

ORGANIZED CRIME IN CALIFORNIA

2009

Annual Report to the Legislature



EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
Attorney General



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **2009 *Organized Crime in California, Annual Report to the California Legislature***, a response to the mandate of California Government Code section 15028, summarizes the major criminal activities and crimes attributed to gang members, organized crime groups, criminal extremists, and international terrorist organizations.

By assisting law enforcement agencies around the state and monitoring criminal activities during the 2009 calendar year, the California Department of Justice has found that:

- Criminal street gangs continue to engage in drug trafficking. They are also involved in auto theft, weapons trafficking, intimidation, extortion, assault and murder. Street gang members use social networking websites to communicate.
- Prison gangs continue to control some of California's criminal street gangs. Despite incarceration, prison gang members influence and direct some criminal street gang activities including assault, weapons and drug trafficking, extortion, intimidation and murder.
- Outlaw motorcycle gangs remain involved in drug trafficking, assault, extortion, homicide, money laundering, prostitution, stolen vehicles and illegal weapons trade. Rivalry among the various outlaw motorcycle gangs continues.
- Mexican drug trafficking organizations command a large portion of the illegal drug trade. The groups also engage in human trafficking, arms trafficking, home invasion robbery, and kidnapping. Mexican drug trafficking organizations partner with criminal street gangs, prison gangs, and outlaw motorcycle groups in a variety of illegal activities.
- Eurasian organized crime groups remain active in medical, financial, and auto theft frauds. These groups also engage in extortion, prostitution, human trafficking, kidnapping, money laundering, and drug trafficking.
- Environmental and animal rights criminal extremist groups continue to destroy property or cause economic loss to targeted persons or companies. These groups may also attack the families and employees of targeted researchers and companies.
- International terrorist organizations continue to have ties in California and are known to criminally work throughout the state to generate capital for their causes.
- Inmate radicalization within California prisons continues to indoctrinate homegrown terrorists who will eventually be released back into the public.

The California Department of Justice remains proudly steadfast at the forefront in the fight against these major crime groups.

GANGS

Hispanic Street Gangs

Hispanic street gangs in California are divided mostly between two rival groups, the Sureños and the Norteños. Together, these fierce enemies comprise the largest number of street gang members in California.

Norteños, or “northerners,” is a north state Hispanic street gang aligned with the Nuestra Familia (NF) prison gang in the California prison system. Norteños gang members are engaged in drug trafficking, carjacking, home invasion, robbery, assault, and homicide. Norteños gangs include Hayward’s South Side Hayward, Stockton’s East Side Stockton, West Sacramento’s Broderick Boys, and the Salinas East Market.

Sureños, or “southerners,” is a south state Hispanic street gang aligned with the Mexican Mafia (EME) prison gang in the California prison system. Sureños gang members engage in drug trafficking, extortion, carjacking, home invasion, robbery, assault, and homicide. Sureños gangs include Los Angeles’ 18th Street, Salinas’ La Posada Trece, Long Beach’s Barrio Pobre, Huntington Park’s Cyclones 13, and Norwalk’s Varrio Norwalk.

The Norteños and Sureños rivalry reached a peak during 2009 in Salinas with 29 gang-related murders. Historically, the Norteños street gang has prevailed as the dominant gang in Salinas. However, as the Sureños population grows in Salinas, the fierce contention between the two gangs has escalated. The result has been a spiraling retaliatory-based violence that compounds Salinas’ public safety concerns.

Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13, is a south state gang that has grown rapidly and earned a reputation of violence. MS-13 gang members engage in drug smuggling and trafficking, alien smuggling, assault, drive-by shootings, homicide, identity theft, prostitution operations, robbery, and weapons trafficking. MS-13 gang members align themselves with other Sureños gangs, but they have been known to be enemies of the 18th Street gang, another Sureños gang.

The Fresno Bulldogs is one of the largest criminal street gangs independent of the Norteños and Sureños. There are several thousand members in the gang with most of them residing in the Fresno and Central Valley area. Fresno Bulldogs gang members are known to associate with Nuestra Familia members for the purpose of trafficking drugs, particularly methamphetamine, marijuana, and heroin. They also engage in assault, burglary, homicide, and robbery. Fresno Bulldogs gangs include Bond Street Bulldogs, Lewis Street Bulldogs, Pinedale Bulldogs, and College Street Bulldogs.

