



# **THE MALDON INSTITUTE**

## **The Gang Culture of the United States**

**December 10, 2007**  
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**P.O. Box 25526, Washington, DC 20027-8526 - (410) 366-2531 - [maldon@tmigroup.org](mailto:maldon@tmigroup.org)**

# The Maldon Institute

The Maldon Institute was founded in 1985 in support of the concept that realistic assessments of political, economic, social and environmental risks, issues and opportunities are essential to responsible decision-making, especially regarding the emerging and developing economies of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Latin America and Africa.

The Maldon Institute seeks to balance the depth of knowledge of academics with the immediacy of reportage by experienced journalists: a situation reflecting the fact that Maldon's founders were all journalists: Arnaud de Borchgrave, well known as foreign editor of *Newsweek*; Robert Moss, author and former editor of the prestigious *Foreign Report* of the London *Economist* and John Rees, founder and publisher of the *Information Digest*.

To facilitate its research, Maldon has established a fully computerized, searchable library of its reports and publications from 1985 to date, as well as the reference material and additional documentation. Complementing this are reports and papers relating to domestic unrest, directed against the United States government, with some material dating back to 1938.

Maldon's ever-expanding data base now covers material covering most countries in the world and major international organizations, as well as key topics and issues under such broad headings as national defense, policy-making, homeland security, environment, population, terrorism, biomedical developments, emerging diseases, low-intensity conflict and international social and political movements.

Guided by its management and advisory board, The Maldon Institute makes and publishes assessments that are read by heads of major businesses, opinion molders and Cabinet-level decision-makers of a number of countries. Maldon reports go to United Nations, to large lending institutions and industries, to the White House, the U.S. Congress and to others involved with making key decisions in politics and world affairs.

Maldon's professional staff, researchers and writers provide information for effective policy-making. Even when that process is less than perfect, Maldon causes the decision-makers to pause and think.

Maldon senior professional staff have spoken at seminars across the United States as well as the Czech Republic, France, Germany, South Africa, the Philippines, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. They have appeared on television and radio programs in several countries and provided regular briefings for

diplomats and overseas officials visiting Washington and at the United Nations in New York.

No Maldon Institute funds come from government sources. Maldon is a tax-exempt private foundation supported by donations from a wide range of private individuals, foundations and institutions.

The president of The Maldon Institute, Martha Powers, a professional journalist, has been associated with the Institute in various roles since its formation. She has specialized in reporting on political and economic issues in the developing world with emphasis on Africa, the Middle East and the peacekeeping ventures of the United Nations.

The director of The Maldon Institute is John Rees, a journalist by profession and editor of *The International Reports: Early Warning*. The staff is recruited from private industry, government and academic institutions in the United States, Europe, Asia and Africa.

Maldon publishes *The International Reports: Early Warning*, a monthly authoritative newsletter concerned with international politics, now in its twenty-third year of publication. In 1998, Maldon began publishing Memoranda to File (MtF) to supplement Maldon Reports that are distributed each month. These MtFs always are timely, ranging from one to several pages and are fully verifiable.

In 1993, The Maldon Institute commenced an East African Project, which was followed three years later by the Sub-Saharan Africa Project. The Southeast Asia Project was initiated in 1998. Together, these groups serve as a focal point for much of Maldon's international work.

In 1998, with an increasingly multinational component in organized dissent across national borders the *Hostes Working Group* to monitor and publish reports on these new challenges was established. Already in existence on September 11, 2001, the *Hostes* teams merged their efforts with that of the Maldon Institute to develop and integrate advanced security planning. This planning includes the expanded computerized data base that provides a unique tool to develop vulnerability studies, training programs and contingency plans for the safety and security of national and corporate interests.

Because of its awareness of the continuing problems related to the economy, the environment, foreign policy and national security, and anxious to contribute objective information in the face of an increasingly partisan climate, The Maldon Institute plans further expansion.

# The Gang Culture of the United States

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# The Gang Culture of the United States

## Introduction

On November 29, 2007, the presidents of the United States and El Salvador met at the White House and in their discussions spoke about the regional and international affect of criminal gangs originating in Central America and moving into the United States.

For the past 25 years, The Maldon Institute (TMI) has been concerned by what earlier planners, sociologists and criminologists have termed the search for tranquility in the streets of cities, large and small, throughout the United States.

During this time, TMI staff have read many studies and research papers and produced our own studies. Research, both academic and practical, has been and continues to be initiated; a partial measure of our success has been several dialogs, initiated by street criminals, with TMI.

In particular, the Institute has developed a considerable data base on juvenile and ethnic-based gangs. This report is the result of a review of these data bases and associated criminal activities.

Youth gangs are not new. Historical records show that in the pre-revolutionary years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, nine and ten year-old boys and girls in King George's American colonies banded together to commit acts of what we now refer to as "criminal mischief."

Some 50 years later, in the 1820s the Forty Thieves of New York were documented as the first youth street gang in the United States, to be followed by slews of others in cities from Philadelphia to Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

The response to juvenile violence depended on the reaction to press stories about youth gangs, the extent of their violence and their numbers. In turn, their numbers were linked to immigration and the culture of the migrant groups involved.

Today, because of their growing and near astronomical membership numbers, the presence of child soldiers migrating with their families from Africa and Latin America and the political acceptance of globalization, gangs have become not only as a public security threat, but a major part of this country's youth culture.

Their ready acceptance into the youth culture owes much to Hollywood movies and Broadway musicals that have glamorized gangs in films such as "West Side Story" and the more recent "Gangs of New York."

Gangs once provided outlets for anti-social children and youths [gangstas] to socialize [rap], control territory [turf], and release aggression [agro]. In the past three decades, some gangs evolved into criminal networks and later linked up with successful politi-

cians. The Puerto Rican-based Young Lords are active from the Midwest to the East Coast; Black Americans created both the Crips and the Bloods in Los Angeles, which have become a national problem; Irish Americans are responsible for the Winter Hill Boys and the Charleston Gang in Boston and the Westies in New York City. Hispanic gangs – Calle 18 [Mexican] and *Mara Salvatrucha 13* [Central America] – began to proliferate in Los Angeles and San Diego during the late 1960s, and are now linked with half a million Latin American members throughout the United States, with major concentrations in New York, Washington, D.C., and throughout the Eastern seaboard. Both these latter entities have links to major gangs throughout Mexico and Central America.

Gang activities range from defending their own ethnic neighborhood [turf] and criminal activities [gambling, illicit liquor sales and prostitution] to armed robbery, extortion, people smuggling and arms and drug trafficking. Gangs provide young recruits for organized crime and drug dealing.

Ethnic gangs – such as the Chinese, Japanese and Russian – have, in common with youth gangs, a need for social interaction, as do other concentrations of ethnic migrants. Reflected in our data bases are the activities of gangs which originated from Albania to Serbia, Nigeria, South Africa, Ireland, Iran, Brazil and Argentina. Naturally, each segment appears to have its own specialization and each has its own youth-catchment group and membership.

For the past 30 years alien and street gangs in America have challenged local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. While members of well-known gangs, such as the Crips and Bloods, are U.S. citizens; Spanish, Asian and European gang members do not always have this privilege. Many are illegal immigrants that form part of a transnational criminal network. Their memberships often reside within immigrant communities, where they will readily prey on their compatriots also living there.

Once apprehended by law-enforcement agencies, these illegal aliens are usually deported, often to return to the United States within a relatively short time. Some manage to return within a week, others more rapidly. An increasing number lie about their country of origin, telling the immigration courts and officers that they are Mexican, for instance, so they will be deported to an airport that lies roughly at the halfway point between their home country and the U.S.-Mexican borders.

Police, immigration, sociological and medical resources firmly indicate gang membership involving criminal activities in the United States involve more than one and a half million people.

# **The Young Lords**

## **Genesis**

Some 40 years ago, in New York City and Chicago, the Young Lords were and in some areas remains a Puerto Rican Hispanic nationalist group. The group, using a variety of names, remains active in several United States cities.

The Young Lords began as a Chicago turf gang in the 1960s in the Lincoln Park neighborhood. When they realized that urban renewal was evicting their families and they saw increasing police abuse, they became involved in the Division Street Riots in June 1966.

While incarcerated, the president and one of seven founding gang members, Jose “Cha-Cha” Jimenez, began to read everything from Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X to Lenin and Mao. In September 1968, Jimenez reorganized the now-defunct gang into a political human rights movement. Jimenez was approached by Illinois Black Panther Party chairman Fred Hampton, who was officially underground organizing and founding the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party. The meeting was held in January 1969, right after the Young Lords took over the Chicago Avenue police station’s workshop meeting.

Soon after, the Young Lords were restructured into ministries in an attempt to build better organization and a Puerto Rican equivalent of the Black Panthers, which became the Young Lords Organization (YLO), and later [in New York – notably Spanish Harlem] the Young Lords Party (YLP); the latter becoming independent from the Chicago group.

## **Rainbow Coalition**

On June 7, 1969, the Black Panther newspaper announced an alliance called the Rainbow Coalition [nominally unrelated to that of Jesse Jackson that carried the same name].

Besides the Black Panthers, and what was then the Young Lords Organization, the alliance also included the Young Patriots Organization (YPO) – an organization of poor white youths, led by Bill “Preacherman” Fesperman, that was intensely political; later many of its members formed chapters of the White Panther Party (WPP). The WPP, active in Michigan, was led by John Sinclair, one-time manager of the MC5 rock group, with Lawrence “Pun” Plamondon and his East German wife. They hosted John Lennon and his wife Yoko Ono at a major benefit concert in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

This new Coalition sent representatives to the annual convention of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which was falling apart as a national student organization by that time. After asking for permission from national headquarters in Chicago, the New York chapter of the Young Lords Organization was officially founded on July 26, 1969.

Two of the founding members were Juan Gonzalez [subsequently in 2006, a New York *Daily News* columnist] and Felipe Luciano [a TV news reporter, radio personality and politician], who served as the organization's first chair.

### **Self-determination**

The Young Lords focused most of their activity around self-determination for Puerto Rico and local community issues such as gentrification, health and police injustice. Gentrification, in Chicago, became a primary focus because Mayor Daley's patronage machine was ruthless and the entire Puerto Rican community was being evicted from the downtown and lakefront areas. The Young Lords used direct action, political education, and "survival programs" to bring their concerns to mainstream public attention.

After the founding of the second chapter in New York, more branches were organized in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Connecticut, New Jersey, Boston, Massachusetts; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Hayward, San Diego and Los Angeles, California; and Puerto Rico. The Young Lords set up many community projects similar to those of the Black Panthers but with a Latino flavor, such as the free breakfast program for children, Emeterio Betances Free Health Clinic, community testing for tuberculosis and lead poisoning, free clothing drives, cultural events and Puerto Rican history classes. In Chicago, they set up a free day-care center. There was also work on prison solidarity for incarcerated Puerto Ricans, and for the rights of Vietnam War veterans. The female leadership in New York pushed, successfully, for the Young Lords to fight for women's rights. In Chicago, a subgroup within the Young Lords led by Hilda Ignatin, Judy Cordero and Angela Adorno called Mothers and Others organized around women's rights and helped to educate the male members and the community at large.

