

## Background Notes for Gang Brief

### 1. Intro slide

### 2. Why?

### 3. [REDACTED] Criminal Street Gang Definition –

Not everyone agrees on the definition of what a gang is. Even the [REDACTED] Code leaves a degree of latitude in interpreting what a gang is. In highlighting aspects of the of the [REDACTED] CODE definition of a gang –

- A. The key is that the reason the group came into being and continues to exist is for the furtherance of some criminal activity or activities. The gang may give a sense of belonging and protection but a primary activity has to be that the group engages in criminal activity. For example, the group was organized and continues to operate to facilitate the trafficking of drugs.
- B. The number of individuals that need to be tied to the group may vary, e.g., the FBI defines it as an association of 5 or more individuals
- C. Formal-informal – some street gangs are highly organized with a well defined hierarchical structure and written out constitutions or codes of conduct. On the other end of the spectrum, some gangs are intentionally leaderless and have no formal written rules to govern the gang.
- D. Generally a gang will have some means of collectively identifying or promoting itself (name, sign, and symbols).

### 4. Gang Identifiers –

There are a number of indicators that law enforcement agencies and correctional institutions use to identify gang membership. There is some degree of variation but this list catches most of the general categories. The important thing is to ensure that multiple indicators are used in positively labeling an individual as being a gang member. Some of the indicators may be weighted differently as well. *(Pick and chose from the below examples)*

- A. **Self admission** – Self admitted gang member at time of arrest or incarceration. At times individuals may falsely claim membership as well and not have any other indicators that would help to verify. For example, an individual may claim to belong to a gang establish status or fear. Also, if you ask any school resource officer there are a number of “wanna be’s” out there who in no way have ties to a criminal group or would engage in criminal activity.
- B. **Source reporting** – Identified by a reliable informant as being a gang member. If the informant’s reliability is unknown then agencies often look for corroborating indicators

before marking someone as a known gang member. Some sources may not always be informed on gang criteria and informants may intend to falsely identify an individual.

- C. **Associations** – This entails identifying who an individual associates with. This would also be one where you would want to have other corroborating information prior to positively stating an individual is a known gang member.
- D. **Case history** – what the individual was arrested for (e.g., gang participation), if was arrested with individuals who are known gang members.
- E. **Communications** – slang, hand signs, letters, phone calls.
- F. **Clothing/Dress** – though a potential indicator, this one may not be as reliable. Gang members are not as likely to overtly demonstrate gang membership as this draws unwanted attention from law enforcement. Also, “wanna-be’s” have adopted the style as well.
- G. **Tattoos** - Categories would include Alpha, Numerical, Symbol/Picture, or a combination of the three.
  - a. **Alpha** – entail either the complete name or the gangs acronym. E.g., GD for Gangster Disciple. Words may also correspond with phrases or other language tied to a gang or that are derogatory to rival gangs.
  - b. **Numerical** – The number may correspond to the beginning letters of the gang’s name. E.g., 74 for G & D of Gangster Disciple. Also numbers may have geographic ties such as area code or street number. Some also use numbers that are tied to the overarching alliance that they may affiliate with.
  - c. **Symbols/Pictures** – Gangs often have a specific image or images that are tied to their group. However, the representation will vary depending on artist.
- H. **Graffiti** - This would be similar to tattoos in that it will likely involve the same categories – alpha, numerical, symbol/picture, of combination. Gangs will also use graffiti to disrespect rival. For example, use of derogatory terms, symbols backwards or upside down. They may also cross out rival gang graffiti.

A single indicator may lead to suspicion that an individual belongs to a gang, finding other indicators will help to confirm these suspicions. Basically one is striking a balance to ensure that we are not mislabeling an individual as either being in a gang or not.

## 5. Gang Categories –

Three basic types of gangs have been identified by gang investigators.

