



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Distribution

June 25, 2008

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FEDERAL RACKETEERING INDICTMENT TARGETS MEMBERS OF VIOLENT DREW STREET GANG IN NORTHEAST LOS ANGELES

RICO Case Alleges Murders, Attempted Murders of Police, Extortion, Witness Tampering and Extensive Narcotics-Trafficking Activity

Seventy members and associates of the Drew Street clique of the Avenues gang have been named in a federal racketeering indictment unsealed this morning that alleges a long series of narcotics-related offenses and violent crimes – including murder, attacks against police officers, witness intimidation and extortion of local businesses, charges that could bring life-without-parole prison sentences for some of the gang members.

This morning, during a massive law enforcement operation involving more than 500 federal, state and local authorities, 28 defendants were arrested on the criminal charges, and another four were taken into custody on immigration charges. Twenty-six defendants were already in state and federal custody. Authorities continue to search for 16 of the defendants named in the indictment.

Today's operation caps an investigation conducted by the HIDTA (High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) Task Force, in conjunction with the Los Angeles Police Department, that began in earnest in January with the establishment of several wiretaps. "The case highlights a progressive law enforcement model in which federal authorities join with their local counterparts to quickly investigate and charge significant numbers of gang members in order to remove them from neighborhoods they have

plagued for long periods of time,” said United States Attorney Thomas P. O’Brien.

The gang problem in and around Drew Street received substantial attention earlier this year when several members of the gang murdered a rival gang member who was walking with his two-year-old granddaughter and later engaged in a shootout with Los Angeles Police officers. These shooting incidents are alleged as racketeering acts in the indictment.

According to the 157-page indictment returned by a federal grand jury on June 12 and unsealed this morning, members and associates of the Drew Street gang are part of a criminal enterprise that, at its heart, is a violent, drug-trafficking organization. The Drew Street clique is part of the Avenues street gang in northeast Los Angeles, and is alleged to control drug-trafficking activity and, to a significant degree, all manner of life, in the area surrounding the intersection of Drew Street and Estara Avenue. The organization allegedly operates and maintains its control through attacks directed at law enforcement, intimidation, extortion, and robberies and murders of both rival gang members and members of the general public.

The leadership of the Drew Street gang – notably “shot-caller” Francisco “Pancho” Real, 26, who is the lead defendant in the indictment – collects “taxes” from those who sell narcotics in the neighborhood, according to the indictment. A portion of the taxes is then paid by gang leaders to the Mexican Mafia. Drew Street gang members also allegedly raise funds for the Mexican Mafia by conducting armed home-invasion robberies and collecting extortion payments from area businesses. The Mexican Mafia allegedly authorized Francisco Real to take control of the Drew Street clique less than a year ago.

Francisco Real allegedly demanded a \$30,000 extortion payment from the owners of two businesses in the neighborhood in March. When one victim balked, Francisco Real stated that their businesses were in his territory, according to the indictment. Later, Francisco Real and two associates allegedly drove to one of the businesses and told a victim that Francisco Real controlled the area and the victim was required to pay \$30,000 or Francisco Real would kill him and burn his businesses.

Fifty-one defendants are named in the first count, which alleges violations of the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act. The charge

alleges that the Drew Street gang is a criminal enterprise designed to distribute crack cocaine, powder cocaine and methamphetamine. The RICO charge also alleges a host of criminal activities designed to preserve the power of the Drew Street gang, crimes such as murder, witness intimidation and attacks on police. The first racketeering charge alleges 87 racketeering acts, with more than half of those acts occurring just this year.

"For the past few years, if you heard someone refer to 'Drew Street' in Los Angeles, the word 'gang' would quickly follow because drugs, guns and fear plagued this once promising neighborhood," said Timothy J. Landrum, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration. "That's why I can understand residents who routinely said that they thought this day would never come – a day when the 'good guys' would win a significant battle in a gang war that has brought so much tragedy to so many innocent people. With today's arrests of 28 gang members, it's time to once again start referring to Drew Street not as a gang, but as a neighborhood and a community. Today, DEA, with the strong support of our Los Angeles HIDTA partners, has severely impacted this violent gang and drug-trafficking organization in Northeast Los Angeles."

