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# ***Washington/Baltimore HIDTA Youth Gang Situation Report***

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prepared by

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***"Enough is Enough"***



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◆ This report is specially prepared for the Washington/Baltimore HIDTA

## **Table of Contents**

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>I. Overview</b>  | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>II. Gang Membership</b>  | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>III. Regional Assessment</b>                                   | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>IV. Gang Migration</b>   | <b>19</b> |
| <b>V. Forecasting the Youth Gang Problem</b>                      | <b>20</b> |
| <b>VI. Knowing the Signs</b>                                      | <b>21</b> |
| A. Colors/Symbols   | 21        |
| B. Magazines  | 21        |
| C. Hair   | 22        |
| D. Tattoos and Jewelry  | 22        |
| E. Sports Teams Paraphernalia                                     | 23        |
| F. Hand Signs   | 23        |
| G. Graffiti   | 24        |
| H. Right/Left Rule  | 25        |
| <b>VII. Conclusion</b>  | <b>25</b> |
| <b>Appendix A: Location of Youth Gangs in Baltimore City 1997</b> |           |
| <b>Appendix B: Gang Migration Map</b>                             |           |

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June 1998

## I. OVERVIEW

The United States has seen a rapid proliferation of youth gangs since 1980. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP's) National Youth Gang Center recently conducted the first nationwide survey of the youth gang problem. In this 1995 study, 2007 law enforcement agencies reported gang activity in their jurisdictions. Of these agencies, 50% reported the problem as "getting worse." In 1980 there were approximately 2,000 gangs and nearly 100,000 members. Presently, there are a reported 23,000 gangs with more than 650,000 members.<sup>1</sup> This report examines the youth gang problem in the Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (W/B HIDTA), consisting of Northern Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia.

**Table 1: Number of Gangs in the United States:  
1975-1995**

| Survey                 | Number of Gangs |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Miller, 1975**         | 1,730           |
| Miller, 1982**         | 2,285           |
| Spergel & Curry, 1988* | 1,439           |
| Curry et al., 1992*    | 4,881           |
| Curry et al., 1994***  | 8,625           |
| Klein, 1995**          | >9,000          |

\* Specific cities identified

\*\* Number of gangs involves estimates

\*\*\* Number of gang members is a conservative estimate, which makes no adjustment for agencies that were unable to report due to lack of data

## II. GANG MEMBERSHIP

The National Crime Index Center (NCIC) defines a gang by the following criteria:

- 1) must be an ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, and
- 2) the group must have a common interest and/or activity characterized by the commission of or involvement in a pattern of criminal or delinquent conduct.<sup>2</sup> Criminal or delinquent conduct includes narcotics distribution, firearms or explosives violations, murder, extortion, obstruction of justice (including witness intimidation and/or tampering), and any other violent offenses such as assault, threats, burglary and/or carjacking. Delinquent conduct is behavior of a juvenile that would be a crime if committed by an adult. Criminal conduct includes acts committed during incarceration often labeled "disruptive" that would be punished as crimes.

Gangs are territorial, often but not always composed of the same gender, and operate by creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation in the community. According to Charles S. Clark (1991), youth gangs have been documented in American society since the 1850s, and the first comprehensive study of gang activity in the United States was published as early as 1927 by criminologist Frederick M. Thrasher.<sup>3</sup> Thus, gang formation is not a new phenomenon. However, what is a new trend is the number of youths participating in gangs, their earlier age of involvement, the characteristics of the participants and the level of violence, especially related to drugs.

Urban youth gangs first emerged in the United States around the late 1960s. This movement began on the West Coast in Compton, California, between two rival high schools that sported school colors of red and blue. These groups adopted the names of



the "Crips" and the "Bloods." Over the past 20 years, the Crips and the Bloods have dispersed their criminal activity into 32 states and 113 cities.<sup>4</sup> Crips and Bloods were the first gangs to develop hand signs, colors and almost every other trend related to gang activity. As mentioned before, these two gangs were some of the first gangs to adopt a color, Crips (blue) and Bloods (red), largely due to the fact that those were their school colors and bandannas were readily available in those two colors.<sup>5</sup>

During the 1960s and 1970s, some gang members built coalitions, bringing the smaller gangs together to protect themselves from the bigger ones. These coalitions are known as the Folk and People Nations. Most nationally affiliated gangs like the Crips and the Bloods are a part of either the Folks or People Nations. It is important to note however, that smaller neighborhood gangs are not likely to be a part of these coalitions.

Recently, the Crips and the Bloods and other gangs have begun recruiting at a much earlier age. Nationally, it is reported that the average gang member is 13 years of age.<sup>6</sup> Numerous studies have been conducted to determine what factors entice youths to join gangs at such an early age. "Membership" invariably seems to be the answer.

Adolescents who join gangs obtain a sense of "membership" not otherwise available to them.<sup>7</sup> Most of these youths live in single-parent homes where family cohesiveness is not present. As a result, youths obtain this sense of cohesiveness and identification through gang membership. Gangs fulfill their need to bond to a family-like organization due to their pervasive lack of bonding to a caregiver. To achieve this need for bonding, adolescents are faced with a decision of whether or not to pursue gang membership.

Membership in a gang usually occurs in one of two ways. The most common practice of initiation is called "jumping in".<sup>8</sup> This practice typically entails being beaten

Baltimore County, MD youth gangs are much less violent in nature than other gangs in the HIDTA region. It has been reported that the presence of gangs is rising in Baltimore County, although it is difficult to determine at what rate. Currently, there are 12 gangs located in Baltimore County, all of which are leaderless, unorganized and have neighborhood status.<sup>14</sup> These gangs commit numerous auto thefts, residential burglaries, assaults, robberies and isolated reports of drive-by shootings. They are partially driven by the drug market, particularly marijuana and cocaine, but drugs are not their primary motivator.