**Street** – start local, covering a specific geographic area within a jurisdiction (e.g. neighborhood). There are a number of Street Gangs that are categorized as regional or national level gangs. Basically they have either spread to neighboring states or have a presence in a number of states across the US. Street gangs can be further broken down as well:

- A. **Racial/ Ethnic gangs**--Membership may be based along racial lines (e.g., black or Hispanic gangs) or specific ethnic group (e.g., Sudanese, Bosnian).
- B. **Hybrid gangs**—initially this was defined as gangs that had mixed ethnicity or race, which is not a new phenomenon. However, modern characteristics of hybrid gangs have changed, according to some, aside from the mix in racial and/or ethnic makeup of the

gang, hybrid gangs tend to be less structured in terms of rules or leadership than traditional street gangs. Also there tends to be shifting allegiances of gang members as they may jump from gang to gang.

To what extent this may or may not be true in [REDACTED] is unclear at the moment. However, the focus here is going to be on means for identifying gang members and what gangs they may be associated with.

**Prison gangs**—organization that started in the prison system. They are also self-perpetuating criminal entities that can continue their operations outside the confines of correctional institutions.

**OMGs**—organizations whose members use their motorcycle clubs as conduits of criminal enterprises. Also commonly known as “one percenters” which was coined by the American Motorcycle Association in 1947 after it stated essentially 99% of people who ride motorcycles are good law abiding citizens, that the remaining 1% are outlaws who give everyone a bad name.

## 6. Street Gang Alliances –

Street gangs generally fall under overarching umbrella groups, which is a way of distinguishing between rivals and allies. Reportedly these alliances become more cohesive in times of conflict or when they are incarcerated. However, there are gangs that fall under the same umbrella group that are rivals.

**A. People vs. Folk**—These gang nations emerged out of Chicago and reportedly had their origins in the prison system, allowing a member protection from rivals if they were separated from their gang while incarcerated. Gangs associated with these alliances do not adhere to racial boundaries as both alliances have white, black, and Hispanic members.

The Bloods reportedly ally with the People Nation and the Crips with the Folk Nation. These ties may be stronger in the Midwest.

**B. Sureno vs. Norteno**—These alliances formed within the California Department of Corrections, with the dividing line reportedly being around Delano, CA, though the gangs are currently spread throughout the state. The Surenos align with the Mexican Mafia prison gang and the Nortenos align with the Nuestra Familia prison gang.

Surenos also reportedly ally with People Nation gangs and the Nortenos ally with the Folk Nation gangs. However, information from the [REDACTED] Department of Corrections indicates that there are often issues between the Hispanic gang members and the groups that fall under the People/Folk alliances.

\*\*\*Prior to getting into the specific street gangs – this is only a small sample of gangs that are present in the state. Almost all of the ones we highlight here are classified as either regional or national level gangs. There are a number of local gangs in [REDACTED]. The focus is on the regional and national gangs because of their widespread presence within the state and, in

many cases, predominance over local gangs. As we continue to do outreach with our state and local partners we continue to seek information to enhance our understanding of gangs within the state to develop a better overarching picture of gang presence and activities.

## **7. People Nation –**

This is a list of People Nation Gangs that have a known presence in [REDACTED] as reported by law enforcement across the state. The “L” behind some of the gangs represents local gangs that are known to associate with the People Nation.

## **8. People Nation Common Symbols –**

There are a number of symbols that People Nation Gangs commonly use in tattoos and graffiti, in part, as a means of showing allegiance to the Nation. These generally would be found in conjunction with other symbols that are specific to the gang in question.

**Star** – 5 pointed star, points stand for love, truth, peace, freedom, justice. May also see the number 5 within different symbols.

**Crown** – 5 pointed crown with the same meaning for the points as the star. Aside from crown and star may also see dice with 5 dots.

**Pyramid** – Peace in all 4 corners of the universe, with 21 bricks representing shelter, strength, knowledge, also 21 days of celebration.

**Playboy bunny** – facing left with left ear bent.

**Top hat** – Shelter

**Gloves** – purity. Palm up means all is well as long as Gangster Disciples are being destroyed.

**Cross** – Strength and for some Allah is with them.

**Champagne/martini glass** – Celebration of defeat of gangsters & rise of Almighty People Nation.

**Two staffs/canes crossing** – Strength and love or power. At times will see a single cane/staff.

People Nation members also commonly identify to the left. Basically this would entail them wearing their hat cocked to the left, having their left pant leg rolled up, and gesturing with their left hand.