Their newspapers, *The Young Lord*, *Pitirre* and *Palante* reported on their increasingly militant activities. The Young Lords carried out many direct-action occupations of vacant land, hospitals, churches and other institutions to demand that they operate programs for the poor. This included a campaign to force the city of New York to increase garbage pick-up in Spanish Harlem. In Chicago, the McCormick Theological Seminary take-over won the Lincoln Park residents \$650,000 to be used for low-income housing. The People's Park takeover by 350 community residents prevented the construction of a for-profit tennis court where low-income persons once lived. In New York, health care activism was spearheaded by a mass organization they formed with the Black Panthers known as the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement (HRUM). In Chicago, the Young Lords health program was coordinated by Doctor Jack Johns, Doctor Quentin Young, Ana Lucas and Alberto and Marta Chavarria, who also worked with the Black Panthers and other groups to recruit medical student organizations, and to advocate for health care for the poor.

Besides the Black Panthers, the Young Lords were influenced by the Chicano Brown Berets, Crusade for Justice, Black Berets, Rising Up Angry, SDS, Movement for Independence, Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, Puerto Rican Independence Party, the Com-

munist Party USA, the East Asian-American Red Guards, Damas y Caballeros de San Juan and many local community activists. As for the island, the Young Lords began organizing conferences and marches calling for Puerto Rican independence, which they always related back to the gentrification that they were fighting in the streets of Lincoln Park, Chicago, Manhattan and other cities.

The Young Lords grew into a national movement through the leadership of activists, such as Angela Adorno, who met with Vietnamese women; Omar Lopez [currently involved nationally with immigrant rights]; and Richie Perez, who established the Puerto Rican Student Union (PRSU) in a number of college campuses and high schools. While the Young Lords advocated similar armed strategies to those advocated by the Black Panthers, it was seen as a right of self-defense that rarely arose, as it did after the shooting of Manuel Ramos, the suicide of Julio Roldan in the custody of the NYPD and the fatal stabbings in Chicago of the Methodist minister, Bruce Johnson and his wife Eugenia, who pastored the Lincoln Park Community, at the Young Lords first People's Church.

By 1973, internal differences began to affect the Young Lords and their networks began to crumble. However, many Young Lords continued to pursue their vision for self determination for Puerto Rico and other nations, as well as neighborhood empowerment.

### **Political mobilizing**

In Chicago, the Young Lords resurfaced after two-and-a-half years and began to run political candidates, their campaigns following the Bobby Seale Panther example. They were viewed as just an organizing vehicle to bring out urban renewal displacement concerns of the community.

After an aldermanic campaign, Cha-Cha Jimenez was incarcerated again for another nine months awaiting trial on an alleged hostage charge, to show support for the *Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional* (FALN) [Armed Forces of National Liberation]. In 1982, the Young Lords became the first Latino group to join and organize a major event for the successful mayoral campaign of Harold Washington. Right after he won, Cha-Cha Jimenez introduced the new mayor before a June 1983 crowd of 100,000 Puerto Ricans in Humboldt Park. That day, the Young Lords gave out 30,000 buttons with *Tengo Puerto Rico En Mi Corazon* inscribed on them. In the fall of 1995, Young Lords' Tony Baez, Carlos Flores, Angel Del Rivero, Omar Lopez and Angie Adorno were brought together by Cha-Cha Jimenez, to form the Lincoln Park Project. They began to archive the Young Lords' history and to document the displaced Latinos and poor of The Lincoln Park. Then, on September 23, 2002, the National Young Lords' offices organized Lincoln Park Camp to show support for the Puerto Rican Vieques Island, campers within the continental United States; and to continue the struggle for Puerto Rican Independence and the fight against displacement of Puerto Ricans and other poor within the Diaspora.

Many Young Lords showed support for the freed Puerto Rican nationalist leaders and urban guerrilla groups such as the Macheteros; others moved on to more explicitly Mao-

ist formations such as the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (PRRWO), and some went on to lead of the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights (NCPRR). A few became media personalities, such as Juan Gonzalez of the New York Daily News and Radio/TV show Democracy Now!, Pablo “Yoruba” Guzman at WCBS-TV New York, Felipe Luciano, most recently news director of Air America Radio, and Miguel “Mickey” Melendez of WBAI-FM New York. The documentary, *“Palante, Siempre Palante! The Young Lords,”* was produced by former Young Lord Iris Morales and aired on PBS in 1996. Jacqueline Lazu’s play, *“El Bloque”* [The Block], about the initial transformation of the Young Lords’ gang in Lincoln Park, Chicago, into a national human rights movement, premiered in Chicago at De Paul University on April 20, 2007.

## *Mara Salvatrucha*

On November 29, criminal gangs were discussed in the White House, for the first time when Salvadoran President Antonio Saca met with President George Bush. Among the issues discussed were ways to further cooperate in the fight against organized crime, drug smuggling and gangs.

*Mara Salvatrucha*, also known as *MS13* throughout Central America and the United States, has become the number one threat on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) organized crime list. Notorious for its brutal hate crimes and murders, *Mara Salvatrucha* is now composed mainly of Salvadoran, Honduran or Guatemalan young people, both male and female.

A wide range of governmental, social and private organizations, both in the United States and Central America, are attempting to deal with crime and violence caused by gangs. Many were represented at the White House for the presidential meetings.

Opening the post-meeting press conference, President Bush said: *"We share a concern about the drug issue and the crime issue. We're in the process of finalizing a strategy to help the Central American countries deal with these issues. And I've asked the president to take the lead, and he has been a strong regional leader, as well as a leader in his home country."*

Salvador's President Saca replied by accepting his role as organizer of an international anti-gang process saying the United States has in Central America a region that is very stable after the democratic construction. *"We have spoken about all the important issues, such as the fight against drug activity; the FOL [forward operating locations – key to their anti-narcotics' efforts] we have in El Salvador to fight drug trafficking that has allowed all the countries of Central America to capture large amounts of drugs. And Minister Figueroa, the Minister of Security, has talked to President Bush about the regional transnational center against gangs. El Salvador is working very well with the FBI, and with all Central America. There is no doubt that the regional plan is going to be a complete success."*

Papers prepared by the FBI for the White House meeting show some Latino gangs could have tens of thousands of members in the United States and hundreds of thousands in Central America. Brian Truchon, with the FBI, says: *"They travel between the U.S. and Central America so they have become a very difficult entity to get your hands around."*

He also says the gangs have a destabilizing effect on Central American countries. *"We already know that the gangs are involved in drug trafficking – drug trafficking for the purpose of producing income for the gang."*

Truchon stated that the gangs' criminal activities include homicide, robbery and car theft, with many cars stolen in the United States ending up in Central America. The FBI estimates that perhaps half of the gang members in the United States are in the country illegally, but there are American-born gang members, too. *"It's not an immigration issue as much as it is a gang issue; it is an issue of individuals willing to commit violence."*

Truchon says Latino gangs, such as *Mara Salvatrucha*, are transnational, with members traveling often between countries.

Ahead of his meeting with President Bush, President Antonio Saca said that a regional approach, known Plan Merida, is being developed to help Central American youth, noting that some 60 percent of El Salvador's population is under 30. *"The security ministers and justice, the Central American police directors, have been meeting and have designed a document, with a regional strategy against delinquency, against organized crime and against narco-trafficking."*

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has sponsored studies and projects in Central America for 10 years. Juana Salazar, who is with the IDB, says the cost of dealing with gangs affects social and economic development. *"The cost and size of the violence is such that between five and 25 percent of the gross national product goes to security control. Most of that is dedicated to the control of gangs."*

Salazar says that combating gangs is not a simple law-enforcement problem. *"The iron fist does not work if it is not combined with preventive measures. Repression by itself does not solve either the causes or the risk factors. The country with most gang members is Honduras, but the most affected country, with a third of the gangs is El Salvador."*

Salazar explained that the years of violence in Central America created a culture of war, a loss of cultural values and broken families. She says gang members have no education, no jobs, and no opportunities and are often very poor. However, she acknowledges that poverty alone is not the problem. *"Huge inequalities, not poverty, are the problem because there are countries much poorer that don't have that level of violence. But when there is inequality there is violence."*

Following the presidential meeting, Violeta Menjivar, a physician and activist with the *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN) [Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front], who is also mayor of San Salvador, the nation's capital, made an official visit to San Francisco.

Many law-enforcement officials, together with the White House, have chosen to forget that the FMLN is a political party in El Salvador that was formerly a revolutionary guerilla organization. In 1980, the FMLN was formed as an umbrella group of four left-wing guerilla organizations and the Salvadoran Communist Party to fight against the U.S.-supported Salvadoran government. After peace accords were signed in 1992, all armed FMLN units were demobilized and their organization became a legal political party. The

FMLN is now one of the two major political parties in the country and the basic origin of the *MS13*.

San Francisco's Supervisor Gerardo Sandoval talked with Menjivar about sharing gang-prevention efforts, such as the resource center's tattoo removal program, that would be a good way to help break the international cycle of violence.

*"Unfortunately, the lack of jobs in El Salvador leads to delinquency there, and some of that is transported to the United States,"* Sandoval said after the meeting. *"As a former criminal attorney, I had many young clients from Central America. They're being used. And they're deported back there with very little future."*

Now with transnational ties, the *MS13* appears to be moving young recruits north to become a pliant underage workforce, said Roberto Gonzalez, coordinator of the Central American Resource Center's youth programs.

Teenagers in Central America are expected to work to help support their families, Gonzalez said. However, with high unemployment, some kids get hooked up with trafficking rings that bring them into this country. Once here and indebted to the traffickers, they wind up dealing drugs for them and living in gang-run "safe houses" in San Francisco and Oakland, he said. When they get arrested, they often get stuck in juvenile hall because they have no family here to whom they can be released.

*"These youth, if we deport them, they'll be back next week in the Tenderloin selling drugs again,"* said Gonzalez, who offers tattoo removal and a raft of education, job training and mental health services to help get kids out of gangs. *"It'll be a continuous cycle until we can give them an option outside of that."*

The director of the Central American Resource Center, Ana Pérez, and staff also met with Menjivar. The staff described its work providing immigration advice, dental care, family counseling and tattoo removal for thousands of the Bay Area's estimated 78,000 Salvadorans, as well as other Mexican and Central American immigrants. And they pressed the mayor on what she is doing to address the root causes of migration and gang violence. *"We do have youth programs, but nothing specifically to help reintegrate deportees,"* she said. *"There were 20,000 deportations from the United States last year, and we don't have the resources to work with them."*

What her country needs most – to curb the influence of gangs and to stop the hemorrhaging of out-migration – is employment, said Menjivar, who stopped in San Francisco on the way home from Europe, where she was courting foreign aid and investment.