Among other criminal endeavors is their recent interest in dealing weapons. Once again, 9 mms and Uzis are their weapons of choice. Gangs in Baltimore County vary in size from 5 - 20 members and are vastly different due to the transient nature of the communities. This transient nature is part of the reason Baltimore County does not report any nationally affiliated gangs in the area. However, some of the more prominent gangs in the County like the Pig Town Gang, Campfield Posse, Eastwood Posse, Second Avenue Crew, Cross Creek Boys and the Untouchables, find the area suits their criminal endeavors. These gangs operate in the areas of Lansdowne (Second Avenue), Lochearn (Campfield area), Cockeysville (Carnbrook Road), Woodmore Shopping Center, Essex (Essex Road and the Duke of Windsor Court) and the Rockdale Apartments located near Rolling Road and Church Lane.

There have been numerous reports of graffiti among all of these gangs and some of them are sporting tattoos with the initials of their gang. High schools in the area suffer from this gang activity, particularly when there is a sporting event among two rival high schools.

The Intelligence Unit of the Charles County, MD Police Department has identified 33 youths gangs in the area.<sup>15</sup> Unlike youth gangs in other HIDTA jurisdictions, drug trafficking does not seem to be the primary motivation of these gangs. They are involved in assaults, extortion, robberies, weapons trafficking, beatings, destruction of property, graffiti violations and drug distribution. Gangs in Charles County range in size from 5 - 30 members and in some instances even more. Some of the more prominent gangs in the area according to size are the 925 Gang, Dawg Pound, Dirty Mob, Hardee's Crew (possibly inactive now) and the 27 Mob. Similar to other gangs across the country, members are congregating at local shopping centers, fast food restaurants, malls, specifically in the areas of Bannister, La Plata (city and high school), McDonough High School, Waldorf, Carrington and the Bryans Road area. In addition to these gangs, Charles County continues to fight the battle against motorcycle gangs where groups like the Pagans, Phantoms, Iron Horseman, Fates Assembly, Tribe, Derelicts and the Kingsman have been involved in criminal activity such as murder, witness intimidation, arson for hire, prostitution, explosives and firearms trafficking.<sup>16</sup>

Charles County faces the unique problem of trying to curb the illegal activity of both youth gangs and motorcycle gangs. It is important to note that the youths are not members of these motorcycle gangs, partly because the level of criminal activity is far more extensive than the typical assault or drug deal associated with the youth gang.

Anne Arundel County, MD seems to be one of the more fortunate counties in the HIDTA region. According to reports within the Intelligence Unit of Anne Arundel Police Department, there is presently no gang activity in Anne Arundel County.<sup>17</sup> Anne Arundel deals with criminal activity associated with motorcycle gangs, like the Pagans,

but in terms of the youth population being involved in gang activity, the evidence indicates it is non-existent. Law enforcement officials attribute this lack of gang activity to the underdeveloped public transportation system in Anne Arundel County. Other jurisdictions have higher populations and require an immense amount of public transportation, which usually is accompanied by increased criminal activity.

Roughly a year ago, a group of Anne Arundel County youths claimed to be members of the Black Gangster Disciples. However, the leader of this so-called gang eventually moved back to Chicago and this teen group no longer exists.

Law enforcement officials in Howard County, MD report their youth gang problem is on the rise. According to Howard County officials, there are five youth gangs in the area that pose a significant threat to the surrounding community.<sup>18</sup> These gangs are involved in assaults, vandalism, auto thefts and breaking and entering. When dealing drugs, these gangs focus on crack cocaine and marijuana. Each gang consists of roughly 11 - 15 members, mostly African Americans and Asians. Even though unconfirmed reports indicate there might be more than five youth gangs in Howard County, the five gangs that are involved in the most violent crimes are the Long Beach Crew (LBC), Whiskey Bottom Crew (WBC), Six Pack Crew (SPC), Jessup Posse and the Head Bitches in Charge (HBIC). These gangs seem to be bonded to specific territories, but their criminal activity is dispersed throughout the county. A number of crimes committed involve 9 mms, BB guns and knives. Unlike gangs in other jurisdictions, youth gangs in Howard County have leaders. This leadership could lead to a more extensive criminal lifestyle among these gangs. The threat they pose to the surrounding communities is growing.

Montgomery County, MD classifies incidents as gang-related when a suspect's behavior is motivated by gang affiliation. There are a reported 42 gangs in Montgomery County and 70% of the crimes they commit are property crimes.<sup>19</sup> Of these 42 gangs, nine of them are involved in violent criminal behavior.<sup>20</sup> Montgomery County is reporting an increase in individuals who claim gang involvement. The number of individuals claiming gang affiliation has risen from 642 in 1996 to 1,015 in 1997.<sup>21</sup> Most of the problems in the county are related to property crime issues, although youth gang members last year committed 19 assaults, 11 auto thefts, four robberies, three weapons violations, a first degree assault and one arson. Gang sizes range from 15 - 25 members, all having diverse ethnic characteristics. Among the more powerful gangs are the Brotherhood Assassins (Gaithersburg), Langley Park Crew (Langley Park), Mara Salatrucha (Rockville, Gaithersburg and Wheaton), Oscos Poloras (Gaithersburg), El Palo (Silver Spring), Westside Mob (Rockville and Gaithersburg), Crips (Bethesda) and the Moonlight Strangers (Wheaton). It is important to note that the Crips mentioned above are not affiliated with the nationally recognized West Coast Crips in California.

Although the majority of their crimes are property crimes, the desire for weapons among these gangs is evident. Knives and 9 mms seem to be the weapons of choice among these youths.