In addition to the criminal case, the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office has filed civil actions – nuisance abatement lawsuits – seeking injunctive relief for nine properties on Drew Street and one located a block away on Chapman. The lawsuits are designed to bring to the properties armed security guards, security cameras, strict tenant screening measures and evictions of individuals involved in narcotics activities. The lawsuits also seek orders directing property owners to reside in their properties, attend neighborhood watch meetings, and provide regular maintenance.

"Local, state, and Federal law enforcement agencies are working together every day to put criminal street gangs out of business and return our neighborhoods to our law-abiding residents," said City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo. "Today's operation represents the largest scale use of property abatement actions against a street gang in the history of this city, and it's a testament to our commitment to using newer, more effective strategies to deal with gangs. Our action will have a lasting and positive impact upon local residents."

The Los Angeles Police Department has also developed a three-prong strategy

to bring the Drew Street neighborhood back to law-abiding residents. Today's enforcement action, including the arrests and the property abatement proceedings, is phase one. The second phase will be to deploy a mobile command center and to hold a community meeting tonight. In phase three, there will be an ongoing government presence in the neighborhood, with police walking the streets and workman conducting beautification efforts.

"Today's joint city, state and federal agency operation is the first phase of a three-step plan to restore hope and revitalize a residential and business community," said Los Angeles Police Chief William J. Bratton. "Collectively, we remain committed to effecting positive change in this community."

During the course of the investigation, authorities seized 35 firearms, including seven guns that were discovered during this morning's operation. Members of the Drew Street gang obtained guns from a number of sources, one of whom was bringing firearms from Arizona, which they used in relation to various crimes, according to the indictment.

"Violence should not control our neighborhoods," said Christopher Shaefer, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Los Angeles Field Division. "Our homes, where we raise our children and families, should be a safe haven. The residents of Drew Street should sleep better tonight knowing that positive change is imminent. ATF and our partners will continue our mission to keep the public safe."

Immigration authorities also played a role in this investigation. The second defendant named in the indictment – Mara "Chata" Leon, 44, who is the mother of several other defendants charged in the indictment – was arrested in April on charges of being an illegal alien who was previously deported from the United States. Four other people were arrested today on federal immigrations violations.

"Today's enforcement action deals a major blow to a ruthless criminal organization whose violence and brazenness has made them notorious even among other street gangs," said Robert Schoch, Special Agent in Charge for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Los Angeles. "Attacking and dismantling dangerous street gangs is one of ICE's top enforcement priorities. We are gratified when those

efforts result, as they did today, in the capture of suspected criminals who used violence and intimidation to hold an entire neighborhood in their sway.”

The activities of the Drew Street gang have reached beyond its neighborhood. Francisco Real, for example, lived in Glendale, where he was arrested this morning. “The citizens of Glendale have been victimized by members of the Drew Street area gang for many years,” said Glendale Police Chief Randy G. Adams. “The Glendale Police Department is pleased to be involved in the investigation and eventual prosecution of these career criminals. Gangs and their criminal activity know no geographic boundaries and the joint efforts of local, state and federal agencies will make a difference.”

Thomas M. Jankowski, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of IRS – Criminal Investigation’s Los Angeles Field Office, stated: “The indictment of Francisco Real and members of the Drew Street gang on federal racketeering, narcotics trafficking, money laundering and asset forfeiture charges is the result of a highly successful multi-agency investigation into the gang’s criminal activity. IRS – Criminal Investigation plays a unique role in federal law enforcement in that we target the profit and financial gains of criminals and their organizations. IRS - Criminal Investigation specializes in following the money, enabling increased criminal prosecutions and asset forfeitures as a result.”

Defendants arrested during this morning’s operation will be making their initial appearances in United States District beginning this afternoon and continuing tomorrow morning.

An indictment contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

This case is the product of a 10-month investigation by the Los Angeles High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Task Force, which is made up of agents and officers from federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. The Los Angeles HIDTA received significant contributions to this Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation from: the Drug Enforcement Administration; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; IRS - Criminal Investigation; the Los Angeles City Attorney’s Office; the United States Marshals Service; the Los

Angeles Police Department; the Ontario Police Department; the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department; the Riverside County Sheriff's Department; the Riverside Police Department; the Glendale Police Department; the Long Beach Police Department.

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Release No. 08-088