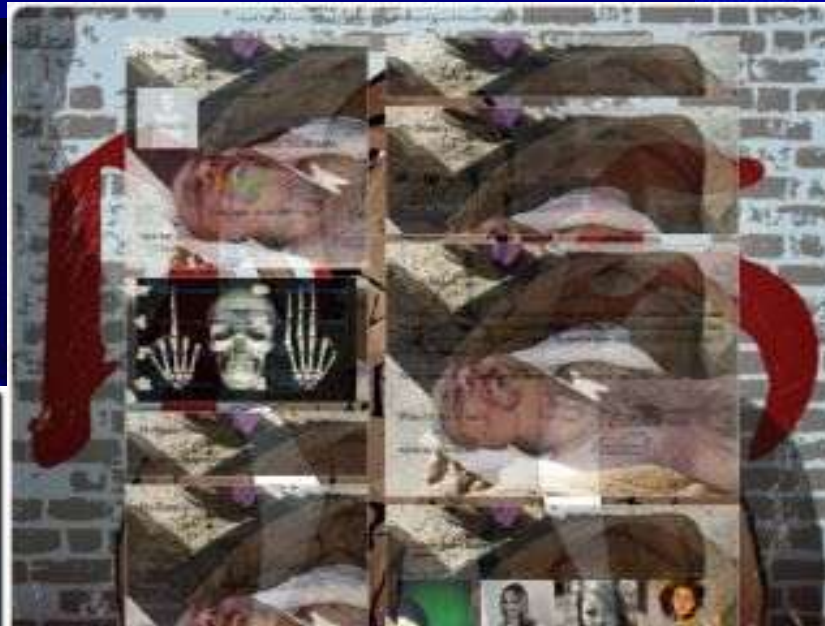


Central American Gangs: Emerging Transnational Concern



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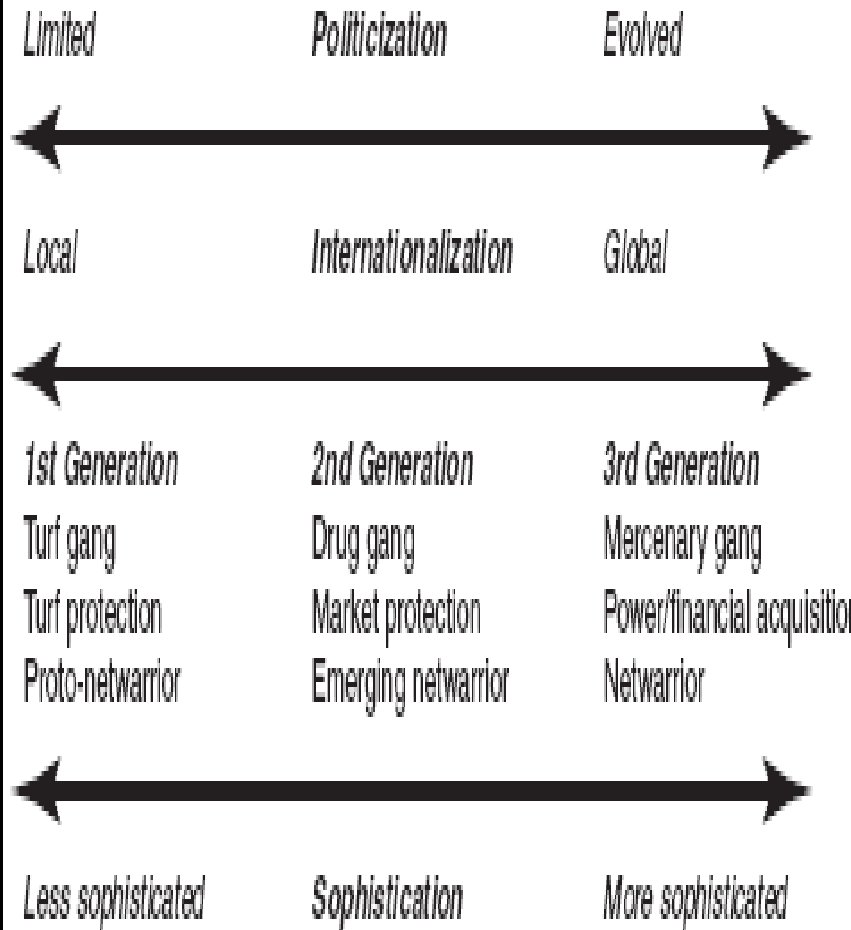
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Definition(?): Ongoing Debate