Prince George's County, MD is viewed as one of the most "opportunistic" gang locations in the entire nation, according to community police officers. The county's definition of a gang is: a group that bands together for criminal activity, has recognizable organizational structure, identifiable leadership and is associated with a geographic area. By this definition, there are roughly eight youth gangs that specialize

in assaults; carjackings; robberies; vandalism and drug distribution, particularly marijuana and crack cocaine.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, there are a number of criminal crews that are not defined as a gang, but may be involved in many of the same criminal activities. For example, the Palmer Park Crew (PPC) is not defined as a gang in Prince George's County even though they recruit members by threats, brand the letters PPC on their arms and are involved in many of the same criminal activities these gangs are. The Palmer Park Crew intimidates young males in the community to join their gang, and there is a particular focus on young males that have just moved into the area and are vulnerable to gang membership. Thus, expanding the narrow definition of the gang by taking crews like the PPC into account, the total number of youth gangs in Prince George's County could be as high as 25 - 30. Prince George's County police define these groups as *emerging* or "*wanna be's*," not as a gang.

Gangs in the County range in size from 15 - 100 members and are mostly African American and Hispanic. Law enforcement officials are starting to see a trend of nationally affiliated gangs migrating to Prince George's County, which would account for the large number of members in some of these crews. Neighborhood gangs like El Palo, Langley Park Crew, Quincey Street and 55<sup>th</sup> Ave Crew, T.K.O., Rushtown Crew, Forest Heights Crew and the Glassmanor Crew are all prominent in PG County. Brown Union, a gang with national notoriety, is also located in Prince George's County.

There is a strong allegiance in Prince George's County to gangs in Chicago. Gangs like the Crips, Bloods, Latin Kings, and the People's Nation are all present in the county. Recently, Crip and Blood graffiti has been reported in areas around Southern Avenue and in vacant buildings in Oxon Hill. Unconfirmed reports state that youths in

the area have been seen wearing Kansas City Chiefs baseball caps (KC backwards represents "Crip Killer"). Baseball caps are also being sported by members of the People's Nation, wearing Pittsburgh Pirates caps that have a "P" on the front or Atlanta Braves caps that have an "A". The "P" stands for People and the "A" signifies Almighty. Present research suggests that only those gangs with a national affiliation model sports teams that represent their gang affiliation.

In addition to gangs migrating from Chicago, Prince George's County is also witnessing a slight migration of gangs from Florida and other states. It has been reported that the Latin Kings have recently been moving into this region from both Chicago and Florida, even though verification has not been supplied. Gangs from L.A. have also begun to expand into Prince George's County. County police observed a gang member with the insignia *Compton 13* on his chest, which is an established gang from Compton, California. The 13, either on its own or in conjunction with another word means the gang member is from Southern California, or below Bakersfield.<sup>23</sup> As stated before, these gangs are moving to this region because of opportunities available in the drug market. This trend could prove dangerous in the years to come because of the possibility that gangs migrating from the South and the Midwest will simultaneously meet in this region, forcing a confrontation.

In the early 1960s, there were a reported 70 crews (District of Columbia's name for gang) in the District of Columbia (DC). Today, Washington, D.C. has approximately 197 youth crews participating in all types of crime, most notably murder, carjackings, burglaries, and drug trafficking.<sup>24</sup> Crews in DC specialize in trafficking powder cocaine and marijuana, as well as carjacking former police cars to use as decoys

in "drive by" shootings. These crews range from 15 to 500 members and all have a strong commitment to violence. Brown Union has roughly 500 members and, according to DC Youth Gang Task Force, is one of the more authoritative crews in DC, along with the Southwest Mob (1<sup>st</sup> District), Barry Farms Crew, named after Mayor Marion Barry (7<sup>th</sup> District) and Lincoln Heights Mob (6<sup>th</sup> District).

It has been reported by task force officials that the most organized crews in DC are the Southwest Mob and Brown Union. This is in a large part due to their tight organization and their ability to manipulate other gangs. Brown Union originated in the area of 11<sup>th</sup> Street and M streets, NW, when one of their leaders relocated to DC from Los Angeles with his family several years ago.<sup>25</sup> Young teenagers who have not yet been "jumped in" to Brown Union are known as "Little Brown Union" or "LBU." In fact, police are looking into the possibility that members of LBU were responsible for the stabbing of three students that took place at Lincoln Middle School in DC on April 14, 1998.<sup>26</sup> Brown Union is involved in a wide variety of criminal activity in DC.

The District of Columbia has numerous street gangs or crews that are identified and named by the neighborhood in which they reside (i.e., 18<sup>th</sup> and D Street Crew). They do not have leaders and ranks like the gangs in Los Angeles or Chicago and with DC gangs, their solution to any conflict is usually murder. Similar to the crime families of the early 1900s, gang leaders in other cities assemble to negotiate when there is a potential gang war. According to DC task force officials, gangs in DC do not deliberate in that fashion. The District of Columbia has been described by police officers as the "Wild West" because gang members kill for the fun of it. Besides killing, it is not uncommon for crew members in DC to steal from or even kill family members.



Most of these gangs are very "loose-knit" organizations are starting to dabble in crimes that are unfamiliar to them, such as counterfeiting.

One act that all too frequently occurs among the DC crews is the gang war. Interestingly, the only time members all dress alike is when a gang war is about to transpire. Male members of the crew will dress in all black and females will have their hair rolled up in a bun before they are about to "head up," or fight.