Recent criminal activities indicate that Hispanic street gangs will continue to traffic illegal drugs and engage in extortion, assaults, murders, thefts, and general intimidation.

Prison Gangs

Prison gangs are highly sophisticated and extremely organized, and they have criminal connections with street gang members outside the prisons. They pose a serious threat to

California communities. While structure and organizational styles may vary, all prison gangs are motivated by money and power. They command extensive street operations through various communications channels to their soldiers. They employ an extended network of gang alliances and at times are extremely aggressive.

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) recognizes seven prison gangs: Mexican Mafia (EME), Aryan Brotherhood (AB), Black Guerrilla Family (BGF), Nazi Low Riders (NLR), Northern Structure (NS), Nuestra Familia (NF), and Texas Syndicate (TS).

The Mexican Mafia is one of the largest and most violent prison gangs in California. Members and associates engage in a variety of criminal activities including murder, assault, extortion, money laundering, and the manufacture and sale of narcotics. The manufacture and distribution of narcotics, such as heroin and methamphetamine, has become a lucrative business for the Mexican Mafia. The Mexican Mafia also works with many Mexican drug trafficking organizations (MDTOs) such as the Arellano Felix organization. The Mexican Mafia directs Sureños gang members and associates in trafficking narcotics and transporting money for the Mexican cartels.

The Mexican Mafia controls many Southern California Hispanic street gangs. As members are released from prison, they often parole to local communities and continue to conduct criminal activities on behalf of the Mexican Mafia. In February 2009, an 18-count indictment charged 34 defendants with narcotics and firearms violations arising from a conspiracy to distribute cocaine and methamphetamine at the direction of the Mexican Mafia. By July 2009, the San Bernardino Gang Impact Team, along with several other law enforcement agencies, had executed the arrest warrants taking 20 federal defendants into custody. The investigation focused on the Westside Verdugos, the Northside Redlands, and the Varrío Redlands, all Hispanic street gangs and Mexican Mafia affiliates.

In addition to prison gangs, CDCR also recognizes disruptive groups. Disruptive groups include gangs that may become prison gangs, street gangs, revolutionary groups, motorcycle gangs, or terrorist groups or affiliates. Examples of disruptive groups include the Northern Ryders, 415 Kumi Nation, the Crips, and the Bloods. The Northern Ryders consists of Hispanic gang members who no longer associate with the Nuestra Familia or other Norteños street gangs. The Northern Ryders' criminal activities include murder, assault, threats, witness intimidation, and narcotics manufacturing and trafficking.

In April 2009, California prison officials reported a rise in cell phone smuggling throughout the prisons. It has become much easier for inmates and visitors to bring today's smaller cell phones into the prisons. With cell phones in their possession, inmates are able to circumvent institution-monitored calls and more easily orchestrate criminal activity inside and outside of the prison system without alerting correctional staff. Cell phones give prison gang members the ability to control criminal activities in real-time.

Recent criminal activities suggest prison gang members will continue to use street gang members and associates for conducting criminal activities. And the use of smuggled cell phones will provide prison gang members real-time ability to direct criminal activities outside the institutions.

African-American Street Gangs

African-American street gangs are divided mostly between two rival groups, the Crips and the Bloods. Together, these two gangs comprise the largest number of African-American street gang members in California.

There are African-American street gangs that do not align with the Crips and the Bloods, such as Sacramento's Ridezilla and G-Mobb, East Palo Alto's Taliban, and Oakland's Lower Bottom. According to street gang investigators throughout the state, African-American street gang criminal activities include armed robbery, assault, burglary, gun trafficking, carjacking, drug sales, home invasion, identity theft, murder, prostitution (including the use of children), and rape. African-American street gangs use weapons including handguns, assault rifles, and knives. In some cases, African-American street gang members reportedly have worn bullet-resistant vests during the commission of crimes.

Over the past six years in East Palo Alto and Menlo Park, an African-American street gang called the Taliban has been directly involved in approximately 12 homicides and 30 violent felonies. On March 7, 2009, several law enforcement agencies participated in the arrests of 42 suspected gang members and associates during an operation targeting this group. The operation followed an 18-month investigation, resulting in the seizure of \$240,000, 10 vehicles, two assault rifles, 14 handguns, and a large amount of drugs that included cocaine base, ecstasy, and codeine.

African-American street gang members monitor and leverage evolving communication technologies. They actively use Internet social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube, as well as other websites they have created on their own. Their websites communicate, recruit, and promote gang-related activities by glorifying the gang lifestyle to individuals across the United States. In addition, these Internet venues often convey intimidating and disrespectful messages and videos to rival gangs. Street gang members call this cyber activity "net banging."

