serious domestic threat to many communities throughout the country. In the long term it is highly probable that U.S.-based gangs will increase their role in trafficking drugs, particularly smuggling drugs into the United States from international sources of supply. Furthermore, it is highly probable that several U.S.-based gangs will increase their relationships with international criminal organizations and DTOs as a means of obtaining access to the global illicit drug market.



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