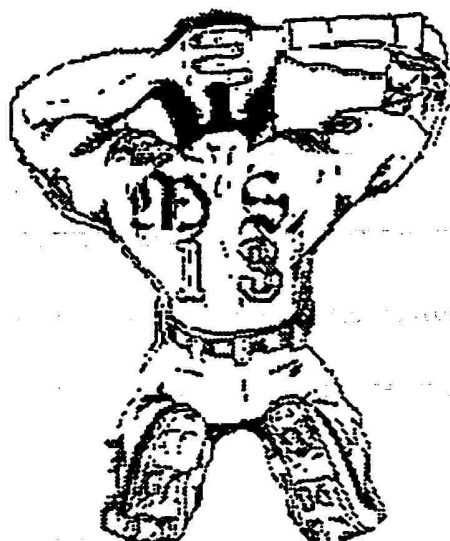
More recently, tattoos and graffiti are becoming increasingly popular among the crews in DC. Some crew members engrave R.I.P. on their arms with a list of murdered crew members under it. Graffiti can be interpreted a number of different ways. A common use of graffiti is to warn others that this is their territory or turf.<sup>27</sup> Another trend in claiming territory is to hang a pair of tennis shoes over telephone wires in the area the gang is claiming. Additionally, graffiti is sometimes used to threaten other crews members' lives. For instance, the numbers 187 (police code for homicide) "tagged" (crew slang for spray painted) on a wall with someone's name under it, implies a crew has a murder contract out on that person. According to DC gang specialists, unlike gangs in other cities, DC crews do all of the killing themselves.

Similar to other gangs in the nation, DC crews are equipped with some of the most deadly artillery available. AK47s, knives, semi-automatics, 9mm, Uzis, even ice picks are used in committing crimes. At times, female crew members are more violent than the male crew members. Male gang members are more concerned about the business aspects of the crew, e.g., drug trafficking, and females are more interested in making a name for themselves by establishing a reputation through extreme violence.

Oftentimes, the females engage in violence to maintain the reputation of their boyfriends who are in prison or are dead.

Throughout the city, new gangs are emerging and splinter groups are on the rise. This phenomenon is prevalent in the areas of DC that have public housing. As a result, it is becoming more difficult for DC police officers and criminal investigators to keep abreast of the youth gang situation.

The recent proliferation of youth gangs in Fairfax, VA is noteworthy. About two years ago, there were approximately 20 youth gangs in the Fairfax area and today there may be anywhere from 40 - 45 gangs. The more than 1,500 members are primarily involved in aggravated assaults, burglaries, and larcenies.<sup>28</sup> Gangs in Fairfax vary in size from 15 - 200 members and all have a high propensity towards violence. Two gangs in particular are posing a problem for law enforcement agencies in Fairfax: Mara Salvatrucha (MS) and the Tiny Rascal Gangsters (TRG). A long-term rivalry between these two gangs has existed for years, nationally and locally. Dating back to July 1997, MS consisted of close to six members. Since that time, the number has increased to roughly 200 members and continues to grow. This is chiefly attributable to the large number of Hispanics migrating to the Fairfax area. MS is a national gang with origins in Los Angeles and is representative of the entire southern portion of the W/B HIDTA region. The Tiny Rascal Gangsters also have national notoriety and were responsible for the shooting death of a juvenile outside Marshall High School on February 27, 1998.



- Mara Salvatrucha tattoo (13 indicates gang affiliation from Southern California)

Most of the gang activity in Fairfax takes place in the cities of Reston and Herndon, as well as along Route 1. Juveniles in this area tend to congregate at Springfield Mall and local movie theaters.

As with other jurisdictions, Fairfax gangs are very unorganized. They do not have leaders, ranks, or particular roles or positions within the group. They are mainly comprised of small neighborhood gangs, and lack internal organization. Undoubtedly, the task of law enforcement officials in Fairfax is to monitor the growth of MS.

In Prince William, VA, police officers in Manassas City report a 45% increase in the number of youths gangs since last year, while officers in Manassas County are reporting about the same number of youth gangs in that same time. Between Manassas City and Manassas County, there are 21 youth gangs in Prince William, 9 in Manassas City and 12 in Manassas County.<sup>29</sup> Assaults, vandalism, drug distribution, auto thefts, malicious wounding, burglaries, robberies and school crimes are among the most common offenses committed by gang members. Gangs in this area are significantly

larger and more organized than other youth gangs in the region, each consisting of about 20 members or more. They are described by local law enforcement officials as being moderately organized and having leaders. Those gangs that are not organized tend to form clicks or sub-elements of the gang. For example, in Manassas County, the 55 Mob has sub-elements: 55 Warriors, 55 Darkside and 55 Dirtyside.

The nine gangs known to law enforcement in Manassas City are: 202 Mob, La Roza, 18<sup>th</sup> Street, West Side, Mara Salvatrucha X III (MS X III), Las Diablos, Imperials, Las Locus and Latin Pride. Seven of the nine youth gangs in Manassas City are located in Georgetown South where youth violence has been a problem for the past ten years. On the other hand, Manassas County gangs do not draw from specific areas. These gangs believe they have specific territories, but reality indicates they in fact share areas with other gangs. The twelve youth gangs in Manassas County are: Gangster Disciples of the Folk Nation, 55 Mob, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels (DRS), La Raza, 606 Family, La Familia, Chronically Cured Crips (CCC), Tiny Rascal Gangsters (TRG), Georgetown Village, Mara Salvatrucha X III (MS X III), Royals and LA 17. Semi-automatics are preferred by these gang members due to their accessibility and power. Along with semi-automatics, gang members in this area have also been known to possess knives.

More recently, members of these gangs are flashing gang hand signs, sporting tattoos and wearing baseball caps with their gang name on the front and their surname on the back. A surname is the name given to a gang members by other gang members, such as C-Dog, G-Money, etc. These caps are being stitched for them by local seamstresses who profit from this hat market. As with any other gang area, the high schools are suffering from some gang-related issues, such as graffiti both outside and inside local

schools. Even though many high schools in Prince William have implemented a "zero tolerance" approach to gangs, the problem is still very persistent.

Incarcerated youths could pose a serious problem to the Prince William area in the future. Youngsters that have been sent to a juvenile justice facility usually come back to society better trained in "gangsterism" because of the training learned in jail. This could result in a number of new gangs emerging in the area, and as a result the level of crime could increase.