Asian Street Gangs

Some of the more active and widely reported Asian street gangs include the Tiny Rascal Gang (TRG), Menace of Destruction, Asian Boyz (ABZ), Asian Crips, and Loc Town Crips (LTC).

The Tiny Rascal Gang is one of the largest and most violent Asian street gangs in the United States, according to the 2009 National Gang Threat Assessment. The TRG includes members of non-Asian ethnicities. TRG members are involved in the street-level distribution of powdered cocaine, marijuana, ecstasy, and methamphetamine. They are also involved in other types of criminal activity including assault, drive-by shooting, extortion, home invasion robbery, robbery, and theft. While firmly entrenched in Long Beach and Fresno, TRG members and associates are also located in Modesto, Stockton, Sacramento, San Diego, San Bernardino, and Orange County.

The Menace of Destruction is a criminal street gang that originated in Fresno and has expanded all the way to Wisconsin and Minnesota. Its members distribute methamphetamine and ecstasy.

The ABZ gang is located mostly in Southern California, and its membership is composed primarily of Vietnamese- and Cambodian-American males. ABZ members are involved in producing, transporting, and distributing methamphetamine. The ABZ also distributes MDMA, or ecstasy, and marijuana. In addition, ABZ is involved in assault, burglary, drive-by shooting, and homicide.

Asian street gang members maintain strong working relationships with overseas criminal organizations. For instance, the Hong Kong-based Wo Hop To and 14 K Triad organizations maintain strong connections with the Wah Ching, Black Dragons, Tiny Rascal Gang, and Black Star street gangs operating in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Detroit, New York, and Seattle. The Hong Kong organizations recruit street gang leaders as trusted lieutenants who, in turn, are expected to direct the street gangs' drug distribution activities on behalf of the foreign crime groups.

Asian street gang members use cell phones, the Internet, and text messaging to remain in close communication without face-to-face meetings. This communication allows these gangs to more easily engage in criminal activities such as narcotics distribution and weapons trafficking. In addition, Asian street gang members are increasingly mobile. Known to travel throughout the state and across state lines to commit crimes or flee from prosecution, Asian street gang members are more transitory than other ethnic gangs.

Law enforcement continues to face specific challenges with respect to investigating Asian street gang activities. Law enforcement officials report many victims and witnesses of crimes in the Asian community do not trust law enforcement and can be uncooperative with investigators.

White Street Gangs

White street gangs, sometimes referred to as skinhead groups, maintain a strong presence in California. Members of racist skinhead groups are frequently associated with white supremacist ideologies. Examples of white street gangs in California include C.O.O.R.S. (Comrades of Our Race's Struggle) Family Skins, Family Affiliated Irish Mafia (FAIM), Golden State Skins, Hate Filled Skins, Sacto Skins, Sacramaniacs, Inland Empire Hammerskins, Wolfpack, and Public Enemy Number One (PENI).

PENI criminal activities include fraud, identity theft, and narcotics distribution. Many PENI members are found throughout Southern California. However, within the past year PENI has established a stronger presence in Northern California including Shasta, Redding, and Sacramento.

As with most gangs, day-to-day operations continue while skinhead members are in custody or in the prison system. "Skinbyrds" or "Chelseas" (the wives and girlfriends of group-associated skinheads) are enlisted to pick up the duties of drug dealing, mail drops, and communications.

Some of the known active white supremacist groups in California include the United Society of Aryan Skinheads (USAS), the Confederation of Racist Working Class Skinheads (CRW), Volksfront, American Front, and an offshoot of the World Church of the Creator called the Creativity Skinhead Movement (CSM).

Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs

Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs have been present in California for many years. The Hells Angels Motorcycle Club, the Mongols Motorcycle Club, and the Vagos Motorcycle Club are three large motorcycle groups that dominate in California. Law enforcement officials report that motorcycle groups engage in fraud, extortion, money laundering, theft, sexual offenses, weapons violations, witness intimidation, assault, racketeering, and homicide.

Motorcycle groups and clubs have been known to engage in violent acts for various reasons. In mid-2009, a man was indicted for the murder of the San Francisco chapter Hells Angels president in an effort to improve his stature within the rival Mongols motorcycle gang. Again, in mid-2009, three suspects associated with the Vagos motorcycle gang were taken into custody for sexually assaulting a woman at a Vagos clubhouse in San Jose.