Important Considerations

1. Risk

- a. Lowest: Traditional
 - i. Peer / troubled youth group
 - ii. Minor offenders / anti-social behavior
 - iii. Many lack criminal record
- b. Middle: Street gangs
 - i. Lose organization localized crime activity
 - ii. Recipients/curries international drug business
- c. Highest:
 - i. Mafia like gang (organized crime/third generation)
 - ii. "Subsidiaries to OC"



2. Ethnicity: "Immigrant and Transnational Gangs"

Major Central American Gangs with Transborder Ties

Mara Salvatrucha (MS 13)



United States
Central American nations
South American nations
Canada
Spain
Germany
UK
Norway



The 18th Street Gang

- US and 11 countries
 - Canada
 - Central America
 - Mexico . . .

MS-13 Characteristics



- Fastest growing - most violent street gangs in US
- Origins: Salvadoran Civil War refugee community of central Los Angeles in the 1970s-1980s
- Early gang members trained paramilitaries during the civil war (Farbabundo Marti National Liberation Front)

“In our Country, we were taught to kill our own people, no matter if they were from your own blood. If your father was the enemy, you had to kill him. So the training we got during the war in our country served to make us one of the most violent gangs in the U.S.”

Ernesto “Smokey” Miranda, co-founder of MS-13

Gang Impact in Central America

Gang violence: part of a broad spectrum of violence in Central America

In Guatemala and Honduras, for example, the regions that have the highest murder rates tend to be those without a significant gang presence, but where organized criminal groups and narco-traffickers are particularly active

Select Countries: Estimated Numbers

- 70,000 (U.S. Southern Command and UN)
- 10,000 in the US (USAF Study)
- According to UNODC
 - 10,500 in El Salvador
 - 36,000 in Honduras
 - 14,000 in Guatemala
 - 4,500 in Nicaragua
 - 1,385 in Panama
 - 2,660 in Costa Rica

Recruitment-Communication

- Internet
- Social media platforms:
 - Facebook , Twitter, YouTube, Myspace
- Recruitment:
 - Middle School and High Schools
 - Coercion and forced recruitment



Law enforcement fear
AVATAR

- Copycat gang proliferation

MS-13 Transformation to Syndicate

“Most Dangerous Gang in the US”

- **From** home enclaves and small-scale crimes (extortion, robbery, burglary, drug dealing and prostitution)

Expanded
Operations

Large-scale: narcotics, weapons and humans smuggling

MS-13 and Mexican cartels: US middleman between Colombian drug cartels and La Cosa Nostra

Hired Killers for Mexican Cartels

Gang: Primary Distributors Illegal Drugs - Worldwide

“Extension of cartels” (MS-13-Sinaloa Cartel, Zetas)



- **Cartel – Gang Relationship:**
 - smugglers
 - transporters
 - wholesale distributors
 - killers

- **Today's gangs are wealthier and with powerful weapons:**
- Assault rifles, grenades, grenade launchers, pipe bombs, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) = violence

MS-13 Clique Organizational Structure

**Leader
“Jefe”**

**2nd
Command**

Recruitment

Logistics

Protection

Criminal activity

Information

Homicide

Drugs

Extortion

Others

Intelligence

PROPAGANDA

Gang Identifiers: Investigations - Educates Jury

Hand Signs: alliance to specific gang

18th Street



Mara (MS 13)