According to the Arlington County, VA Police, the youth gang problem has steadily increased since 1993. There are roughly six gangs in the Arlington County that participate in all crimes, especially assaults, breaking and entering, robberies and vandalism.<sup>30</sup> Gangs in Arlington County consist of roughly 16 - 20 members most of which are Hispanic. Some of the more powerful gangs in Arlington County are: La Mara Li, Mara Salatrucha (MS), Tiny Rascal Gangsters (TRG), Latin Pride Familia, Mara Persing and Little Locos. Four of these six gangs reside in the Columbia Heights West area. To intimidate, these gangs use both guns and knives when committing crimes. Gangs in Arlington County are becoming more violent and are displaying their gang affiliation more openly. They display their affiliation by tattoos and by wearing baseball caps with their letters embroidered on the front; e.g., Latin Pride Familia (LPF). Even though the youth gang problem in Arlington County may not be as severe as other counties in the HIDTA region, the need to address it is critical.

Alexandria, VA has had a constant gang problem in the area for the past six years, according to Alexandria police. Alexandria currently has 13 gangs which commit many crimes, specifically assaults, drive-by shootings, firebombing, threats, homicides,

auto thefts, robberies and drug distribution.<sup>31</sup> Crack cocaine and marijuana seem to be the most popular drugs, particularly with respect to dealing. Because some of these gangs are nationally affiliated and others are not, their membership sizes range anywhere from 6 - 30. The following 13 gangs pose the biggest threat to the city of Alexandria: Newberry Square, Dinky Honies, Section 8, 3000 Mob, 5000 Mob, Vatos Locos, La Siete, Mara Sulvatrucha (MS), Latin Homies, Brown Union, Park Terrace, Mara Li and Los Bravos. Although these gangs are scattered throughout the city of Alexandria, a disproportionate amount of them are located in an apartment complex known as the Hamlets. Also, many gangs are found in the area of Arlandria. Clifford Avenue, Manning Street, Holmes Run Parkway, Armistead Street and Duke Street are all heavily populated with gang activity as well.

Like other youth gangs in the region, these youths are using knives, clubs, pipes, shotguns, Mac - 11s, small caliber handguns and machetes. Alexandria police report the number youth gangs in the city has remained constant, while the level of violence has increased dramatically.

About a year ago, Loudoun County, VA was reporting the presence of three youth gangs in their area. Presently, there are five youth gangs in Loudoun County that specialize in threats, assaults, burglaries and breaking and entering.<sup>32</sup> "It's not that serious a problem right now, but it will be," according to Stephen O. Simpson, Sheriff of Loudoun County, where the presence of youth gangs has only recently surfaced.<sup>33</sup> Gang sizes range from 6 - 20 members and their average age is roughly 15 years old. The five gangs in Loudoun County that pose a threat to the community are the: Zoo Crew, 700 Mob, Oriental Bloods, 51 Crew and McPherson Crew. It should be stressed that the

Oriental Bloods are not affiliated with the California Bloods from Compton or Los Angeles. Gangs in this area are very unorganized and leaderless, but have a high level of allegiance to their gangs. After a shooting death of the 21 year old leader of the Zoo Crew, gang members wore their colors and gang apparel to Broadrun High School in a show of respect for their fellow gang member. Reports do not indicate whether the shooting was gang-related or not.

Gangs in this area reside primarily in the Loudoun House Apartment complex, Sugarland Run and the countryside area. Loudoun County suffers from gangs migrating in from the eastern part of Virginia, committing crimes of intimidation and then returning home. Even though the number of gangs in Loudoun County may not be as high as other HIDTA jurisdictions, the need to recognize this increase in gang activity and crimes that accompany them is essential in curbing any further gang problems.

#### IV. GANG MIGRATION

Gang migration is a recent phenomenon; relatively few cities report their first gang migration as occurring before 1986.<sup>34</sup> In most cities, including those in the W/B HIDTA region, the emergence of local indigenous gangs either proceeded the onset of migration (54 percent) or occurred the same year (41 percent).<sup>35</sup> See Appendix B.

Another example of gang migration, which has not been thoroughly researched, is the indirect involvement that universities play in the spread of gangs across the United States. Picture the following scenario:

A senior basketball player out of Chicago is about to graduate from high school and has received a number of basketball scholarships, including some from schools in the W/B region. He is also a Blood. He decides to attend a university in the W/B area and is accepted immediately among his teammates. They are mesmerized with his gang membership and decide to form their own sect of

- Youth Gangs are recruiting family members.
- Gang activity is on the rise in schools, at all levels.
- Jewelry, dog tags, graffiti, tattoos, branding and baggy clothing are popular.
- Incarcerated youths are being trained to become better gang members.
- Increase in gang activity could be a result of better intelligence gathering by law enforcement and non-law enforcement agencies in the area.

## VI. KNOWING THE SIGNS

Before assuming a youth is a gang member based on one identifier of gang involvement, law enforcement agencies, schools and parents should identify three or more characteristics of gang involvement. These identifiers include colors, magazines, hair, tattoos and jewelry, sports team paraphernalia, hand signs, graffiti and the right/left rule. Literature suggests if three or more of these characteristics are identified, further investigation is warranted.

### COLORS / SYMBOLS

| <u>GANG</u>     | <u>COLOR(S)</u>    | <u>SYMBOL(S)</u>  |
|-----------------|--------------------|---|
| BLOODS          | RED, AT TIMES GOLD | 5-POINT STAR  |
| CRIPS           | BLUE               | THE WORD CRIP   |
| EL RUKNS        | BLACK, RED & GREEN | CRESCENT MOON<br>WITH 5- POINT STAR;<br>PYRAMID WITH AN<br>EYE; NUMERAL 7 |
| MARA SALATRUCHA | BLUE               | MS x III  |

### MAGAZINES

One identifier that is undoubtedly gang related is the nationally distributed magazine *Teen Angels*, which targets Hispanic gang members. This publication should trigger concern to many authorities in the W/B region since a majority of the gangs in the



the Bloods in this area.