Perhaps, said Sandoval, a sister city relationship that fosters investment in El Salvador is a small part of the solution.

*“The federal government’s approach to immigration reform right now is to build a \$12 billion border fence,” he said. “We need to create jobs in Latin America so people don’t have to come here. The city of San Francisco can set an example.”*

## **Genesis**

*Mara Salvatrucha 13* is a street gang, which originated in El Salvador in the 1980s. It is probably named for *La Mara*, both a street and a feared street gang in San Salvador, and the *Salvatrucha* guerillas who fought in the El Salvadoran civil war. From 1980 until 1992, fighting between the Salvadoran government and the communist rebels claimed over 75,000 lives and sent more than one million refugees and immigrants to the United States and to its neighbors throughout Central America. In the United States, many Salvadoran expatriates initially settled in concentrations either in Los Angeles or in Northern Virginia.

It must be remembered that while the initial waves of refugees from Salvador were, generally, pro-United States, mostly migrating for the reasons of safety, security and economic opportunity the pattern changed in 1992. After 1992, migrants from Salvador, subjected to at least 12 years of anti-U.S. propaganda were less than friendly. While future gang members might be a-political, many of their families must be considered as extremely hostile to U.S. society.

In Los Angeles, the Salvadorans settled in the Rampart area and were rejected as outsiders by the local Hispanic [Chicano or second- and third-generation Mexican American] community. They were often the targets of Latino and black street gangs. In response, some Salvadorans began to form their own gangs for self-protection. These gangs were not dissimilar in their origins to those of many other ethnicities who have emigrated in waves and experienced similarly directed violence – the Germans, Irish, Italians, Chinese and many others. The Salvadoran gangs found what they sought – instant street protection and credibility, respect, an alternative caring “family” and financial security. Costs were carried by an alien society who had refused to accept them.

The act of emigration itself combined with the ethnic concentration in Los Angeles meant that a self-selecting group rose to power to form the “protection” for the whole. Some group members arrived in the United States having had ties to *La Mara*, a violent street gang in El Salvador. Many had actually seen fighting in El Salvador’s civil war, or had older brothers who fought. Ex-members of the paramilitary FMLN also numbered among the early founders of *Mara Salvatrucha*. The FMLN had fought an insurgency against the Salvadoran government, using guerilla tactics and urban terrorism, and as a result many Salvadorans arrived in Los Angeles as “veterans,” already adept in the use of explosives, firearms and booby traps.

The development of the *Mara Salvatrucha* in El Salvador and Central America is said to have been an unforeseen consequence of the Rodney King riots of 1990 in Los Angeles. In the wake of these riots, a task force was formed by the U.S. Immigration and Natu-

ralization Service, which deported at least 1,000 *MS* members to El Salvador. There were many other uncounted “voluntary departures.” In San Salvador, the *Mara Salvatrucha* cadre had two ambitions – first, to become involved in a criminal enterprise and become financially secure; second, to return to the United States.

In the mid-1990s, changes in U.S. immigration law allowed deportations of convicted criminals, including many gang members. Most deportees had not been home since they were children. Some were not fluent in Spanish. Many landed in poor communities driven by unresolved feuds, disintegrating families and churned economies. “*When they began to deport them, it converted neighborhood disputes into international problems,*” said Oscar Bonilla, head of the Salvadoran Public Security Commission.

Tattooed, strangely dressed and oozing a worldly cool, the returnees became apostles of mayhem. They found ready converts, with the U.S.-trained gangsters offering rootless boys a sense of family. They brought discipline and purpose to chaotic lives. They provided income to those with little hope of finding well-paying jobs. Youths joined by the thousands.

## **Tattoos**

The *Mara Salvatrucha* has become an international crisis and many of its members sport tattoos marking their territory and what “clique” they are in. Tattoos represent area codes of where they were initiated, crimes they have committed, whether they were in jail or did serious time. The official colors of the *Mara Salvatrucha* are blue and white, which were taken from the El Salvadoran flag.

Tattoos are a major factor in the life of a *MS13* member. First a tattoo must be approved by the clique. Tattoos with a clique name must have *MS13* etched above or before the clique name. There are many variations of *MS13* that will appear in their tattoos. A number 13 or a variation of the two digits 1 and 3, along with the word *suerno* [southerner] or *sur*, an abbreviation of the same word, may be used. These terms reference the fact that *MS* members like to claim their home as southern California, as northern California is the territory of rival gangs. Other common tags are “*M*” or “*MS*.” Many of these will often be worn at once, but it is important to note that there is no single “signature” that always uniquely identifies an *MS13* member. The 13 and *sur* tattoos are relatively common among Hispanic gangs, including prison gangs both inside and outside of California. A more reliable indicator is a combination of known symbols and tags.

## **Multinational *MS13***

Since the 1990s, in both the United States and Central America, *MS13* has established a criminal presence and a record of savage cruelty that is phenomenal. *MS13* is known for gun running, drug smuggling, human smuggling, assassination for hire, prostitution, theft and its grizzly murders. Solving the problems caused by *MS13* has become a priority for

law-enforcement agencies and politicians. Despite the best efforts by police, Justice Departments and Homeland Security, *MS13* continues to grow.

Based on the trials of active or ex-gang members, law-enforcement agencies have been able to implement gang profiling, making the enforcement of legal codes more practical. Profiling can be based on multiple identifiers: age, sex, race, clothes, gang signs, time and place of offences and what related activities took place.

An unusual aspect of the *MS13*, when compared to other street gangs, is that it is extremely flexible in its activities. While most gangs are only involved with drug moving and dealing, the *MS13* will participate in any criminal activity at any given time.

## **Membership**

Generally, active members of the *MS13* are Latin American males between the ages of 11 and 20. Even so, with the numbers continuing to grow, some cliques are allowing non-Hispanic members to join. Many young males first enter into the gang around the age of 11, although they may have been peripherally involved since the age of eight. Most clique leaders are between the ages of 18 and 20; as older members of the clique realize that their orders are being given – and obeyed – by younger members, the older ones drop out from active participation in the cliques’ activities. However, older members always remain available for criminal activities.

The major problem Central American boys are facing is that *MS13* members do not take no for an answer. They recruit boys as young as nine for membership and if they are told no, they are immediately blacklisted. Many Central American boys have no other choice than to join *MS13*.

Women are not allowed as members of *MS13* either in the United States or elsewhere. However, they frequently are attached to a clique, in an arrangement of relationships that seem to range from servitude to accessory. Women provide services for gang members, from carrying weapons to acting as decoys, providing sex and writing computer programs. They are allocated work by gang members such as begging, shoplifting, acting as lures and often older women [18 to 20 years of age] serve as recruiters for new male members in the 10 to 12 age bracket.

## **Structure**

This simple gang-clique structure essentially comprises the entirety of the formal *Mara Salvatrucha 13* organization. For example, in Virginia, it is known that *MS* members attend weekly or monthly gang meetings, and then once a month [generally on a Saturday] also attend a separate clique meeting. These smaller “cliques” can range in size from a dozen to 80 members, and each will feature its own distinct name. The actual nickname given to a member is usually based on his clique membership. Clique members

mostly hang out with each other, although they are friendly toward everyone including *MS13*. Rules dictate the hierarchy: members face punishment if they write their clique name before the characters *MS13*. All tattoos, for example, must have *MS13* etched above or before the clique name.

Although the gang has a reputation for being young, immature, decentralized and seems to have a difficult time preventing leaks they are extremely adept at eluding the authorities as Sergeant George Norris, supervisor of the Prince George County Police Department gang unit states. *“They adapt to what the police do. They will change the way they operate, depending on the way the law is enforced by the police. If there is no enforcement, they will wear their colors and bandanas because in the communities they are in it is common knowledge and the people fear them, so it is a form of intimidation.”* Norris continues, *“Once the police recognize and confront them, they will change and wear different colors from the blue and white, no bandana on their head, maybe now in their pocket, and instead of the number 13 they will wear 67 or 76 because it equals 13. They adapt so it is a continually evolving thing.”*

Court testimony in a U.S. District Court in Alexandria, Virginia, trial of four *MS13* members on charges of murdering a Federal witness [Brenda Paz] has enabled a more detailed examination of clique meetings.

In the numerous cliques – such as the *Centrales Locos Salvatruchas*, (CLS), the *Modesto Locos Salvatruchas* (MDLS) and the *Big Gangsters Locos Salvatruchas* (BGLS) – the members meet every weekend for their *misas* and once a month for the *“Big One,”* a meeting that if missed can lead to a beating. At the meetings, they discuss the rules and the appropriate punishment for those who fail to abide by them.

The *MS13* expansion is linked in part to the movement of the Salvadoran population throughout the United States. Often working as day laborers or in similar undocumented “hired-help” positions, Salvadorans moved to Tennessee to help in the construction of the Titans’ stadium, to Pennsylvania for work in the mushroom farms, to the Midwest for agricultural jobs and a near take-over of the labor in the meat packing industry, and to the East and Northeast in search of unskilled factory or service-oriented work. In each instance, the gang may have been brought east from Los Angeles by teenage children or parents and then later, as they became established, developed the larger gang structure in their new communities.

As previously discussed, *MS13* supplies its arsenal and narcotics stock from El Salvador, but its criminal activities within the United States far exceed the bounds of smuggling and gun running. As a criminal element, *Mara Salvatrucha* is a force to be reckoned with, existing as both a nation-spanning gang and as a strictly local street-thug posse. In fact, there seems to be no national command structure within the United States that would imply cohesiveness as the cliques spread nationwide. That said, national trends do become readily apparent and may well even be coordinated, but again, this does not support a command-and-control hierarchy in any sense.

Their tendency for violence is eminent. Many times gang members feel that the crazier and more gruesome the crime, the more respect they will earn. Recently victims of *MS13* have been dismembered or decapitated with their body parts left nearby. Often times, a morbid note is left with the body as well. Gang graffiti is used to advise others of gang territory and also is spray painted at crime scenes to claim responsibility for the crime.

## The Crips and Bloods

The extreme profitability of narcotics trafficking has made it the prime focus of black organized youth gangs. Money obtained from drug sales has both encouraged and enabled federations of black gangs, originally based in Los Angeles, since the very early 1970s to proliferate and expand. The Crips and Bloods both emerged in about the 1969 to 1970 period and began to develop their operations nationwide by 1972. Both Crips and Bloods have national memberships estimated at 50,000, and a near total similarity of operations and culture.

While both gangs are rivals, and of other drug dealing groups, they share much of the same sub-culture. Thus, this initial section deals with both the Crips and Bloods as an entity. Later sections deal with each of the gangs.

The Crips and the Bloods have an intense rivalry with each other. Each has many associated gangs, not numbered within the national count. Gangs favoring the Bloods are those such as People Nation, while the Crips are favored by many more, such as the Black Guerrilla Family, Nuestra Familia, Hollywood Click and other Crips sets or organizations.