## **9. Vice Lords -**

Originating in Chicago in the late 1950s, the Vice Lords are the oldest and currently one of the most dominant organized criminal enterprises in Illinois.

- Currently the Vice Lords are the second largest street gang in Chicago with an estimated 20,000 members.
- The gang expanded into neighboring states to advance criminal activity and currently have confirmed sets in 28 states with a nationwide membership estimate of 35,000.
- The gang is highly structured, at least in its Chicago-based configuration, with a Chairman of the Board and a Board of Directors. There are a number of sets that fall under the Vice Lord umbrella, including the Conservative Vice Lords, Unknown Vice Lords, and Traveling Vice Lords.
- In the 80s a number of Vice Lord leaders while in prison, adopted Islam. In many ways they are not stringent adherents to the religion and some would claim they exploit the religion for their own purposes.
- The Vice Lords are the second largest Security Threat Group within the Department of Corrections with over 250 members currently incarcerated.
- Criminal activity associated with the Vice Lords includes drug trafficking—including but not limited to marijuana and cocaine—homicide, drive-by shootings, assault, robbery, burglary, home invasions, carjacking and thefts, weapons violations, and money laundering.
- Based on [REDACTED] data, Vice Lords are currently incarcerated in [REDACTED] for...
- Slide has a list of common symbols used by Vice Lord sets

## 10. Vice Lord [REDACTED] Presence –

This map is based on information received from law enforcement partners across the state.

## 11. Vice Lord Images 1 –

In looking at the tagging there is the common use of acronyms for the different Vice Lord sets. CVL – Conservative Vice Lord (Upper & lower left), TVL – Traveling Vice Lords (upper right), and VLN – Vice Lord Nation. There is also the left-facing playboy bunny. The upper right tagging has a little of everything.

Also there are derogatory or taunting elements in three of the pictures (upper right and lower right and left). GDK – Gangster Disciple Killer, upside pitchfork (Folk Nation symbol), LKK – Latin King Killer w/ upside down three pointed crown (Note Latin Kings are also part of the People Nation, which highlights the rivalries within alliances).

The middle images are hand drawn, demonstrating that graffiti is more than just tagging with spray paint. Left facing playboy bunny, top hats, cane, 5-pointed star, initials, and the upside down pitchforks.

## 12. Vice Lord Images 2 –

The tattoos have similar symbols that are tied to the Vice Lords or to the People Nation in general. Top hat, cane, initials, 5 pointed star, playboy bunny, pyramid, 22 12 (VL).

Hand signs – VL, 5 pointed star, and VL handshake.

### **13. Latin Kings –**

The Latin Kings came into being in Chicago in the 1960s reportedly as a social organization composed of Puerto Rican and other Hispanic males in an effort to overcome racial prejudice.

- The group devolved into a criminal organization and is now has a nationwide presence.
- The gang has moved beyond only having Puerto Rican and Hispanic members to include a number of different races and ethnicities. There are also female members known as Latin Queens.
- A separate set began on the East Coast, New York, in the 1980s and operates separately from the Chicago-based gang.
- The Latin King presence within the [REDACTED] is not significant, making up less than 5% of the identified STG members.
- At the national level Latin Kings are known to engage in drug trafficking (cocaine, heroin, marijuana, methamphetamine), homicide, assault, burglary, robbery, weapons violations, and violence towards law enforcement.
- Based on [REDACTED] data, Latin Kings incarcerated in [REDACTED] have been charged with...
- There are a number of items that can be found in Latin King graffiti and tattoos as listed on the slide.

### **14. Latin King [REDACTED] Presence –**

Though not as well represented within [REDACTED] the gang has a presence in a number of communities throughout the state. We have received intelligence in regards to the gang recently, which does indicate that members located in Muscatine are tied closely with Chicago. Also, the [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] branches may at some point in the future be tied together under one leader.

### **15. Latin King Images 1 –**

Within the Latin King Graffiti you can see a lot of common themes. There is the 5 pointed crown, LK, Amor de Rey (King Love), and the upside down pitchforks.