On an ESPN program, *Gangs and Sports*, this theory of gang migration seems somewhat prevalent in the United States, and reportedly contributes to the spreading of gangs.<sup>36</sup> It is extremely difficult to confirm whether a gang member that claims membership to a nationally affiliated gang like the Bloods and Crips is truly a member of that gang. Consequently, agencies should use caution when drawing conclusions on this migration phenomenon.

## **V. FORECASTING THE YOUTH GANG PROBLEM**

Due to the diversity of the gangs in the W/B region and their activities, many law enforcement agencies have trouble defining, or recognizing the extent of their gang problem. If this trend continues, the W/B HIDTA can expect to see more youth gangs migrate to this area, and as a result, crime will increase. While there are conflicting reports about the extent to which gangs play a role in drug trafficking, the vast majority of gang cases investigated nationwide by the FBI revealed that drug trafficking was the primary criminal enterprise supporting the gangs.<sup>37</sup>

### **Some current trends among youth gangs in the W/B HIDTA region:**

- Gangs are often loose confederations under general leadership, as opposed to strictly structured groups with a specific chain of command.
- Gang level of violence is increasing.
- There have been recent reports of nationally affiliated gangs migrating to W/B HIDTA region, but this is extremely difficult to verify.
- Membership diversity (gang members no longer share the same ethnic characteristics).
- Gangs are experimenting in unfamiliar criminal activity, becoming hard-core for-profit operations.

region are Hispanic. Recently, African American gangs are buying this magazine as well, so the readership is expanding.

## **HAIR**

Many gang members are wearing their hair according to current fashions among athletes and rap singers. Currently, either very short hair or corn-rows is popular among African American gangs. Hispanic gang members are wearing similar styles and tend to have mustaches and goatees. Female gang members are wearing their hair short as well, except for Hispanic female gang members who wear their hair very long.

## **TATTOOS AND JEWELRY**

Tattoos and jewelry are other ways for gang members to display their membership. Tattoos are very popular among Hispanic male gang members and may be located anywhere on the body. These tattoos can be found on their necks, arms, hands, backs and calves. Most of the gangs in the W/B area are tattooing initials of their gang. For instance, Mara Salvatrucha would have an (MS) tattoo and the Tiny Rascal Gangsters would have a (TRG) tattoo. Jewelry is also being used in the same fashion as tattoos and other identifiers. Sterling silver or gold medallions on a necklace or chain are very popular among gang members. The symbols below represent different gangs and are commonly found in any jewelry store. For instance, the five-pointed star (not shown) represents an affiliation with the People's Nation and the six-pointed Star of David are worn by members of the Folk Nation. A rounded crown is exclusively worn by Latin King gang members and dollar signs and revolvers are commonly sported by all gang members.



### **SPORTS TEAMS PARAPHERNALIA**

Sports team apparel is an important indicator of gang involvement. Any gang member will wear sporting apparel if the colors of that team correspond with their gang colors. In addition to the color, the letter on the front of the cap must correspond with the gang name or a gang philosophy. For example, a Blood might wear a Kansas City Chief hat because it is red and the KC on the cap could mean Crip Killer (backwards).

Members of the Folk Nation might wear a University of Illinois cap because the I and the U overlap into a pitchfork, which is a Folk Nation symbol. Baseball, football, hockey, basketball and collegiate teams are all used among gang members. Even sports brands such as Converse (People Nation), Nike (Folk) and Starter (People and Folk) are worn by gang members.

### **HAND SIGNS**

Gang members from the nationally affiliated African American and Hispanic gangs use hand signs to communicate. Hands and fingers are positioned in certain ways to represent letters, numbers and words.



HOOVER  
CRIPS



COMPTON  
CRIPS



NEIGHBORHOOD  
BLOODS

## GRAFFITI

Graffiti is a way to let the world know gangs exist. Graffiti may be written on walls, buses, trains, telephone poles, dumpsters, garages and street signs. It is often used to insult other gangs while glorifying their own. For example, graffiti from the People's Nations might contain an upside down pitchfork showing disrespect towards members of the Folk's Nation. Another way to show disrespect towards rivals gangs is to have their symbol broken in half or have an arrow going through it. Communities should be aware of what constitutes gang graffiti. One identifier is a common roll call on the side of a building (as seen below).



This roll call wall shows the moniker "Spanky" (notice how the letter "n" in Spanky is a downward pitchfork). Also, notice the five-pointed crown with five dots, which is a symbol used by the Latin Kings.

## **RIGHT/LEFT RULE**

The Folk and People gangs use direction, in other words, they emphasize the right or left side of the body to show their gang affiliation. For example, Folks display clothing and accessories on the right. This includes wearing gang-colored shoe laces on the right shoe, wearing gloves or earrings on the right, hanging bandannas from right pocket or rolling up their right pant leg. People gangs display their accessories the same way but on the left.