While narcotics trafficking – focused on “crack” or “rock” cocaine – occupies a large portion of Crips and Bloods’ criminal activity, they remain active in other major felonies including: murder, armed robbery, burglary, street robbery, rape and counterfeiting.

Both Crips and Bloods frequently recruit and utilize children as young as eight or ten years. The use of young juveniles in major felonies poses a special problem for law enforcement. Recruitment of new gang members is facilitated by the amount of money in the hands of recruiters. A 10-year-old child may be paid as much as \$250 for a single task.

As they travel and establish bases in new cities, Crips and Bloods’ gang members blaze a trail of distinctive graffiti patterns. Its appearance may provide an “*early warning*” to law enforcement not only that the gangs have moved into their jurisdiction, but that specific Crips or Bloods’ members are or have been in the area. This may be an important, exploitable weakness in the gangs’ *modus operandi*.

A series of attacks in East Coast locations in November 2007 highlighted the changing role of the gangs. Law-enforcement officials attribute the violence, including a fatal stabbing at a bus station and shootings at a crowded grocery store and transit stations, to feuding between the gangs.

In one suburban Washington D.C. location, according to the latest gang assessment by county police detectives, the number of members of African-American gangs surpassed the membership of Latino gangs, long the primary target of anti-gang initiatives. Police said the assessment, which said 36 separate gangs were active, is based on self-

identifications by suspects, tattoos and clothing, reports from informants and other investigative methods.

Until recently, Latino gangs such as *Mara Salvatrucha* accounted for more gang members than any other ethnic or racial group, according to past assessments.

Violence associated with those gangs has abated significantly, a drop that law-enforcement officials attribute to aggressive prosecutions, including a federal racketeering indictment targeting *MS13* leaders, and intervention initiatives aimed toward at-risk Hispanic youth.

According to the State's Attorney for one county involved, the "seminal moment" came in August 2005, when members of *MS13* committed two stabbings in broad daylight: one outside a high school, and one outside a Target Store.

The attacks spawned an array of county anti-gang initiatives. Grants for intervention and outreach programs were given to CASA [a social service] and Identity Inc., two groups that serve Hispanic immigrants. County and federal officials spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center, a training, mentoring and recreational facility in the region built in a densely Hispanic area.

In October 2005, the County hired Luis Cardona, a Spanish-speaker and self-described reformed gang member, as its first youth violence-prevention coordinator. In recent months, the county has hired three outreach workers who report to Cardona and are tasked with steering teenagers away from gangs. Two are Hispanic and one is African American.

Those efforts have been effective against *MS13*, law-enforcement officials said, but as it and other Latino gangs have assumed a lower profile, the Crips and Bloods – the membership of which is more diverse than it once was – have emerged as a new concern.

*"I think that they were putting all the eggs in one basket,"* said a detective and president of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Gang Investigators Network, of the county's response to a gang problem that was viewed as primarily Hispanic. *"They were only paying attention to the Latino gang problem."*

Investigators say suspects, who claim affiliation with the Crips and the Bloods, have been charged in street robberies and home invasions. Investigators say they have found no evidence that the gangs are active players in such organized crime as drug trafficking.

Citing numbers gathered by the District of Columbia, Northern Virginia and elsewhere in the Maryland suburbs, black gang members account for roughly 40 percent of the region's gang population, which includes more than 8,000 people. Hispanics make up about the same percentage, and the rest are white people and people of mixed ethnicity. In past years, Hispanics made up the largest segment of the gang population, he said.

As of August, when the latest gang-assessment report was issued, detectives had identified 1,117 active gang members in one county – about 491 of them black and 369 of them Latino. The previous report, issued in January, identified 1,027 gang members, 452 of them Latino and 277 black.

County officials said they are shifting the focus of not only law-enforcement efforts but also social services outreach, including after-school activities. They are considering building a center to duplicate their existing facilities to target girls who are gang members or associates.

Uma Ahluwalia, director of the county's Department of Health and Human Services, said outreach workers are coordinating with detectives to defuse tensions and to help people get out of gangs. *"One of the major obstacles that we have faced related to this growing challenge of gang activity in the upcountry area has often been the denial of parents that their kids are involved in gangs, thus allowing gangs to flourish,"* explained Ahluwalia.

The gangs recruit in schools, on playgrounds and on the Internet, law-enforcement authorities say, but gang ties are often forged or strengthened in jails and prisons. According to officials, in one state, the number of identified gang members being sent to state prisons has increased 45 percent over the past year. Almost all are African-American.

There are about 2,400 identified gang members in Maryland state prisons, accounting for about 10 percent of the system's population. *"It's become a very big deal,"* a prison official said. *"It's really picked up in the last four, five years."*

He continued saying that state officials have in recent months made a concerted effort to more thoroughly screen incoming inmates for gang affiliations, which might account for part of the apparent increase.

Once behind bars, pledging allegiance to gangs such as the Crips and Bloods becomes a matter of survival for inmates, experts said. When they are released, many return to their old neighborhoods as Crips or Bloods, sometimes setting off violent internal rivalries within smaller local gangs, experts said.

*"When you go to jail, you've got to pick a team,"* said the executive director of the East Coast Gang Investigators Association. *"Once you get into that prison system and you get involved in the niche, you become more illiterate and more unemployable; the only thing you can do is run with your clique. The same thing applies once you're back on the streets."*

He said that Crips and Bloods are now more visible, more violent and more organized on the East Coast than at any other time in the gangs' nearly 40-year history. *"These guys have really stepped it up a notch,"* he said. *"With the activity that you're seeing, the simple issue is who just got out of jail, who is moving into the community and who's taking over the block."*

In yet another county area, people who claim affiliation with the Crips and the Bloods are proliferating among smaller neighborhood gangs, reported one law-enforcement source said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to discuss the topic publicly.

Investigators say some of the recent attacks appear to have been triggered by a dispute between the Vampire Bloods, a subset of the Bloods, and the 418 Crips, a Crips subset, some of whom formed an unusual alliance with another local Bloods chapter, the Black Mob Bloods.

The first of the attacks occurred on Halloween, when four men barged into a Safeway grocery store argued with a 23-year-old cashier and then shot him in the leg. Detectives believe the assailants were Bloods because they wore red garments and bandannas. They remain at large.

Nearly five hours later, two young men, ages 17 and 22, were wounded in a near by drive-by shootings. One of the victims had ties to the Bloods, two law-enforcement officials confirmed, and investigators think the shooting might have been connected to the Safeway attack.

Then, four days later, one teenager stabbed the hand of another during a fight at a Wendy's Restaurant; later that day, a 21-year-old man was fatally stabbed at a bus stop outside the mall.

The next day, also near the mall, police say five men stabbed and seriously wounded a 26-year-old man in what authorities described as a retaliatory strike. Police charged six people, including a 16-year-old girl who was related to the man who had been killed a day earlier, with attempted first-degree murder.

On November 12, there was a shooting of a 15- and 18-year-old outside a transit station. Police charged two teenagers with attempted first-degree murder and other crimes.

When they formed in Los Angeles, the Crips and the Bloods were exclusively African American gangs. In other areas of the United States, gangs identifying with the Crips and the Bloods increasingly include Hispanics and whites. The Vampire Bloods, for example, is what is known in police circles as an "*equal opportunity employer, so to speak.*"

Many of the East Coast youths, who have lately embraced the mantle of the Crips and the Bloods have done so without direct contact from any national organization. The police view is that many of the gangs' new members are drawn by what he calls the "*thug*" lifestyle celebrated in rap music and videos. "*These kids need new heroes,*" he said.

# The Crips

## Genesis

The Crips remains primarily, but not exclusively, a black gang founded in Los Angeles, California, in 1969, by 15-year-old Raymond Washington. He was obsessed with the Black Panther Party and did his best to emulate their activities. Lacking any political guidance, he failed and, eventually concentrated on protection of himself and his friends from the violence of other gangs. Once a single gang, it is now a loosely connected network of individual sets, often engaged in open warfare with each other. Some units in this network have “allowed” Hispanic and Caucasians to become gang members but not to our knowledge in leadership roles

Raymond Washington initially called the gang the Baby Avenues in an attempt to emulate older gangs and the activities carried out by the Black Panthers, a movement with which he was fascinated. The gang renamed itself the Avenue Crips and then took on the nickname Crips because of the young age of the members. The name Crips was first introduced in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* newspaper in a description by crime victims of young men with canes, as if they were crippled – though there is some discussion that it may have initially been a simple spelling mistake. The name stuck.

Stanley Tookie Williams, generally acknowledged as co-founder of the Crips, started his own gang called the Westside Crips. The Crips became popular throughout southern Los Angeles as more youth gangs joined; at one point they outnumbered non-Crip gangs by three to one, sparking disputes with non-Crip gangs including the L.A. Brims, Athens Park Boys, the Bishops and the Denver Lanes. The Crips eventually became the most powerful gang in California. In response, all of the other besieged gangs, including the Pirus, formed an alliance that later became the Bloods.

Along with friends, Williams and Washington created the initial intent of continuing the revolutionary ideology of the 1960s. Washington and Williams were never able to develop an agenda for social change within the community and instead became obsessed with protecting themselves from other gangs.

Early members of the Crips included Anglo White, Michael Concepcion, Melvin Hardy, Jimel Barnes, Bennie Simpson, Greg Davis, Mack Thomas, Stanley Williams, Raymond Cook, Ecky, No 1 and Michael Christianson. Many of these youth became the neighborhood “toughs” in the community and gained respect from other youth in Los Angeles in the early 1970s.

In 2007, as in many years past, the Crips are well known, if not best known, for their intense and bitter rivalry with the Bloods as well as with Hispanic and Chicano gangs.

## Feuds

By 1971, the gang's notoriety had spread across Los Angeles. The gang became increasingly violent as it attempted to expand its turf. By the early 1980s, the gang was heavily involved with the drug trade.

In 1971, a Crip set on Piru Street, Compton, known as the Piru Street Boys was formed. After two years of peace, a feud began between the Piru Street Boys and the other Crip sets. It would later turn violent as gang warfare ensued between former allies. This battle continued until the mid 1970s when the Piru Street Boys wanted to call an end to the violence and called a meeting with other gangs that were targeted by the Crips. After a long discussion, the Pirus broke off all connections to the Crips and started an organization that would later be called the Bloods, a street gang infamous for its rivalry with the Crips.

Since then, other conflicts and feuds were started between many of the remaining sets of the Crips. It is a popular misconception that Crips sets feud only with Bloods. In reality, they fight each other – for example, the Rollin '60s and 83<sup>rd</sup> Street Gangster Crips [Eight-Tray] have been rivals since 1979. This conflict has resulted in the majority of Gangster Crip sets feuding with most neighborhood Crip sets. In Watts, Los Angeles, the Grape Street Watts Crips and the P Jay Crips have feuded so much that the P Jay Crips even teamed up with the local Bloods set, the Bounty Hunter Bloods, to fight against the Grape Street Crips.