### **16. Latin King Images 2 –**

The same themes are reflected in the tattoos though there were also lion tattoos found. 5 pointed crown, LK, Amor de Rey. One tattoo has the term Folk Killers and the upside down pitchforks.

Hand signs – 5 pointed star, 5 pointed crown, three pointed crown, letters LK formed with fingers.

### **17. Black Peace Stone Nation (BPSN) –**

The Black Peace Stone Nation emerged out of an alliance of 21 gangs in Chicago in the mid-1960s with Jeff Fort at the helm through its various incarnations. The Black P Stones have had a very colorful history.

- In the late 60s and early 70s the group passed itself off as a political organization, receiving federal funds, which it mismanaged and used to further its criminal enterprises.
- Fort did time after for the mismanagement of the funds and when he emerged from federal prison he had adopted Islam and attempted to merge its beliefs with the organization, forming the El Rukns. Elements of the Black P Stones remained under different leadership as not all had accepted Fort's version of Islam.
- Fort was arrested again in the early 80s on drug charges though he continued to rule the gang from behind bars. During the 80s members of the El Rukns met with Libyans and conspired to engage in terrorist acts against the US. Fort was charged on terrorism charges and the El Rukns leadership was decimated.
- Fort changed the name of the group back to the Black P Stones.
- Based on [REDACTED] data the BPSN have engaged in...

## **18. Black Peace Stone [REDACTED] Presence –**

### **19. Black P Stone Images 1 –**

- Common in the tagging is the BPS or BPSN.
- There is also the 5-pointed star showing ties to the People Nation, but it reportedly also has connotations for the gang's ties to Islam.
- Also in the one tagging you see the derogatory images, including the upside down pitchforks and the GDK (Gangster Disciple Killer).
- Also common is the pyramid, generally with the 21 bricks to represent the 21 gang leaders that helped bring about the formation of the BPSN. Often accompanying the pyramid is the rising sun symbol.
- Other symbols that also reportedly associated with its leaning towards Islam include the crescent moon, all seeing eye (Eye of Allah), and the number, which represents the 7 prayers of the Koran. The 7 also represents the 7 BPS branches in the Chicago area. Some of the images will also have Arabic writing.
- In the upper right corner there is the drawing of the hand signs that may be used for "stacking", the rapid forming of the letters in succession to spell out words or show signs.

### **20. Black P Stone Images 2 –**

- Could not find much for tattoos or hand signs for the BPSN.
- The pyramid, 7, BPS, rising sun.
- Other images that I was unable to find include CSA (Cold Soldiers Army) and "Stones Run It."

### **21. Bloods –**

The Bloods street gang was formed by a number of smaller street gangs in Los Angeles in the early 1970s in an effort to counter the Crips street gang, which had targeting the smaller gangs. Initially the Bloods leadership structure was less formal and for the most part it had no written

rules. However, the gang has reportedly started writing down its rules and has become more structured.

- An East Coast entity of the Bloods, known as the United Blood Nation started in the early 1990s in the Rikers detention center in response to threats from Hispanic gangs within the correctional system. Though generally they are two distinct entities, both identify themselves as Bloods.
- Blood sets have reportedly been identified in all 50 states, making them one of the few the few truly national gangs.
- The Bloods make up the second largest People Nation gang within the [REDACTED] though they only a third the size of the Vice Lords.
- Based on [REDACTED] data, Bloods gang members arrested in [REDACTED] have generally....

## 22. Bloods [REDACTED] Presence –

### 23. Bloods Images 1 –

- Different version of Blood name (DLB = Denver Lane Bloods out of LA)
- Dawgs Paw or Triple Os.
- Affiliation with People Nation – 5-pointed star and crown.
- Derogatory – have Crip Killer (CK)
- Blood up, pitchforks (Folk) down
- 5 poppin – usually the rest of this would be 6 droppin

### 24. Bloods Images 2 –

- 5-pointed star signifies affiliated with the People Nation.
- MOB – Member of Blood
- Blood Out Blood Out
- Damu Ways – Damu being Swahili for Blood
- Scarring – Blood spelled out. Three points in shape of paw – dawgs paw or triple Os.
- Hand signs – B, Blood Love, spelling out Blood.