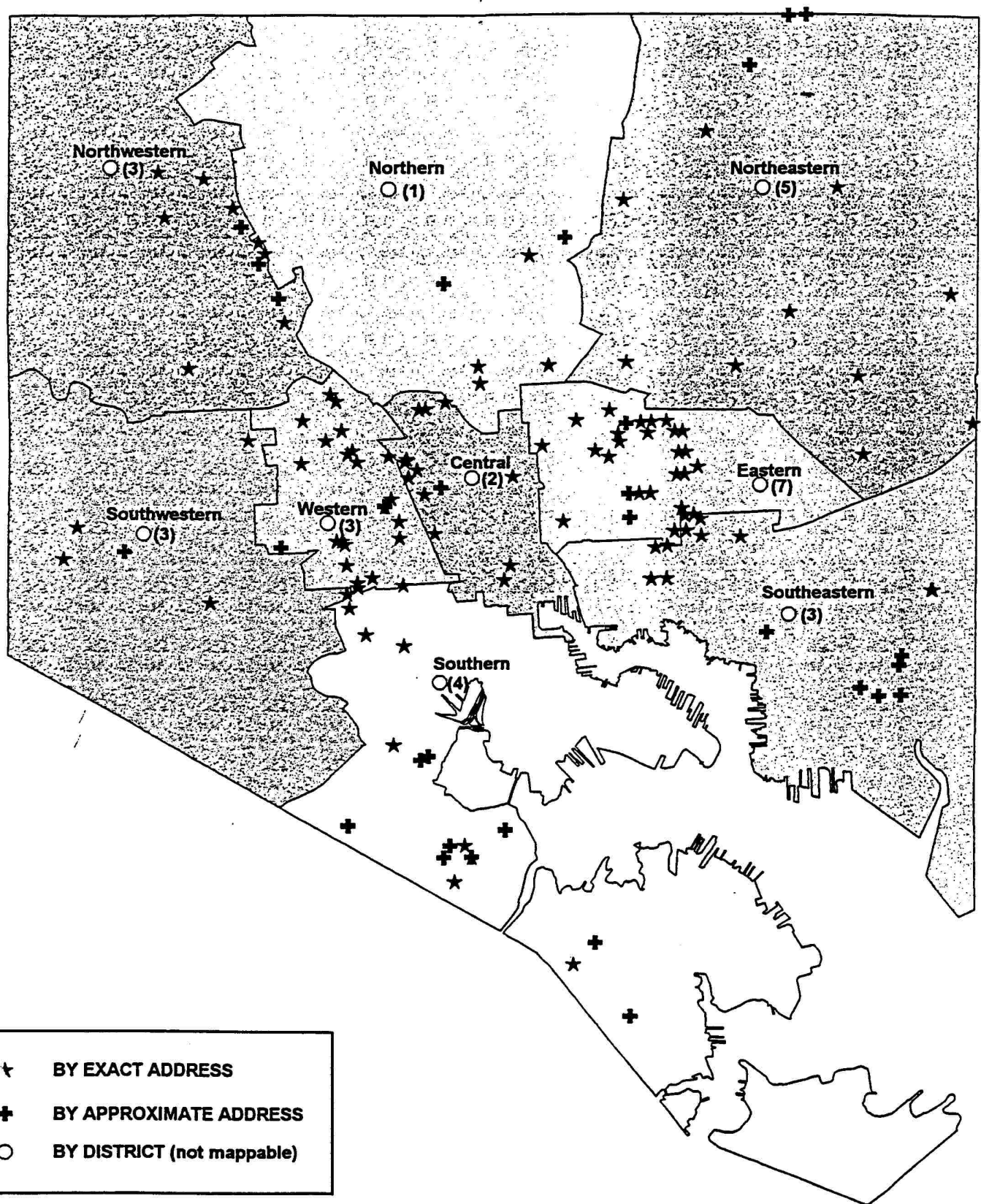
## **VI. CONCLUSION**

The findings of this report present a stark challenge to law enforcement agencies in the W/B region. These findings underline the importance for these agencies to address the youth gang problem as swiftly and severely as possible in order to curb the trend of the growing youth gang problem. The current increase in gang activity in the W/B region, specifically the migration of youth gangs to gang-free communities, requires all law enforcement agencies to adjust their resources to deal with these problems. In the past, these problems were deemed to rest largely outside the mandate of federal law enforcement, but the need for local, state and federal collaboration in dealing with this inter-jurisdictional crime problem is all too evident.

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- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention.
  - <sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, National Crime Index Center (NCIC). Systems Transition Unit.
  - <sup>3</sup> Thrasher, Frederick M. *The Gang*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.
  - <sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, National Drug Intelligence Center. *Bloods and Crips Gang Survey Report*. May 1994.
  - <sup>5</sup> Sachs, Steven L. *Street Gang Awareness*. Fairview Press, 1997.
  - <sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention. *OJJDP Fact Sheet: Youth Gangs*, December 1997.
  - <sup>7</sup> membership
  - <sup>8</sup> Curry, G.D. Gang community, gang involvement, gang crime. Paper presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C., 1995.
  - <sup>9</sup> Spergel, I.A. *The Youth Gang Problem*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995.
  - <sup>10</sup> Walker, M., Schimdt, L., Lunghofer, L. Youth Gangs. In M. I. Singer, L.T. Singer, T.M. Anglin (Eds) *Handbook for Screening Adolescents at Psychosocial Risk*. New York: Lexington Books, 1993, pgs 504-552.
  - <sup>11</sup> Washington Post, At Gang Summit, a Call for Answers, April 21, 1998, pg B08.
  - <sup>12</sup> Baltimore City Police Department. Detective Marco Miranda.
  - <sup>13</sup> Baltimore City School Police. Sergeant Richard Damon.
  - <sup>14</sup> Baltimore County Police Department, Intelligence Unit.
  - <sup>15</sup> Charles County Office of the Sheriff, Intelligence and Identification Manual.
  - <sup>16</sup> Maryland State Police, Criminal Intelligence Unit.
  - <sup>17</sup> Anne Arundel County Police Department, Intelligence Unit.
  - <sup>18</sup> Howard County Police Department, Youth Services Section.
  - <sup>19</sup> Kids and Gangs Conference, *Communities Make the Difference: A Model of Collaboration*, Johns Hopkins University, Montgomery County, March 12, 1998.
  - <sup>20</sup> Montgomery County Police Department, Special Investigations Division.
  - <sup>21</sup> Montgomery County Police Department. Drug Intelligence Section.
  - <sup>22</sup> Prince George's County Police Department, Intelligence Unit.
  - <sup>23</sup> Sachs, Steven L., *Street Gang Awareness*. Fairview Press, 1997.
  - <sup>24</sup> District of Columbia, DCPS, Youth Gang Task Force.
  - <sup>25</sup> Washington/Baltimore HIDTA, Joint Intelligence Project, Montgomery County Police Department, April 1996.
  - <sup>26</sup> Washington Post, Wounded Teens Leave Hospital, April 16, 1998; pg D05.
  - <sup>27</sup> Harris, Judith A. *Graffiti: A Thesis Paper*, 1996.
  - <sup>28</sup> Fairfax County Police Department, Youth Services Division.
  - <sup>29</sup> Manassas City Police Department, Grace E. Metz Junior High School.  
Prince William County Police Department, Criminal Investigations Division.
  - <sup>30</sup> Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Gang/Violent Crimes Task Force, Arlington County
  - <sup>31</sup> City of Alexandria Police Department, Criminal Investigations.
  - <sup>32</sup> County of Loudoun, Office of the Sheriff, Criminal Investigation.
  - <sup>33</sup> Washington Post, At Gang Summit, a Call for Answers, April 21, 1998, pg B08.
  - <sup>34</sup> Klein, Malcolm W., Maxson, Cheryl L., Woods, Kristi Woods. *Street Gang Migration: How Big A Threat? National Institute of Justice*. February 1996.
  - <sup>35</sup> Klein, Malcolm W., Maxson, Cheryl L., Woods, Kristi Woods. *Street Gang Migration: How Big A Threat? National Institute of Justice*. February 1996.
  - <sup>36</sup> Knox, George Dr. *ESPN's Outside the Lines: Gangs and Sports*.
  - <sup>37</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation. *Violent Street Gangs in America*. Statement of Steven R. Wiley, Washington D.C., April 23, 1997.