Gang Identifiers:

Tattoos

Three Dots:

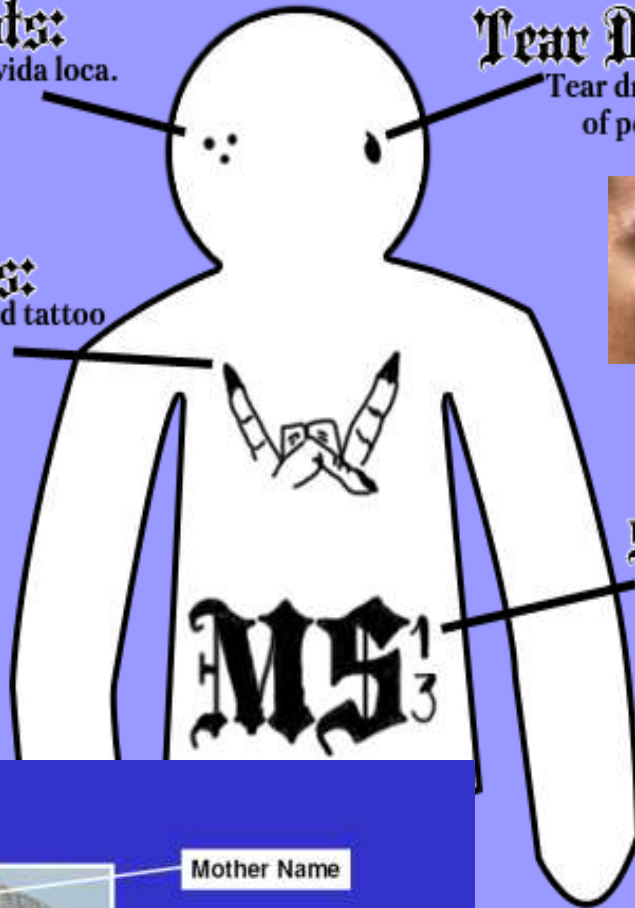
Three dots means: Mi vida loca.

Tear Drop:

Tear drop means the quantity of persons you've killed.

Devil Horns:

A common gang sign and tattoo from MS-13.



Mara

Salvatrucha 13:

The abbreviation of the gang and the number 13 is a way to represent the Maras, as the 13th letter is "M"



Mother Name

Deceased Loved Ones

Salvatrucha

MS

13



Some no longer get tattooed, others remove them

Clothing/Colors

Graffiti:

Territory, purpose, next plan of attack



Dieciocho, Sureno, 18, 666

MS-13: Blue & black bandanas

Gang Identification – Sports
Team Logos

MS-13 /Marasalvatrucha

Most Dangerous Gang *FBI*



Initiation Rites

- Kicking
- Beatings – “Jumping In”
- Gang rapes – “Sex In”
 - Forcing new female gang members to undergo gang rape to enter the gang



Commits horrific crimes:

More crimes = more status

Murder with machetes

Victims slaughtered and dismembered

Booby-trap drug stash houses (antipersonnel grenades)

Contract Killings



MS-13 members reportedly contracted by Mexico's warring DTOs to carry out revenge killings

Relationship between DTOs – gangs most developed in El Salvador, Honduras, with few DTO-gang connections in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, or Panama

(FBI)

18th Street

- A. Fastest growing in US
 - US, est. 10,000 members
- B. Active in all 50 States
- C. Expansion of criminal acts:
 1. Alien smuggling-human trafficking:
 - Higher profits – lower risk detention/punishment
 2. Prostitution rings:
 - Girls as young as 12 years
 3. White collar crime:
 - Counterfeiting
 - Identity theft
 - Mortgage fraud
- D. Infiltrated in the military

- A. Active in 32 States
- B. Linked to:
 1. Homicide
 2. Extortion
 3. Alien smuggling
 4. Drug smuggling
 5. Auto theft
- C. Infiltrated in the military

Maras Increasingly Involved in Narcotics Trafficking: Working with Cartels



Gang Incursion into the Military

According to a recent FBI report, every branch of the military contains some gang members, but most gang members join the Army, the Army Reserves, and the U.S. National Guard.