### 24. Folk Nation -

This is a list of Folk Nation Gangs that have a known presence in [REDACTED] as reported by law enforcement across the state. The “L” behind some of the gangs represents local gangs that are known to associate with the Folk Nation. Note there are a lot more Folk affiliated gangs in [REDACTED] than there are People Nation gangs.

### 25. Folk Nation Common Symbols –

Similar to the People Nation, gangs that are tied to the Folk Nation also share a common set of symbols that may be found within their graffiti and tattoos.



**6 pointed star** – also referred to as the star of David (for founder of GD?). The points of the star stand for love, life, loyalty, wisdom, understanding, knowledge. Also the number 6 in various representations.

**6 pointed crown** – same as star

**Pitchfork** – facing up – struggle. As noted in the People tattoos and images, the pitchforks are facing down as a taunt at the Folk gangs.

**Dice** – may either have the number 6 or have numbers tied to the neighborhood the gangs originated from or associated with the letters in their name.

**Sun** – Knowledge the disciples have. All encompassing.

**Playboy bunny** – facing right, possibly with right ear bent.

**Horns** – Power to overcome; voice of the gang.

**Flame or torch** – eternal life and determination to overcome all obstacles; path and direction of the gang.

**Heart** – love of the whole Folk Nation. May also appear with a sword through it, which represents death before dying.

**Devil's tail** – represents hardships endured, oppression of gang members and other 3<sup>rd</sup> world people.

Folk Nation members also commonly identify to the right. Basically this would entail them wearing their hat cocked to the right, having their right pant leg rolled up, and gesturing with their right hand.

## **26. Gangster Disciples –**

The Gangster Disciples, in its initial incarnation, came about in the late-1960s when the Black Disciples, led by David Barksdale, and Black Gangsters, led by Larry Hoover formed an alliance. Barksdale passed away in 1974 and Hoover, sentenced to life in 1973, took over the leadership of the alliance.

- Hoover disbanded the alliance in the late 1970s to make the Black Disciples a separate organization.
- The Gangster Disciples is a highly structured gang with Hoover acting as Chairman of the Board even though he has been incarcerated since 1973. Hoover was initially in a state institution in Illinois but was eventually moved to a federal facility in Chicago.
- Hoover was also key in the formation of the Folks Nation.
- The Gangster Disciples is the largest gang in the [REDACTED] comprising nearly a third of the individuals currently identified as belonging to a gang.
- Currently incarcerated members...

- Though initially composed of only El Salvadorans, the gang also includes individuals of other Hispanic descent.
- MS-13 is composed of a number of different cliques that operate independently of each other but that are well networked.
- MS-13 does not have a significant presence in [REDACTED] as [REDACTED] is the only location indicating the gang is present in its jurisdiction. [REDACTED] officials have only identified 5 individuals as being MS-13 members.
- Why in [REDACTED]

#### **48. MS 13 [REDACTED] Presence -**

[REDACTED] ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) data on gang arrests from 2005 indicates MS-13 members were arrested in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

#### **48. Mara Salvatrucha Images –**

- MS-13 uses a variety of ways to tag its name and numbers as indicated by the photos.
- The two photos in the upper left were taken in [REDACTED]
- Have the 3 dots for Mi Vida Loca.
- The hand sign image – referred to as the devil’s pitchfork or claw. Notice the pronounced fingernails.
- Crossing out of 18<sup>th</sup> Street graffiti. These gangs are rivals though they both fall under the Sureno umbrella.

#### **49. Mara Salvatrucha Images 2 –**

- Similar to the tagging there are multiple variations of the MS-13 primary logo as well as the devil’s pitchfork.
- Of note is the tattoos in between the fingers, w/ Mi Vida Loca. Also, according to some, the tattooing on the face is an indicator of a hard core gang member. That is at least among the Hispanic gangs.
- Member with the emblem from the El Salvadorian flag.
- Laugh now, cry later tattoo.
- Hand signs – 2 different versions of the devil’s pitchfork and the letter M.