Since DOJ's Operation Black Rain in 2008, the Mongols have suffered a major organizational setback. The operation resulted in federal racketeering indictments charging 79 Mongols members with various crimes including murder, torture, firearms trafficking, prostitution, and narcotics trafficking. In addition, a federal judge barred the use of the Mongol trademark. These criminal justice actions resulted in a decline in Mongols recruitment during 2009.

Motorcycle gangs are careful to protect their "colors" or patches. In 2009, the Hells Angels filed suit in federal court against a Visalia woman alleging cyber-piracy and trademark infringement of the Hells Angels logo. The Hells Angels claimed the woman illegally registered more than 20 Internet domain names associated with the group and then placed them up for auction on eBay.

DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS

Mexican drug trafficking organizations (MDTOs) supply and distribute a large portion of the illegal drugs found in California, including marijuana, heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine.

In 2009, 13 of the 14 "super labs" found in the U.S. were operated in California by MDTOs. A super lab is an illegal methamphetamine production site that can produce 10 or more pounds of product at a time. MDTOs are circumventing bans against the precursor chemicals pseudoephedrine and ephedrine used to produce methamphetamine. Since 2008, the precursor chemicals have been smuggled into Mexico and the finished product smuggled back into the U.S. California is the favored port of entry in the Southwest.

Marijuana eradication increased on public lands during 2009. This eradication effort presents officer safety concerns because these marijuana gardens are usually guarded by well-armed occupants who may engage law enforcement officers. In June 2009, a Lassen County Sheriff's deputy and a U.S. Bureau of Land Management officer were wounded after a gun battle with a suspected MDTO member in an illegal outdoor marijuana garden near Redding. In addition to violence, these outdoor grows pose a health risk to law enforcement with the use of banned pesticides closely resembling chemical nerve agents.

To make up for waning drug profits, MDTOs are diversifying their illegal activities by increasing their involvement in human smuggling, arms trafficking, home invasion robberies, ransom

kidnappings, and vehicle thefts. Kidnappings, which were once used as a revenge technique or retribution within an MDTO, are now being used for profit. MDTOs continue to foster their criminal relationships with U.S. Hispanic street gangs, prison gangs, and outlaw motorcycle gangs. MDTOs use these gangs to smuggle and distribute narcotics, and collect proceeds in suburban areas. This collaboration is improving the organizational effectiveness of street gangs, intensifying their threat to communities and law enforcement. This collaboration also serves to further insulate the MDTO and its leadership from apprehension or prosecution.

EURASIAN ORGANIZED CRIME

Eurasian organized crime (EOC) remains a significant problem for California. Numerous EOC groups continue to operate and spread their influence in the state, engaging in arms trafficking, auto theft, cargo theft, extortion, murder, prostitution, money laundering, drugs, insurance fraud, recycling fraud, smuggling, immigration fraud, and human trafficking. The main criminal activities of EOC groups in the state are medical fraud, financial fraud, and auto theft.

Concentrated areas of EOC activity exist in Fresno, Glendale, the greater Los Angeles area, Sacramento, San Francisco, and San Diego. EOC members are highly successful in adapting to a variety of criminal schemes because of their flexible structure, global connections, and desire for wealth and power.

Based on recent criminal activities, it is anticipated EOC groups in California will continue to engage in criminal activity that creates profit, particularly crimes that are of low risk or transnational.

DOMESTIC CRIMINAL EXTREMISM

The Earth Liberation Front (ELF), the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), and other environmental and animal rights extremist groups, such as Earth First!, Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty, and Revolutionary Cells of the Animal Liberation Brigade, are underground organizations that operate as a leaderless resistance movement against perceived abuse, exploitation, and destruction of animals or the environment. During 2009, attacks targeted University of California (UC) researchers.

In February and March 2009, a series of attacks targeting UC researchers left a UC Berkeley researcher's window smashed, a UC Los Angeles (UCLA) van vandalized, and a UCLA researcher's vehicle burned. On March 7, 2009, a car belonging to a UCLA researcher was blown up outside his house. The next day, animal rights extremists took credit for the attack. Recent criminal activities suggest animal rights criminal extremist activity can be expected to continue in California.

INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

Al-Qaeda has a long history of fundraising efforts in California. In February 2009, federal authorities arrested a man in Tustin for allegedly lying about his identity and immigration status and failing to disclose his associations with senior Al-Qaeda leaders. The man, originally from

Afghanistan, and his wife allegedly used an unlicensed money transfer system known as Hawala to transfer money to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Al-Qaeda is an international terrorism network seeking to unite allied Islamic extremist groups to overthrow regimes it deems as “non-Islamic” and purge Muslim countries of Western influence. Al-Qaeda activities in California include the fundraising of money to support the group’s terrorist activities and the radicalization and recruitment of independent individuals to act as lone wolves.

A former Californian, now known as “Azzam the American,” is Al-Qaeda’s English language spokesperson. Raised in Riverside and Orange counties before moving to Pakistan, “Azzam the American” has been charged with treason and providing material support to terrorists. He continues to appear in video messages, releasing four such communications in 2009. In April 2009, Azzam urged followers to increase assistance with money and manpower to radical fighters like suicide bombers.

Hamas is a group that aims to destroy the state of Israel and establish an Islamic Palestinian state in its place and also has a fundraising link in California. In May 2009, two subjects were sentenced to 65 years in prison on 108 charges tied to funneling millions of dollars to Hamas. The two men were convicted on charges ranging from supporting a terrorist organization to money laundering and tax fraud.

Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MEK) is another group that also raises funds in California to support terrorist activities. In April 2009, seven defendants referred to as the “Los Angeles 7” pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization and one count of actually providing material support to the group. The defendants reportedly admitted that they knowingly raised funds to support MEK activities.

The Lebanese Hizballah (also spelled “Hezbollah”), the Indonesian group Jemaah Islamiyah, and the Al-Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf are also believed to be involved in illegal fundraising activities in California such as brand piracy and narcotics trafficking.

Recent criminal activities indicate California will remain a venue for the criminal generation of monies needed to support terrorist acts.

INMATE RADICALIZATION

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines radicalization as a process that leads to behavior that encourages, endorses, condones, justifies, or supports commission of violent acts or other crimes against the United States to achieve political, social, or economic change. This process can happen with un-incarcerated individuals, as well as inmates inside jails and prisons. Inmate radicalization is increasing in California’s jails and prison system and is a major domestic terrorism threat to California and the nation. Radical prison groups recruit by offering friendship and support networks to inmates inside and outside of prison. Recruitment can occur through one-on-one proselytizing by other radical inmates. Recruitment can also be accomplished by charismatic individuals visiting the inmates.

In March 2009, the founder of the prison-based radical group Jamiyyat Ul-Islam Is-Saheeh (JIS) was sentenced to 16 years in federal prison for conspiracy to levy war against the U.S. government through terrorism and to kill members of the U.S. military. JIS members reportedly committed armed robberies in the Los Angeles area to raise money to fund attacks on U.S. military facilities, Israeli government facilities, and Jewish synagogues in the Los Angeles area. In August 2009, another JIS member was found competent to stand trial and was convicted of the same charges and sentenced to 70 months in federal prison.

Many local, state, and federal law enforcement authorities in California and numerous other states now train jail and prison personnel, screen religious service providers in correctional facilities, and employ tracking tools for radicalized individuals who are released from the correctional system. The identification of early onset radicalization patterns and trends is important in the forthcoming years to stop the spread of radicalized terrorism.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Acronym	Definition
AB	Aryan Brotherhood
ABZ	Asian Boyz
ALF	Animal Liberation Front
BGF	Black Guerrilla Family
CDCR	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
C.O.O.R.S.	Comrades of Our Race's Struggle
CRW	Confederation of Racist Working Class Skinheads
CSM	Creativity Skinhead Movement
ELF	Earth Liberation Front
EME	Mexican Mafia
EOC	Eurasian Organized Crime
FAIM	Family Affiliated Irish Mafia
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
HA	Hells Angels
IT	International Terrorism
JIS	Jamiyyat Ul-Islam Is-Saheeh
LTC	Loc Town Crips
MDMA	Methylenedioxy-N-methylamphetamine
MDTO	Mexican Drug Trafficking Organization
MEK	Mujahedin-e-Khalq
MS-13	Mara Salvatrucha
NF	Nuestra Familia
NLR	Nazi Low Riders
NS	Northern Structure
OMG	Outlaw Motorcycle Gang
PENI	Public Enemy Number One
TRG	Tiny Rascal Gang
TS	Texas Syndicate

Acronym	Definition
UC	University of California
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
USAS	United Society of Aryan Skinheads
U.S.	United States