In Los Angeles County today, there are 88 incorporated cities and dozens of other unincorporated places in Los Angeles County with Crips firmly established in 24 cities and areas in the County. In 1972, the eight Crip gangs grew to 45 in 1978. By 1982 there were 109 Crips in Los Angeles County and by the late 1990s there were 199 individual Crip gangs active in Los Angeles County. Crip growth in Los Angeles has stabilized and even declined in areas that are undergoing demographic change, but in other parts of California, the United States and abroad, many places have started copycat gangs. Through the years, the gang has grown to be one of the largest and most powerful gangs in the United States with a membership that exceeds well over 50,000 gang members. Since affiliation is loose and unofficial, the number may be much higher. The gang is known to be involved in murders, robberies, drug dealing, among many other criminal pursuits.

In Florida, the presence of the Chicago-based Folk Nation and People Nation is so prevalent, that the Crips and Bloods have developed allies under these alliances. Bloods traditionally align themselves with the People Nation, and Crips with the Folk Nation. This alignment may vary for local jurisdictions due to competition for drug territory or violence against one another.

## Colors

For many years, Crips were characterized by their tendency to wear blue in order to easily identify each other. One suggested origin of the selected color is traced to the school colors of Washington High School in South Los Angeles. Another theory is the co-founder, Stanley Williams, had a good and close friend called Buddha, who wore blue shirts, khakis, shoes and a blue bandana from his back left pocket. When Buddha died, Williams made blue the Crip color in honor of Buddha. A particular set of Crips, the Grape Street Crips, have been known to wear purple in addition to blue. The Shotgun Crips (SGCs) are separated into three sub-sets: the Nine, 139<sup>th</sup> Street; the Foe, 134<sup>th</sup> Street; and the Deuce, 132<sup>nd</sup> Street in the city of Gardena, California; and have been known to wear dark-green, the city color of Gardena, in addition to blue to show that the Shotgun Crips are from Gardena. Crips also wear blue bandanas and British Knights sport shoes [using the company moniker BK, which the Crips use as a backronym meaning “Blood Killas”]. They usually refer derisively to their rivals, the Bloods, as “*slobs*” and “*busters*.”

The gang remains notorious for its gang member’s flamboyant use of the color blue in their clothing. More recently, however, the Crips have begun to cease the use of colors as a means of identification, since it is likely to draw attention from police. Methods such as the use of college sport team jerseys and hats are sometimes used, but in general, what set a certain gang member claims can be determined solely by their tattoos.

Crips will often wear jogging suits and tennis shoes, professional sports team jackets and caps bearing the names of Los Angeles teams, and sometimes Adidas sweatshirts. They also may wear Dickey brand cotton work pants or bib-style overalls. Nike and British Knights shoes are also popular.

Many Crips also will change words containing the letter B or choose another word to replace it, the best being a word with a C. This is due to their hatred of Bloods. If no word can reasonably be substituted, the letter B will be crossed out to show disrespect. Sometimes excessive use of the letter C also occurs, such as “6e right 6aCC,” to refrain from using the initials “CK,” which stands for “Crip Killer.” Also, the letter B can be written BK as in “Blood Killer.”

## Tagging

Crips refer to each other as “*Cuzz*” and use the letter C to replace the letter B in their conversations and writings. They have an intricate communication system that involves not only graffiti on walls, which mark their particular territorial boundaries, but also the use of hand signals [flashing], displaying their colors, and wearing selected athletic clothing. The initials BK represent their status as “Blood Killers.”

Crips seldom wear tattoos, and their graffiti represents past or future gang activity. Crips gangs are found in nearly every city in the United States and have been identified in

several foreign countries. The most prominent traits of Crips are individualism and maintaining a commitment to foster violence upon other gangs. The Crips rivalry with the Bloods' gang presents a likelihood of violent encounters between members

Their many alignments are often communicated in their graffiti.

### **Gang functions**

What was once a single gang is now a loosely connected network of individual sets, often engaged in open warfare with one another. The gang is known to be involved in murders, robberies, drug dealing, among other criminal pursuits. They have been popularized in many movies, thousands of songs and even video games such as "GTA 3."

Should the Crips ever become more structured, they could present even more serious problems than created by other recognized gangs. For a short time, a small group of gang members claimed the word Crip was an acronym for "Community Revolution in Progress." This was an attempt to gain public sympathy as they mimicked the many other gangs who attempted to make similar false claims. Despite their temporary claim of being a peaceful organization, the gang is still heavily involved in urban warfare, drug sales, and recently violent take-over robberies and warehouse burglaries.

However, there are areas of the country where Crips and Folk groups, such as the Black Gangster Disciples, are in competition for the drug trade and thus, are rivals. This is illustrated in their graffiti by use of the "eight ball." If the eight ball is drawn or displayed intact, then the sets are aligned. If it is cracked or drawn through, there is dissension among the groups. The eight ball is significant because when you bring the hand sign for the Crips and the "pitchfork" hand sign together it forms an eight ball.

The 83 Gangster Crips [Eight-Tray Gangster Crips (ETG)] are one of Los Angeles' most well-known Crip gangs. ETGs were strongly involved in the 1992 Los Angeles riots and were seen wearing *locs* [sun glasses], black bandanas and white T-shirts. Their Crip rivals include all of the N'hood Crips and the Rollin' sets, especially Rollin' 60 Crips. The ongoing feud between Rollin' 60 and ETG has been a bloody one, causing more Crip-on-Crip killing than with the rival Bloods. Other rival sets include the 67 Neighborhood Crips and the Inglewood Family Gang, a Bloods set.

They also are a rival to all "rollin 0s" gang, which would include the Rollin 40s and the Rollin 90s. They also have a rivalry with all NeighborHood (NH) gangs including the 67 NeighborHood Crips (67 NHC), located on the north side of their territory. They are rivals to all Blood gangs but their main Blood rivalry is with the Inglewood Family Gang (IFG) located to the west of their territory; but it must be noted that their rivalry with the Rollin' 60s Crips is stronger than with any Blood gang. Their Crip rivalries include: Rollin 30s, 40NH, 55NH, 57NH, 58NH, 60NH, 67NH, 90NH, 100S NH, NH103, 111NH, 112NH, 115NH, UnderGround Crips, BCG, Menlo Crips, BudLong Crips, Geer Gang, 99 Mafia Crips, 87 Gangsta Crip and all Mexican gangs that hate blacks.

## The Bloods

The Bloods are another of Los Angeles-originated street gangs, which have become a national threat. They are identified by the red color worn by their members, and their gang symbol is the word “blood” or *blodze* spelled out with their hands. The Bloods are made up of various sub-groups known as “sets” or *tres* [trays] between which significant differences exist such as colors, clothing and operations. Since their formation, the Blood gangs have branched out throughout the United States, and have even influenced youth groups using the same name in Europe. Unlike the Crips, we have no information indicating any Hispanic or Caucasian members.

### Genesis

Starting in late 1971, the Avalon Garden Crips, Inglewood Crips and various other Crip sets joined forces. They began to expand to non-Crip territories such as those controlled by The L.A. Brims, a powerful street gang that had been formed in 1969. Due to the encroachments of the Crips, several gangs eventually became part of the Blood family, including the Bishops and Athens Park boys. The Denver Lanes also had conflicts with the Crips, but were outnumbered and eventually became unknown in California for some time. The Piru Street Boys, who presented a powerful force in Compton, actually collaborated with the Crips prior to 1972, as the Crips had affected the Piru neighborhoods. The gang sign eventually was developed using hands.

A number of popular West Coast rappers [entertainers] claim to be affiliated with Bloods or Crips gangs or use speculation about their ties to gangs to generate media attention. The Game has said he was caught up in the gangs in his Cedar Block neighborhood. Allegedly, Dipset is affiliated also with Blood sets. Due to employing several known Blood members, the media has long speculated that Death Row Records CEO Marion Suge Knight maintains at the very least an association with the gang. It also has been long speculated that rapper Tupac Shakur, at least, maintained some ties with the MOB Piru Bloods, who were close associates of Tupac as well as Death Row Records. This is evident in the fact that both Suge Knight and Tupac got matching tattoos that read MOB, meaning Member of Bloods. Rapper/producer DJ Quik [note the C is omitted], also a Compton native, has talked about growing up as a member of the Tree Top Piru Bloods. In 1995, Los Angeles producer Ron “Ronnie Ron” Phillips produced the self-titled debut album of the Damu Ridas, a rap group consisting of gang members from the Denver Lane Bloods and the Crenshaw Mafia Gang.

According to a *L.A. Weekly* profile, the Bloods generally refuse to use the letter C in words and names, often replacing C with B for Bloods or appending a K, to form CK, meaning Crip killer. Bloods also wear their “colors” on their right side, often with right red shoe laces, a red belt, or a red bandana in the back right pocket. The Bloods, as well as other gangs such as the Hells Angels, are sometimes mistakenly said to practice an ini-

tiation ritual that involves driving at night with their headlights off and murdering the first motorist who flashes their own headlights at them.

## Chinese Gangs

The structure of Chinese organized crime is complex. Broadly defined, there is a great variety of Chinese criminal organizations. These include gangs, secret societies, triads, tongs, Taiwanese organized crime groups, and strictly U.S.-based tongs and gangs. According to experts there is no empirical support for the belief that there is a well-organized, monolithic and hierarchical criminal cartel called the “Chinese Mafia.”

In research, it was found that Chinese gangs are quite active in legitimate businesses in New York City’s Chinatown. For example, they own or operate restaurants, retail stores, vegetable stands, car services, ice cream parlors, fish markets and video stores. On a higher, more professional level, they also own or operate wholesale supply firms, factories, banks and employment agencies. In addition, on the West Coast, Chinese gangs have penetrated the entertainment industry. Perhaps it is because of their relatively small size, the youth of their members, their lack of business experience and acumen, and the geographical constraints in which they operate, that Chinese gangs do not seem to play significant roles in the broader legitimate economy.

In California, Chinese organized crime has problems and a presence that is quite different from in New York. In California, the dominant groups are the Wo Hop To and the Wah Ching.

### **Fuk Ching gang**

In order to simplify this analysis, it will concentrate on the Fuk Ching gang. The Fuk Ching are active in New York City, and are regarded as one of the most powerful Chinese organized crime groups in the United States, which also is globally active. They are estimated to have approximately 35 members, with another 20 members currently in prison. Other major gangs have similar membership figures. Those in New York City include the Ghost Shadows, Flying Dragons, Tung On and Born-to-Kill. In total, there are indications that at least 400 hard-core Chinese gangsters operate in New York’s Chinatown. New York City gangs, such as the Fuk Ching, mainly operate extortion and protection rackets – victimizing businesses in defined neighborhoods in New York’s Chinatown.