#### **50. 18<sup>th</sup> Street -**

The 18<sup>th</sup> Street gang originated near 18th Street and Union Avenue in Los Angeles in the mid-60s. Initially the gang was composed Mexican nationals but now it is open to other ethnicities including non-Hispanic individuals.

- Generally the cliques operate independently and most cliques are the result of 18<sup>th</sup> Street members migrating to other cities across the US.
- 18<sup>th</sup> Street also has a presence in Mexico and Central American, making it a transnational gang.
- Currently there are no 18<sup>th</sup> Street gang members have been identified within [REDACTED] though the gang is known for its involvement in drug trafficking.

- One of the few Sureno gangs where you will not see a 13 in the display of its gang name.

## 52. 18<sup>th</sup> Street Images -

### 53. Nortenos –

This is a list of Norteno gangs with a known presence. As you can see the Nortenos do not have anywhere near the presence in the state as the Sureno gangs. This lack of presence also exposes them if they are ever incarcerated in the Bottom line, don't get arrested and if you are, keep your mouth shut and have a low profile.

Much like Surenos there are not a lot of common symbols shared by all Norteno affiliated gangs. In showing their allegiance to the Nuestra Familia, Norteno gangs will use the 14, N or ENE, and 4 dots.

### 54. Norteno 14 –

Similar to Surenos 13, there is a need to distinguish between Nortenos the affiliation and Nortenos 14 the gang. Raises the question as to whether individuals are members of the gang Norteno 14 or are an affiliate and a member of another specific gang.

- Nortenos are the muscle for Nuestra Familia, at least in California.
- Other than that there is not a lot of literature that goes into specific as to the nature of the gang as opposed to the alliance.

### 55. Norteno 14 Image 1-

- Variations of Norteno, Norte.
- ENE – Nuestra Familia prison gang, which the Nortenos are tied to within the correctional system.
- Also the number 14, much like the 13 Surenos use to show affiliation to La Eme, show the Nortenos allegiance to Nuestra Familia.
- Huelga Bird – Nortenos lay claim to images of the Mexican-American labor movement (United Farm Workers). Also use sombrero and machete (found no images of this).
- 4 dots.
- SK – Sureno Killer
- Imagery of Mayan warrior – can't really say this is distinctive to Nortenos as other Hispanic gangs also use historical cultural references.

### 55. Norteno 14 Images 2 –

- Similar symbolism.
- Also use a 5-pointed star, which represents the “North” star, another symbol of the United Farm Workers. This is not to be confused with the People Nation 5-pointed star. Nortenos in the Mid-west align with the Folk Nation, which uses a 6-pointed star.
- Reportedly star and Huelga are earned by committing assault or murder against Surenos.

## **56. Ethnic Gangs –**

Currently ethnic gangs are not believed to have a significant presence within the state.

### **A. Bosnian Gangs**

The first three gangs have operated in and around the ██████████ Metro area since around 2005 until 2010. Issues of tagging, drug dealing, and gang violence has been associated with the different groups.

For many of the suburbs the issues have died down. There was some speculation that the individuals graduated into organized crime as they are older now. There continue to be issues with Bosnian groups but generally it is not associated with gang activity.

### **B. Sudanese Gangs**

Currently do not have the numbers as to how many Sudanese are currently living in ██████████ but the largest Sudanese community in the US is in ██████████ Sudanese gangs are a relative new phenomenon for the state. Much like the origins of other gangs, you have pockets of a community forming with the youths starting a group for protection among other reasons.

Awareness of the Chie Channy gang came about from an ██████████ PD bulletin. The gang is reportedly located in ██████████ though there is at least one member in Ames. Don't have a lot of information on the gang in regards to criminal activity. The group reportedly uses an alligator as a symbol.

The 249 Boyz came to the attention of the Center after an incident in Kansas City after the gang went down for a concert and got into an altercation with another Sudanese gang. Once again we do not have a lot of background on this group.

Based on information out of ██████████ the different Sudanese gangs based there have engaged in violent crimes including assaults and robberies. Based on the proximity of the large community, Sudanese gang issues may continue to be a concern within the state, especially Western ██████████