## **Appendix A**

# LOCATION OF BALTIMORE CITY YOUTH GANGS 1997

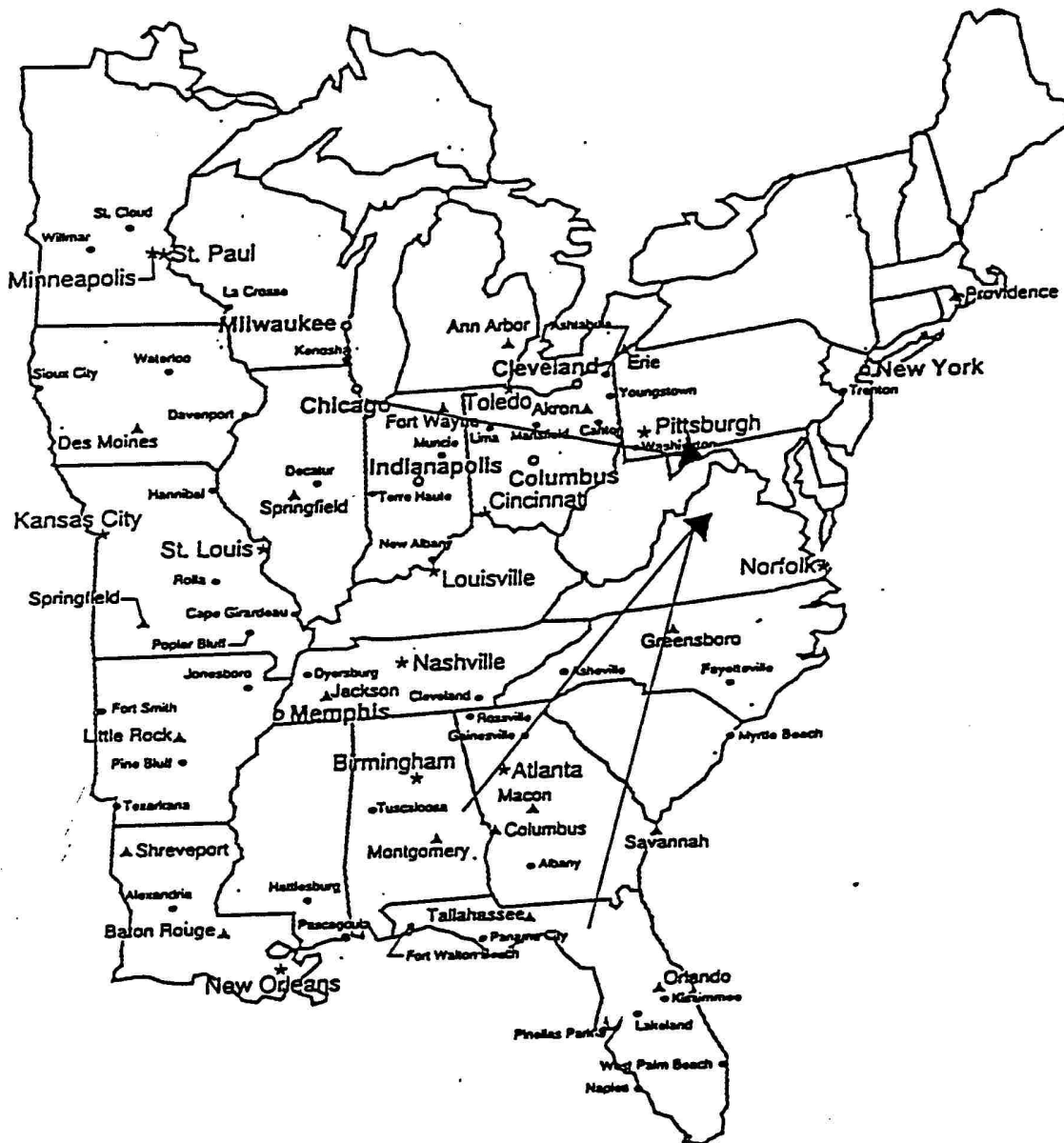




## **Appendix B**

# Reported Presence of Bloods & Crips Gangs

## Eastern United States



It is important to note the wave of Crips and Bloods migrating to the W/B HIDTA area from both the Midwest and the Southeast. Law enforcement agencies should be aware of this migration and develop strategies to combat this recent trend in gang migration.

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