



National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations

Robert Mateo
President
National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations
(Reduction of Crime)

Thank you Sheriff Mina, District Attorney Moore and ladies and gentlemen of the Commission. I am honored to present to you on behalf of the National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations. NAGIA is comprised of 22 member Associations that collectively represent more than 20,000 individual members who work fighting the scourge of criminal gangs.

I have personally been involved in the identification and investigation of criminal gangs and their members in some capacity for the vast majority of my almost 25-year career. However, my experience with gangs started at a much earlier age. Growing up in the Logan Square area of Chicago, I became well versed in how gangs operated and preyed on our youth. This life-lesson prepared me well to identify criminal gang activity and gave me a head start in this line of work providing me with the foundation needed to identify major national gangs known to have operated in Chicago. Currently, I am assigned as an Intelligence Detective, attached to the FBI's Safe Streets Violent Gang and Violent Crime Task Force. I have been involved in the investigative process of criminal gangs from both the local and federal point of view.

I am here today to share with you my thoughts on how we might be able to reduce gang crime and increase prosecutions of gangs and their members who operate in furtherance of their respective gangs. The national landscape of gangs evolves regularly with time. The most recent national gang survey conducted by the National Gang Intelligence Center, which is operated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, revealed 49% of respondents identified an increase in criminal gang activity in their jurisdictions, with only 8% reporting a decrease. That trend



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remains and did not show signs of decreasing gang membership nor a decline in criminal activity according to the report and provided that “neighborhood-based gangs were reported to be the highest threat, perpetuating violence, drug distribution and opportunistic crimes, such as robbery, in communities throughout the country.” In February of 2020, the National Alliance of Gang Investigators Association and the National Gang Center collaborated with the National Gang Intelligence Center to conduct this year’s survey. However, our current national crisis has dampened that effort, but only temporarily.

In consulting with a variety of gang investigators from around the country, many agree our laws as they pertain to criminal gangs lack vigor and effective language to fight criminal gangs. Federal law addresses criminal gangs with a narrow scope of when enhanced penalties could be applied for crimes committed in furtherance of the gang or its members. Society has changed over decades of the evolution of criminal gangs and how they operate. Our laws have been very slow to respond to those changes. If we are going to reduce gang activity in our country, we need to strengthen our laws to give our state and federal prosecutors the tools they need to prosecute gang members for violent gang crimes.

Further, there is a need to continue building relationships and partnerships among our local, state and federal law enforcement and prosecutors. This seemingly simple step is crucial to successfully fight criminal gangs. Operations conducted during joint-agency investigations, led by federal agencies providing additional funding for equipment, personnel, training, confidential sources and overtime show success in mitigating gang activity where they have been conducted. Operation Triple Beam was a joint effort conducted in south Florida in January of this year targeting persons with warrants for their arrests, and gang members and their associates known to be involved in violent crimes. The U.S. Marshal’s Service, the Miami Gardens Police



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Department and the Miami-Dade County Police Department among others led the operation's efforts. This operation resulted in the arrest of 150 suspects, the seizure of 45 firearms, over 6 kilos of illicit drugs and nearly \$40,000 taken as evidence. These types of operations undoubtedly save lives and keep communities in need of protection from criminal gangs safer. The Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDEFT) and other federal programs that support joint operations by bringing local resources into larger scale long term investigation remains crucial in the investigation of larger criminal organizations.

The Denver Channel reported in February when Aurora voters did away with the city's red-light camera program, funding for Aurora's gang prevention program was eliminated as well. Now they report a potential tax on marijuana to recover anti-gang programs in light of increased youth violence this year.

Durham, NC Police Chief C.J. Davis reported a 5% increase in shootings from 2018 to 2019. In a report on KUNC.org, Davis reported 12% of those shootings were known to have gang members as either victims or suspects.

The City of Chicago reported overall crime decreased so far in 2020, while at the same time reporting increased shootings and murders from the same time last year, pointing out that gang members are still out on the streets in an article written by Bob Chiarito. There would be no way to correlate the current Covid-19 situation to these statements. Some mention of the coronavirus lock-down playing a role in their statistics. There simply would be no way to know if that is the case as any thought of correlating the two would be pure speculation.

Intelligence databases used to house data regarding identified gang members and associates are essential in gang investigations and prosecutions. Different areas around the country have lost the ability to maintain these databases making it very difficult for gang



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investigators to be effective in their pursuit of these dangerous and violent individuals. Gang databases were meant as a vital tool to keep officers and the public safe, and assist in identifying gang members and associates readily. This would benefit any investigation involving gangs, including crimes that might trigger retaliation. Having critical intelligence on those who might be inclined to carry out retaliation could save lives. Recently, these databases have come under fire due to some inaccurate entries or misidentification of subjects as gang members causing non-gang members to be entered into the database. Proper training could prevent the entry of bad data into these databases, and would ensure consistent practices of identifying who should go into the database across the board. The states that have Gang Investigators Associations are already positioned to provide training to law enforcement in the proper identification and documentation of gang members and associates for entry into gang databases. Funding support for those associations would allow additional training to be provided at a greater scale throughout the United States. This training can be provided to law enforcement, juvenile justice, corrections and prosecution personnel who work together all the time to fight against criminal gangs. Training together could also serve to strengthen relationships across criminal justice disciplines, which will prove invaluable in the future. Law enforcement and corrections personnel would benefit greatly if better lines of communications were in place to exchange information. Training would allow the means to identify the best practices in accomplishing that goal.

The National Alliance of Gang Investigators Association would also like to express their support and endorsement for the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program as a successful model and as an effective tool in gang prevention and intervention. This program is typically taught by law enforcement officers in our schools. The Gang Resistance Education



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and Training program began in 1991, in Phoenix, Arizona. It has evolved into the only existing evidence-based youth gang prevention program taught by law enforcement officers in schools and continues to protect children against delinquency and youth violence as well as gang membership in their younger years, allowing our youth to flourish and succeed in their formative years. Again, this is an area where the state's gang investigator associations are well positioned to step in and meet that training need if properly funded and supported.

The National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations would also suggest continued support of the National Gang Center (NGC) and the Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS). The resources they provided to our law enforcement partners in the fight against gangs and violent crime is essential to our ongoing efforts to combat the evil gangs represent. The continued and unwavering support from NGC and RISS whenever needed does not go unnoticed by our Member Associations and we look forward to continued partnerships for years to come.