One of the structural characteristics that differentiate Chinese organized crime is the relationship between some street gangs and certain adult organizations called tongs. The Fuk Ching, for example, is affiliated with the Fukien American Association. The Fukien American Association – similar to other tongs and their related gangs – provide the Fuk Ching with a physical place to gather and hang out. They allow the gang to operate on the tong’s territory, thus legitimizing them with the community. They also provide criminal opportunities, such as protecting gambling operations, as well as supplying money and guns. The Fuk Ching originally emerged in New York in the mid-1980s, and as with other gangs, their main criminal activity in Chinatown was extortion. They were founded

by a collection of young men [youth in their late teens and early twenties] from Fujian Province in China – most of whom had criminal records in China. Today, Fuk Ching recruitment continues among Fujianese teenagers.

Tong-affiliated gangs, such as the Fuk Ching, have an *ah kung* [grandfather] or *shuk foo* [uncle] who is their tong leader. The top gang position is the *dai dai lo* [big big brother]. Communications between the tong and the gang occurs principally between these two. Below the *dai dai lo* in descending order are the *dai lo*(s) [big brothers], the *yee lo/saam lo*(s) [clique leaders], and at the bottom the *ma jai* [little horses]. There are a variety of norms and rules that govern the gangs. These include respecting the *ah kung*, beating up members of other gangs on your turf, not using drugs, following the orders of the *dai lo*, and not betraying the gang. Rule violators are punished, sometimes severely, through physical assault and death.

Research and interviews with various police experts confirms that violence is a defining characteristic of Chinese criminal gangs. Use of violence within the group and against other organized crime groups is very prevalent. Disputes over territory and criminal markets among the gangs are typically resolved using *kong so*, a process of peaceful negotiation. However, when this does not occur, the resolution is usually a violent one, in which guns are used against rival gang members. Law-enforcement authorities believe that an escalation of gang violence has taken place in recent years, due in part to the advent of the Fuk Ching, and to gang involvement in alien smuggling activities.

The capacity for violence appears to be one of the key defining characteristics of street gang culture. Its use is shaped and determined by a cluster of constraints related to profit-generating goals. Violence between and among gangs is regulated through an agent or *ah kung*, who attempts to channel aggressive behavior in ways that effectively maintain gang coherence. Gang coherence in turn supports the gang's involvement in extortion activities and in the provision of protection services to the organized vice industries in the community.

The Fuk Ching members are violent, but their use of violence is not very sophisticated nor specialized. It is not the systematic use of violence [including threats] to protect and gain monopoly control of criminal markets that is associated with mature forms of organized crime. Instead, it is more likely to be random street-level violence, with guns, employed by anyone in the gang. Sometimes this violence is sanctioned and sometimes not.

Understanding alien smuggling to be the illegal movement of migrants across national borders and human trafficking to be migrant smuggling that includes coercion and exploitation, the Fuk Ching are extensively involved in both types of activities. Indeed, these criminal activities, along with kidnapping, are the main transnational crimes of the Fuk Ching. Their dominance is related to Fujian Province being the principal source of Chinese being smuggled and trafficked into North America. On the domestic scene, their main criminal activities in New York City's Chinatown are extortion and gambling. Each Chinese gang dominates these crimes in their particular Chinatown neighborhoods. This includes the Fuk Ching.

The professionalism and sophistication of the Fuk Ching are quite low, again as compared to more mature forms of organized crime. The same is true of other Chinese criminal gangs operating in the United States. This may be due to their being generally much younger than, for example, La Costra Nostra or Russian organized-crime figures. Also, their criminal activities are not particularly sophisticated, although the Fuk Ching may be becoming more complex in their organizational structure as they become more heavily engaged in human trafficking.

The consensus is that the Fuk Ching, like other Chinese gangs, does not have the connections and stature to be able to corrupt U.S. police and judges. There have been only one or two cases of police corruption [none in recent years], and no cases of judicial corruption.

As to political influence, there is some ability to manipulate the political system via corruption in China – namely in Fujian Province and with respect to their human trafficking enterprise. However, in the United States, there is no evidence of corrupting the political process, of getting members elected or appointed to political office, nor of being able to manage media coverage of their activities. They are influential only in Chinatown, and their connections to U.S. politicians are non-existent. Any political influence Chinese gangs have is exerted through the tongs with which they are affiliated. For example, it is reported that the head of the Fukien American Association once gave \$6,500 to a New York City mayor's re-election campaign. The affiliation is beneficial to the gangs. The tongs and other Chinatown community organizations benefit from the Chinese gangs' threats of extortion because business owners donate money to the associations in the belief that this will buy protection.

There is no evidence that Chinese gangs are involved with political terrorism either abroad or at home, nor associated with armed political groups of any kind.

The New York City Police Department, which polices the neighborhood in which the Fuk Ching are active, uses all the standard law-enforcement practices commonly used to combat organized crime. These include informants, undercover investigators and electronic surveillance. In addition, both the police and the FBI support and encourage extortion victims to use hot lines to report their victimization. Furthermore, the New York City Police Department has created an Asian Gang Intelligence Unit that employs street patrols to monitor street gangs.

Of the 15 Chinese crime groups indicted under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act between 1985 and 1994, one involved the Fuk Ching. In that 1993 case, 20 defendants were charged with, and pled guilty to murder. The investigation was conducted jointly by the FBI and the New York City Police Department.

On the international level, U.S. law enforcement has undertaken a number of initiatives to improve international cooperation against Chinese organized crime groups. These include the creation of the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Bangkok, Thailand, and sponsorship of numerous international meetings on Asian organized crime.

Annual meetings of the International Asian Organized Crime Conference attract more than a 1,000 law-enforcement officials from dozens of countries. Both the ILEA and the conferences promote interaction among officials of affected countries, and lead to better cooperation and better information.

Many crimes in Chinese-American communities – especially drug trafficking, money laundering and human trafficking – are linked to China. Chinese gang members will flee to China when sought by U.S. law enforcement.

There is not general cultural acceptance of Chinese gangs such as the Fuk Ching in Chinatown. Most Chinese business owners comply with gang extortion demands because compliance is easier and less risky than resistance. As previously indicated, the gang affiliation with a tong gives them a degree of acceptability in the neighborhoods associated with that particular tong. The gang must be tolerated in order to gain any benefit that accrues from the tong.

It would seem that there is little need in Chinatown for awareness-raising campaigns on organized crime, or for sensitizing citizens on the dangers and threats posed by Chinese gangs. The Chinese who live in these neighborhoods are fully aware and fully sensitized. Rather than public information campaigns, Chinese businessmen would prefer a tougher criminal justice system, such as harsher punishment for offenders, the reinstatement of the death penalty and the deportation of chronic Chinese criminals. They also want to see many more Chinese police officers in their neighborhoods.

Because of the compartmentalized nature of Chinese organized crime in the United States, the public at large is unaware or concerned about what is going on in Chinatowns in U.S. cities. National media pay relatively little attention to these problems.

However, Chinese involvement in human smuggling may be the exception to this rule, and has received considerable attention. A conference on human smuggling pointed to five possible reasons for the high public profile given these smuggling operations: they are expensive; associated human rights abuses are considerable; they are highly efficient; there is an enormous potential pool of migrants; and collecting intelligence and other information from China is extraordinarily difficult. Human-trafficking activities by Chinese gangs such as the Fuk Ching are contributing to this higher profile.

# Japanese Crime in the United States

## The *Yakuza*

The term *Yakuza* literally derives from beginnings of the traditional words *Yattsu* [Eight], *Ku* [Nine] and *Za* [Three], based on the worst hand attainable in the Japanese card game *Oicho-Kabu*, similar to Black Jack. The general difference between the card games is that in *Oicho-Kabu* a winning hand is 19 instead of 21. The sum of eight, nine and three is 20, which is without any worth in *Oicho-Kabu*, and represents their lack of worth to society. The *Yakuza* are proud to be outcasts, and the word *yakuza* reflects the group's self-image the "bad hands of society," a characterization they embrace in the same way that U.S. bikers prominently tattoo the slogan "Born to Lose" on their biceps.

Nationwide, there are some 84,700 known members of *Yakuza*. Since they are not a secretive gang, their numbers are relatively easy to track down. Historical reports show the *Yakuza* to have been around since the 17<sup>th</sup> century as a low-ranking derivative of the *hatamoto*, similar to the shogun warriors.

## Genesis

The origin of the *Yakuza* is a matter of some debate. Some feel that its members are descendants of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century *kabuki-mono* [crazy ones]; outlandish *samurai* who reveled in outlandish clothing and hair styles, spoke in elaborate slang and carried unusually long swords in their belts. The *kabuki-mono* was also known as *hatamoto-yakko* [servants of the shogun]. During the Tokugawa era, an extended period of peace in Japan, the services of these *samurai* were no longer needed, and so they became leaderless *ronin* [wave men]. Without the guidance of a strong hand, they eventually shifted their focus from community service to theft and mayhem.

Modern *Yakuza* members refute this theory and instead proclaim themselves to be the descendants of the *machi-yokko* [servants of the town] who protected their villages from the wayward *hatamoto-yakko*. The official *Yakuza* history portrays the group's ancestors as underdog folk heroes who stood up for the poor and the defenseless, just as Robin Hood helped the peasants of medieval England.

Current *Yakuza* members fall under three general categories: *tekiya* [street peddlers], *bakuto* [gamblers] and *gurentai* [hoodlums]. The peddlers and gamblers trace their roots back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century while the hoodlums came into existence after World War II when the demand for black market goods created a booming industry. Traditionally, the *tekiya*, medieval Japan's version of snake-oil salesmen, worked the fairs and markets while the *bakuto* worked the towns and highways. By contrast, the *gurentai* modeled themselves on

U.S. gangsters of the Al Capone era, using threats and extortion to achieve their ends. After World War II, in the governmental power void caused by the occupation, the *gurentai* prospered, and their ranks swelled. They also brought organized crime in Japan to a new level of violence, replacing the traditional sword with modern firearms, even though guns were now officially outlawed in the country as a result of the surrender.

Following World War II, *Yakuza* membership increased dramatically to 184,000 members divided into 5,200 gangs throughout the country, making it larger than the Japanese army at the time. Inevitably, these gangs encroached on one another's territories, which resulted in bitter and bloody gang wars. The man who brought peace to the warring factions and unified the *Yakuza* was the group's first 20<sup>th</sup>-century godfather, Yo-shio Kodama.

Kodama's gift was his ability to balance his affiliations to both right-wing political groups and criminal gangs, using each to keep the other in check. He was a political fixer who served his government through corruption, espionage and other dirty dealings, which the Japanese simply call *kuroi kiri* [black mist]. In the 1930s and 1940s, he maintained an extensive network of spies in China, feeding information back to the Japanese government. He procured large shipments of materials, such as nickel, cobalt, copper and radium for the mounting war effort, sometimes bartering for these supplies with heroin. A grateful Japanese government awarded him the title of rear admiral for his patriotic efforts. By the time the war was over in 1945, Kodama was worth the equivalent of \$175 million.

