

CITY OF RIVERSIDE/EASTSIDE GANG INTERDICTION PROGRAM

In January 1994, incidents of violent street crime began to occur on almost a nightly basis. Most of these crimes took place in the Eastside area of the City of Riverside and were committed by gang members against rival gangsters and innocent members of the community.

In response to this surge of gang violence, the police Gang Unit began intensified investigative efforts designed to target leaders of the predominant gangs. Police management ordered that conventional anti-gang tactics of "police sweeps" and arrests for minor violations not be used. Instead, a variety of investigative tactics were employed. Two of the more noteworthy were the use of undercover operatives to buy illicit drugs from gang members, and to engage gang members in the illegal sale of firearms. Gang members who participated in the illegal sale of a firearm were immediately arrested to insure the firearm remained under the control of law enforcement. The Gang Unit was also assisted in this covert operation by Agents from the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Riverside County Probation Office, the Riverside County District Attorney's Office and the Riverside City Attorney's Office. Funds from the department's Organized Crime Narcotics Grant (OCN) were used to buy the illicit drugs. Undercover officers infiltrated the targeted gangs and were successful in buying illicit drugs from 96 separate gang members or gang associates over the six month period that the covert operation was conducted. The successful prosecution of these gang members was significantly strengthened by the fact that each drug or gun sale was video taped.

Seventy-one gang members or associates who sold drugs to our undercover operatives were identified and warrants were issued for their arrest. Many of the gang members caught in this operation have been charged with multiple felony narcotic violations. This successful Riverside program has seen, to date, 17 members of the '1200 Block Crips' convicted and given a minimum of 7 to 20 years for their crimes. Five members of the 'Four Trey Crips' have plead or been convicted. Court cases and pleadings in these matters are continuing.

In a related investigation stemming from an arrest, members of the gang unit assisting ATF broke up a gun theft ring operating out of a business known as Lorcin Engineering, a gun manufacturing company located in Riverside County. Four arrests were made and 87 semi-automatic handguns were recovered. The investigation showed that several thousand weapons were stolen from the Lorcin plant. This covert operation utilized an ATF undercover operative and was monitored by Gang Unit personnel. Many of these weapons were connected to gang related crimes in our city.

As the Eastside Gang Interdiction Program was occurring, the community, city government and members of the educational and social services providers for the community formed strong bonds to address youth at risk. In addition to the strong enforcement approach taken against gangs and gang members, the police department and community developed anti-gang strategies.

The police department, in conjunction with the local school districts, has implemented the Gang Resistance Education and Training curriculum, commonly referred to as the G.R.E.A.T. Program. This program presents a united response to gang intervention and prevention. The G.R.E.A.T. Program has two fundamental goals; to reduce gang activity, and to educate a population of young people as to the consequence of gang involvement.

The City Attorney's Office, with the strong support of City Council, hired attorneys solely for the purpose of identifying and filing civil actions. Abatement proceedings, against those persons who maintain structures or properties attracting gangs and gang activities now begin immediately.

A series of meetings held at the police department to develop a multi-agency approach to gang enforcement has occurred. The Riverside Police Department has made space available to house representatives from Probation, District Attorney's Office, Parole, City Attorney's Office, and the Sheriffs Department to achieve effective enforcement actions.

Another outcome of the Eastside Interdiction Program was the development of a gang hotline; gang information distributed in English and Spanish to the community, and a surveillance log that can be picked up at all of the Police Area Storefronts in the City of Riverside or can be mailed to concerned parties.

As a result of promising program strategies from the Eastside Interdiction Program, Riverside has been selected as one of five cities in the nation to participate in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention National Gang Consortium.

This collaborative program, through the University of California Riverside, will implement and test a comprehensive program model design for gang prevention, intervention and suppression, to mobilize the multi-disciplinary leadership of the community.