**53 gangs identified on
domestic and international
military installations**

As of 2012



Theft of Military Hardware by Gang Members:



- Twice in 2011, live artillery rounds found in homes of people affiliated with the military, including a known gang member. Projectiles easily converted into improvised explosive devices (IEDs).
- Small arms — though strictly monitored— have appeared on the street in the hands of gang members.
- In July 2011, 27 AK-47s stolen from a warehouse at Fort Irwin in California, gang members suspected in the theft.

U.S. Initiatives



MS-13 National Gang Task Force
(NGTF)



U.S. Prosecution Efforts

Charges brought against Gangs include:

- Racketeering and conspiracy to commit racketeering
- Conspiracy
- Homicide (state and federal)
- Robbery (state)
- Rape (state)
- Assault with a deadly weapon (state and federal)
- Kidnapping (federal)



U.S. Prosecution Efforts

- Drug trafficking and distribution (state and federal)
- Extortion (state and federal)
- Aggravated malicious wounding (state and federal if committed in conjunction with federal crimes)
- Threats against law enforcement (state and federal)
- Human smuggling (federal)
- Weapons smuggling (federal)



U.S. Prosecution Efforts

- Conspiracy to further the objectives of the gang
 - Preserving, promoting, and enhancing the power, territory, and reputation of the gang—the enterprise—through the use of intimidation, violence, threats of violence, assaults and murder and keeping victims and community members in fear of the gang as well as providing financial support and information to MS-13 members including those incarcerated in the United States and elsewhere.



U.S. Prosecution Efforts

- **RICO Act**


- Federal prosecutors stitch together crimes over 10 years, from extortion to murder to bribery, in a single case
- Prosecutors tie an organization's leaders to the acts of their underlings
- Imposes a minimum of 20 years in prison for those found guilty of two of the crimes included in the RICO law.

"The RICO statute allows prosecutors to focus on organizations that engage in a whole series of crimes," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Joey Contreras. "It makes our job a little bit easier. Basically, the statute outlaws a group of people coming together and committing a whole series or patterns of crimes."



NGTF's Role

Coordinates MS-13 / 18th Street investigations and enforcement

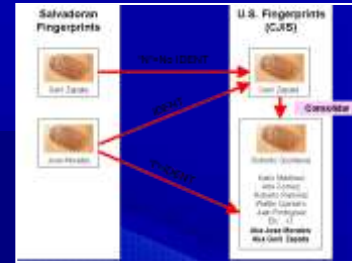


- Local, state, federal investigations
 - national and
 - International levels

- International intell. Investigation
 - US, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras

Initiatives

1. Central America Fingerprint Exploitation (CAFÉ)
 - Criminal file-fingerprint retrieval (Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Belize and Honduras)
2. Transnational Anti-Gang Program (TAG)
 - a. Increase FBI resources in Mx
 - Investigate gangs Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico
 - FBI agents in Salvador working with Police
 - LEO's cooperation-coordination



International Law Enforcement Challenges

- Lack of understanding / knowledge:
 - Traditional gang
 - Mafia like gang (organized crime/third generation)
 - “Subsidiaries to OC”
- Lack of resources, professionalism and training to control/combat gangs
- Anti-gang policies:
 - Balance to avoid human and civil rights violations
 - Gangs retaliate against civilians and government and adopt new tactics to avoid identification
- Challenging cooperation with weak/failing states (Source)
 - Issues of lack resources, corruption, and ongoing internal armed conflict
- Need for integrated strategy to tackle **causes-effects-prevention**
 - Strategy must support criminal justice, community agencies, outreach in schools and immigrant communities

Questions?