After the Japanese surrendered to the Allied powers, he was classified a Class A war criminal – a distinction reserved only for Cabinet ministers, ultra-nationalists and high-ranking military leaders – and served two years in prison before being released as part of a general amnesty. A fervent anti-Communist with access to valuable information regarding Communist movements in China and Japan and an army of street criminals at his disposal, Kodama became an attractive asset for the occupying forces. Just as Lucky Luciano provided the Mafia's services to the invading Allied forces in Sicily during World War II, Kodama acted as go-between for the G-2 section of the occupational forces and the *yakuza*, and was able to mobilize battalions of gangsters to carry out his political will. The Central Intelligence Agency paid him \$150,000 in 1949 to use his underworld connections to smuggle a shipload of tungsten out of China, a shipment that never arrived, although Kodama kept his fee.

Kodama used the *Yakuza* to suppress anything that might be considered a Communist initiative. In 1949, Kodama ordered one crime group, the *Meiraki-gumi*, to disrupt a labor movement at the Hokutan Coal Mine. A fervent nationalist, Kodama used his clout in the hope that the honor and glory of the Japanese empire could one day be restored. To that end, he modernized the bickering and disorganized *Yakuza* gangs and brokered coalitions between the larger factions, throwing their combined support to the conservative, anti-Communist Liberal Democratic Party. Personally, Kodama detested warfare and abhorred street hoods, although they were an important part of his power base. Ironically his dream was to insure a peaceful Japan.

Kodama was a pivotal figure in the notorious Lockheed scandal that emerged in 1976 when it was revealed that the aircraft giant had paid the godfather more than \$2 million to influence the Japanese market away from McDonnell-Douglas and Boeing and toward Lockheed. To do this, Kodama sent a gang of *sokaiya* [shareholders' meeting men] to disrupt a meeting of All Nippon Airways stockholders. The *sokaiya* spread rumors of an illegal million-dollar loan made to the president of the company, Tetsuo Oba, who had rejected Lockheed's bid for a new fleet of passenger aircraft. The pressure mounted on Oba, and he was soon forced to resign. His replacement was handpicked by Kodama, and the new president was more favorably disposed to purchasing Lockheed's wide-bodied jets. In 1976, Carl Kotchian, Lockheed's president, was called to testify before a U.S. Senate committee investigating the Lockheed scandal. The ripple effect of his shocking testimony reached back to Japan, spurring the national police to investigate Kodama's participation in the scandal. Though the police could not uncover enough proof to prosecute Kodama on charges stemming from the Lockheed incident, they found that he had evaded taxes on more than \$6 million. The public was outraged by the enormity of Kodama's tax-fraud scheme. In fact, a distraught young actor who had been a great admirer of Kodama's attempted to crash a small airplane into Kodama's suburban Tokyo house.

### ***Yakuza* structure**

Prospective *Yakuza* come from all walks of life. In the past, they would accept sons who have been abandoned or exiled by their parents. Many *Yakuza* start out in junior high school or high school as common street thugs or members of *Bosozoku* gangs. Some *Yakuza* "goons" are actually mentally handicapped, but recruited due to their large physiques, while the leadership levels of *Yakuza* gangs usually consist of very sharp, cunning, intelligent men, as the process to raise to the top-levels in the *Yakuza* can be very competitive and Machiavellian. Members of *Yakuza* gangs cut their family ties and transfer their loyalty to the gang boss. They refer to each other as family members – fathers and elder and younger brothers. The *Yakuza* is populated entirely by men, and there are usually no women involved. However, unlike many crime groups, women are sometimes involved in its activities. When the *Yamaguchi-gumi* Family boss was shot in the late 1990s, his wife took over as boss of *Yamaguchi-gumi* for a short time.

The *Yakuza* system is similar to the Mafia hierarchy but more intricate. The Mafia *capo* [boss] rules the family with the assistance of his underboss and *consigliere* [counselor]. On the next level, captains run crews of soldiers who all have associates [men who have not been officially inducted into the Mafia] to do their bidding.

The *Yakuza* power structure is a pyramid with a patriarch on top and loyal underlings of various ranks beneath. The guiding principle of the *Yakuza* structure is the *oyabun-kobun* [father-child role] relationship. When a man is accepted into the *Yakuza*, he must accept this relationship. He must promise unquestioning loyalty and obedience to his boss. The *oyabun*, like any good father, is obliged to provide protection and good counsel to his children. However, as the old Japanese saying states, "If your boss says the passing

*crow is white, then you must agree.*” As the *Yakuza* put it, a *kobun* must be willing to be a *teppodama* [bullet] for his *oyabun*.

The levels of management within the *Yakuza* structure are much more complex than the Mafia’s. Immediately under the *kumicho* [supreme boss] are the *saiko komon* [senior adviser] and the *so-honbucho* [headquarters chief] The *wakagashira* [number-two man] is a regional boss responsible for governing many gangs; he is assisted by the *fuku-honbucho*, who is responsible for several gangs of his own. A lesser regional boss is a *shateigashira*, and he commonly has a *shateigashira-hosa* to assist him. A typical *Yakuza* crime family will also have dozens of *shatei* [younger brothers] and many *wakashu* [junior leaders].

A successful candidate for admission into the “real” or “traditional” Mafia must participate in a ceremony where his trigger finger is pricked and the blood smeared on the picture of a saint, which is then set on fire and must burn in the initiate’s hands as he swears his loyalty to the family. In the *Yakuza* initiation ceremony, the blood is symbolized by *sake* [rice wine]. The *oyabun* and the initiate sit face-to-face as their *sake* is prepared by *azukarinin* [guarantors]. The *sake* is mixed with salt and fish scales, and then carefully poured into cups. The *oyabun*’s cup is filled to the brim, befitting his status; the initiate gets much less. They drink a bit, then exchange cups, and each drinks from the other’s cup. The *kobun* has then sealed his commitment to the family. From that moment on, even the *kobun*’s wife and children must take a backseat to his obligations to his *Yakuza* family.

Popularized in the West in several movies, *Yubitsume* is the cutting off of a finger as an act of apology or humility. For a first offense, the offender cuts off the tip of his left pinky, giving it to his boss. Sometimes an underboss does this to his boss in order to spare a member of his own gang from retribution. This is so prominent in Japan that when the British children’s movies, *Bob The Builder* and *Postman Pat*, were imported, the Japanese considered adding an extra finger to the characters’ four fingered hands to avoid scaring their children.

*YakuzaIrezumi* are full body tattoos, which many *Yakuza* members have and are often “hand-poked,” where the ink is injected using a steel or bamboo needle instead of a machine. This can be very painful and take as long as 10 years to complete.

The *Yakuza*’s tentacles reach into many different areas, principally corporate extortion, gambling, smuggling, loan sharking, money laundering, narcotics, real-estate, sports, entertainment, stock manipulation, tourist scams, sex tours, prostitution, slavery, pornography and gun running.

Sex-related enterprises are the *Yakuza*’s bread and butter, and they cater to the wild side of Japan’s overworked, buttoned-down “salary men.” The *Yakuza* smuggle truckloads of pornographic films and magazines into Japan from Europe and America. They control prostitution rings throughout the country, commonly holding young women from other Asian countries captive as indentured servants and forcing them to work as “com-

fort workers.” The Japanese euphemistically refer to the act of prostitution as “*selling spring*,” and Japanese “*johns*” have a taste for very young women, as demonstrated by the national obsession with young women in school-girl outfits complete with short pleated skirts and knee socks. The *Yakuza* buy unwanted female children from China – where the law formerly restricted couples to only one child and the cultural preference is for boys – for as little as \$5,000 and put them to work in the *mizu shobai* [literally the water business] – the *Yakuza*’s network of bars, restaurants and nightclubs.

The *Yakuza* also make millions of dollars a year through corporate extortion, and the *sokaiya* [shareholders’ meeting men] are the masters of this enterprise. *Sokaiya* will buy a small number of shares in a company so that they can attend shareholders’ meetings. In preparation for the meeting, the *sokaiya* gather damaging information about the company and its officers; secret mistresses, tax evasion, unsafe factory conditions and pollution are all fodder for the *sokaiya*. They will then contact the company’s management and threaten to disclose whatever embarrassing information they have at the shareholders’ meeting unless they are “*compensated*.” If management does not give in to their demands, the *sokaiya* go to the shareholders’ meeting and cause a huge uproar, shouting down anyone who dares to speak, making a boisterous display of their presence, and shouting out their damaging revelations. In Japan, where people fear embarrassment and shame much more than physical threats, executives usually give the *sokaiya* whatever they want.

The *Yakuza* have made their presence felt in the United States principally in Hawaii, but also in California, Nevada and New York. Its members blend in easily in Hawaii because tourists from Japan and other Asian countries flock there. They invest in high-priced real estate, one of their favorite enterprises, and use the island state as a way station for crystal meth headed for the U.S. mainland and firearms head back to Japan. They also work with local crime gangs, funneling tourists from Asia to gambling parlors, sex shows and brothels in exchange for kickbacks from locals.

The *Yakuza* have also put down roots in California where they have made alliances with Korean and Vietnamese gangs and furthered their traditional partnerships with the Chinese triads. Los Angeles is particularly attractive because of the influx of young actresses desperate to get their big break in the film industry. *Yakuza* skills have become adept at luring these vulnerable women into pornographic films and prostitution. Japanese men, whether on sex tours or at home in Japan, often desire western women, particularly blondes.

Like most U.S. organized crime groups, the *Yakuza* love Las Vegas, where gambling – both legal and illegal – everywhere. Showgirls and hookers are also plentiful in Vegas, and the *Yakuza* are instrumental in steering Asian tourists to establishments owned by Americans who pay substantial “finder’s fees.”

# Russian Organized Crime

The phrase “Russian organized crime” (ROC) refers to criminal groups from the 15 republics, which comprised the former Soviet Union. ROC, which has existed in the United States for some 20 years, has had a distinct increase in criminal activities, according to law-enforcement authorities. Criminals from the former Soviet Union have established their networks in major cities and also are emerging in some smaller cities. ROC groups are involved in murder, money laundering, extortion, auto theft, weapons smuggling, narcotics trafficking, prostitution, counterfeiting currency and a multitude of complex fraud schemes.

## Genesis

In the United States, Russian organized crime evolved in Brighton Beach, New York, which at one time was a small Russian immigrant community. During the 1970s and the early 1980s, the Soviet government liberalized its immigration policy, which allowed its citizens to travel freely. Approximately 200,000 Soviet citizens immigrated to the United States to escape religious persecution, which they had endured during the 70 years of communist rule. It was during this time that many Soviet criminals came to the United States under the guise of fleeing religious oppression. Additionally, some U.S. government officials suspect that the *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* (KGB) [Committee for State Security] emptied their prisons of hard-core criminals, much like Cuban dictator Fidel Castro did during the Mariel boat-lift in 1980.

Amid the political uncertainty that has engulfed the former Soviet Union from 1991, with the end of the Cold War; rampant, unchecked organized crime has laid waste to noteworthy democratic reforms and contributed to an economic and moral meltdown within the 15 newly independent republics. Intelligence reports estimate the Russian *mafia* to include 100,000 direct and 600,000 indirect members. After the break up, many Russian criminals and organized crime figures fled to the United States. By 1992, Russian authorities had alerted U.S. law-enforcement officials of the arrival in New York of Vyatcheslav Ivankov [Little Japanese], identified as a leader of the “Thieves in Law,” which is a traditional-style organized crime group that predated communism in 1917.

Ivankov spent approximately ten years in a Russian prison before bribing his way out. Russian authorities speculated that Ivankov went to the United States to organize local networks of Russian criminals, including in California. He was arrested in June 1995 in New York for attempting to extort \$3.5 million from an investment firm operated by two Russian immigrants. In January 1997, Ivankov was sentenced to over nine years in prison for conspiracy to commit extortion.

## Organization

Law-enforcement authorities have identified varying levels of organization and sophistication among ROC criminal networks, ranging from professional organizations with an identifiable structure to loosely aligned criminal networks and amateur criminals. Generally, the professional groups have an established allegiance to a leader and follow a criminal code.

The loosely aligned criminal networks are in a continual state of transformation and are highly mobile. Members are opportunistic and form to complete one particular criminal scheme. Once the scheme is completed, they disperse and re-form to commit other crimes. Allegiances may change to accommodate a current scheme or for monetary advantage. These groups may have recruited ex-KGB and military personnel who possess the skills and training necessary to avoid detection and arrest.

Frauds are the core of these groups' criminal activities and involve the theft and use of stolen credit cards, insurance schemes involving staged auto accidents and/or false billings for medical treatment, theft of excise taxes in the fuel industry, theft of telecommunications signals [used to clone cellular telephones] and immigration fraud.

Prior to 1989, the Communists indirectly controlled the government of the Soviet Union. It was during the Mikhail Gorbachev era in which his "openness" measure of reform was challenged by the explosion of the nuclear reactor at Chernobyl on April 26, 1986. This incident brought about change, which was subsequent to an open discussion of poverty, the waste of resources and the Afghan conflict. Efforts of reform were made by Eastern Europe leaders to remove the Communists leaders. In 1989, there was a celebration over the seeming victory of democracy and capitalism over communism in the Western part of the world. Ronald Reagan's "evil empire" had become a prospective partner. However, the Russian economy had not responded well to the restructuring. The strength of the Russian government had fallen back into the hands of Communists and ultranationalists. More importantly, Russian politics, economy and society had been plagued with the Russian *mafia*.

On February 12, 1993, President Boris Yeltsin stated that "*organized crime has become a direct threat to Russia's strategic interests and national security.*" Many of the bosses and main members of the Russian *mafia* are believed to be former Soviet army and ex-KGB officers who lost their posts in the reduction of forces that began in 1993 after the end of the Cold War. It is also believed that some of the groups' enforcers are former Russian military. Russian mobsters also recruit athletes, including boxers, martial artists and weightlifters. *Spetsnaz* [Russian special forces] members are also utilized by the *mafia*.

The Russian *mafia* appears to be organized in similar ways to the KGB. A particularly brutal practice rumored to be utilized by the Russian *mafia* is the killing of not only the "snitch," but also his or her family. The Russian *mafia* is notorious for underground operations and clean transactions, and, unlike certain vestiges of the Italian mafia, it is

known for its secrecy and un-flamboyant manner. It uses professional operatives to carry out the bulk of its activities.

Unlike other organized crime organizations where there is a semi-hereditary hierarchy, which often fragments after the death of leaders, the Russian *mafiya* works with a strict professional hierarchy. The media often claims that the Russian *mafiya* are the best funded criminal organizations in the world, allegedly owning tanks, helicopters, planes, trains and armored pseudo-fortresses.

Despite their apparent appearance during the fall of the Soviet Union, organized crime had existed throughout the imperial and communist eras as a form of open rebellion against the systems in the form of the “Thief’s World.” During this time, organized crime was fiercely honor-based and often attacked and killed traitors among their ranks. Nevertheless, during World War II, many enlisted in the Russian army resulting in the Suka Wars, which killed many of the thieves who were branded as government allies as well as the original thief underworld during Stalin’s reign. The criminals, seeking a new survival strategy, began alliances with the elite in the Soviet Union as a means of survival, creating a powerful Russian black market. The creator of the Black market was the Shutov Family.

The real breakthrough for criminal organizations occurred during the economic disaster and mass emigration of the 1990s that followed the fall of the Soviet Union. Desperate for money, many former government workers turned to crime, others joined the large numbers of Soviet citizens who moved overseas primarily to the United States and the *mafiya* became a natural extension of this trend.

Backed by its extensive connection to the *apparatchik* power network of the Soviet Union between 1992 and 1994, the Russian *mafiya* targeted the commercial centers of power, seizing control of the nation’s fragile banking system. At first the criminal gangs were content to merely “park” their large cash holdings in legitimate institutions, but soon they realized that the next step was easiest: direct ownership of the bank itself.

Banking executives, reform-minded business leaders, even investigative journalists, were systematically assassinated or kidnapped. In 1993 alone, members of the eight criminal gangs that controlled the Moscow underworld murdered 10 local bankers. Calling themselves “*Thieves in Law*,” Russian gangsters murdered 95 bankers between 1993 and 1998.

## **Emigrant crime**

Beginning in the late 1970s, the Communist bloc systematically began encouraging large numbers of its people to emigrate to the United States and Europe. Encouraged by diplomatic feelers put out by the Soviet government, both the Carter and Reagan administration, in association with the government of Israel, began pushing for the emigration of the Soviet’s large Jewish population. That was soon joined by other non-Jewish ethnici-

ties. By the late 1980s, large colonies of former Soviet and Communist bloc subjects had been established throughout the United States. Most of these ethnic colonies were dominated by the Soviet crime groups who answered to their associates and superiors in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). After the fall of the Soviet Union that emigration increased.

Via their large communities throughout the West, particularly in the United States; since the mid-1990s the crime groups have been trying to expand their criminal empire into the United States, most often via the trafficking of drugs and illegal weapons. This has led to some brutal wars with the organizations already present, including the Italian Mafia, and Chinese Triads all of whom also had their own communities to protect.

The result has been a number of alliances among the gangs of the former USSR and others. The group is believed to have links to Colombian drug smugglers and many smaller gangs as a result of the fall of the Soviet Union. Some also believe they are at the heart of gangs smuggling illegal workers west to the European Union and often Britain, though no proof has been offered. While the home of the Russian *mafija* in the United States is in the Brighton Beach neighborhood [dubbed by Russians “Little Odessa” or recently renamed as “Little Russia by the Sea”] in Brooklyn, New York City, it is also widely believed that there is a prominent West Coast operation as well, with constant communication between the two coasts.

Over the last few years, the FBI and Russian security services have tried to crack down on the *mafija*, though the affect of this crackdown has yet to be measured. Foreign companies pay up to 20 percent of their profits to the *mafija* as the on-going price of doing business in Russia. Ignoring shakedown threats merely invites tragedy. Most American and other Western firms find it necessary to hire private security guards to protect their executives from extortion threats and roving assassins.

Ineffective law enforcement has spurred the rapid growth and expansion of the private security industry. Over the last decade, 25,000 Russian security firms were established, employing between 600,000 and 800,000 workers. The *mafija* controls at least one-sixth of them.

### **Foreign businessmen as targets**

An unknown number of foreign businessmen, believed to be in the low thousands, arrived in Russia from all over the world during the early and mid 1990s to seek their fortune and cash in on the transition from a communist to a free market/capitalist society. This period was referred to by many of the businessmen as the “*second great gold rush.*”

Generally, 1990 to 1998 was a wild and unstable time for most foreign businessmen operating in Russia. Dangerous battles with the Russian *mafija* occurred, with many killed or wounded. The *mafija* welcomed the foreign businessmen and their expertise in facilitating business and making things happen in a stagnant and new economy. The *ma-*

*fiya* considered them a good source of hard currency, to be extorted under the usual guise of “protection money.” Many different *mafija* groups would fiercely compete to “protect” a certain businessman; in exchange, the businessman would not have to worry about having more than one group showing up demanding tribute from him. Many foreign businessmen left Russia after these incidents, and the *mafija* still holds its grip on the majority of legitimate and illegal business occurring in Russia.

Paul Tatum, an American, and joint owner of Radisson-Slavanskaya Hotel in Moscow; was shot 11 times in the head and neck – his attacker knew he was wearing a bulletproof vest and he was killed in a Moscow Metro station in November 1996 for refusing to pay “*krysha*” and to be squeezed out by a silent partner. Tatum was surrounded by his own bodyguards when attacked; however, they made no attempt to save him and allowed his attacker to escape unharmed. Tatum had, only weeks before this, taken out a full-page ad in a local newspaper denouncing his Chechen partner Umar Dzhabrailov for trying to squeeze him out of their hotel joint venture. He was a multi-millionaire, with close connections to the then President Bill Clinton and many high-ranking Moscow politicians. His murder has not been solved.

Ken Rowe, a Canadian businessman and joint owner of Moscow Aerostar Hotel was threatened by the Russian *mafija* in an attempt to force him out of a joint hotel-airline venture. The *mafija* at one point entered the hotel with armed men and forced all employees out. Rowe later fought back and seized an Aeroflot aircraft in Montreal to recover his award in a Russian court.

- end -

## *Where The Maldon Institute Got Its Name*

*In the year 991, Viking marauders sailed up the Blackwater river in Essex and disembarked on a small island near the town of Maldon joined to the mainland by a narrow ford that was accessible only at low tide. These raiders were professional fighters facing part-time soldiers - feudal levees of the aged Earl Bryhtnoth. Nevertheless, the English refused to pay tribute and when the Vikings tried to cross the ford, time after time they were held off by the defenders. In the words of the anonymous author of the Old English epic, *The Battle of Maldon* - the finest battle poem in the English language - "the strangers began to dissemble, asked for permission to make approach, to fare over our ford and take their troops."*

*The English commander agreed, out of a misplaced sense of fair play, to let the Vikings cross. As a result, he and many of his men were slaughtered though they made a heroic stand. Their sense of a moral imperative was immortalized in the closing words of one of the Earl's retainers:*

*"heart must be braver, courage the greater  
thought the keener, as our might fails."*

*One of the lessons of Maldon, the first battle to be won by disinformation, is that survival depends on making a realistic assessment of the political, social and environmental risks now and in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century. This is the primary objective of *The Maldon Institute*.*