

Gang War News



Prison artwork depicting a Norteno and Sureno at war. Artwork by Frank De La Cruz

Vacaville police to focus on gang activity

By Robin Miller / The Reporter

Posted: 05/22/2010 01:01:10 AM PDT

The Vacaville Police Department is planning series of meetings in the Markham/Rocky Hill neighborhood in coming weeks aimed at helping residents stay informed about and prevent gang activity there.

The idea is one of several that will be detailed for the Vacaville City Council on Tuesday by Police Chief Richard Word.

In a detailed report to the council, Word outlines what gang activity exists in the city, what efforts are being made to deal with it and what future steps can be taken.

Fighting the problem first requires an understanding of it, he notes in the written report included with the City Council agenda packet.

"Why do youth join gangs? There are many different reasons," Word wrote. "Some ... are drawn by parties, girls and drugs. Some are looking for a sense of respect and power. Others find a feeling of caring and attention in a gang. It becomes almost a surrogate family for them."

There are two validated street gangs active in the city: the Norteños, who are associated with Nuestra Familia prison gang, and the Sureños, who are associated with the Mexican Mafia prison gang.

Norteños are the largest, Word noted, with about 200 members and associates, a large number of whom live in the Trower neighborhood and consider Trower Park their "turf."

Sureños number around 100 in Vacaville, and Word said they live throughout the city without a concentration in any one area.

Both gangs have their own "code of conduct" and often celebrate violent acts against their rivals and use violence to enforce their gang culture, he said.

"Many of the gang members in our community come from a familial background of gang membership, with cousins, siblings, parents and even some grandparents being members or affiliates of the gang," Word noted.

Despite a spate of recent shootings, including the March 5 shooting death of Beto Padilla, 17, in the 100 block of Meadows Drive, and the May 3 wounding of three people on Rocky Hill Road in a shooting incident, Word said 2009 showed a steep decline in gang-related incidents from the previous year and that 2010 is on a pace to mirror 2009.

Still, the city can and will do more to deal with the issue, he said.

In addition to existing efforts, including awareness programs, directed patrols and gang enforcement, he said his department will look at such ideas as implementing a gang injunction similar to what Fairfield has in place to crack down on problem gang members.

In addition, he said the department will begin meeting with residents of the most impacted neighborhoods to discuss gang prevention, intervention and suppression efforts. The department also will continue pursuing state and federal grants for programs that have proven effective in combating gangs.

The Vacaville City Council meets at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the Council Chamber, 650 Merchant St.

Arraignment today in slaying in Gonzales shooting

The Monterey County Herald
Herald Staff Report
Posted: 05/14/2010 01:30:28 AM PDT
Updated: 05/14/2010 01:30:30 AM PDT

A Gonzales man arrested in connection with a fatal February shooting is scheduled to be arraigned today in Monterey County Superior Court.

Prosecutors have charged Alfredo Gonzales, 19, with two felony counts of attempting to dissuade a witness and one felony count of accessory to murder after the fact with sentencing enhancements, alleging the crimes were committed for the benefit of a Norteño criminal street gang.

Gonzales was scheduled to be arraigned Thursday in Salinas, but because of an error he was mistakenly taken to the courthouse in King City, prosecutor Emily Flores said.

Chief Assistant District Attorney Terry Spitz said Gonzales did not fire the shots that killed Jose Antonio Jimenez, 27, on Feb. 21.

Gonzales police said a 15-year-old boy is being sought in connection with the shooting. His name has not been released because he is a minor.

Spitz said no murder charge was filed against Gonzales because there is not enough evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that he acted in cooperation with the gunman.

Gonzales police said Jimenez, Gonzales and the 15-year-old suspect attended a party in an apartment at 550 Fanoe Road. As guests were leaving about 3 a.m., there was an argument and Jimenez was shot, police said.



With confiscated guns from gang members in the foreground, Watsonville Police Chief Manny Solano lays out the details of Operation Groundhog on Monday in Watsonville surrounded by District Attorney Bob Lee, Watsonville Mayor Luis Alejo, Santa Cruz Police Chief Howard Skerry and gang investigator Tom Corral. (Dan Coyro/Sentinel)

Eight Sureno gang members busted during Operation Groundhog in Watsonville already convicted, four sent to state prison

By Jennifer Squires

Posted: 05/10/2010 07:35:18 PM PDT

WATSONVILLE - Four of the gang members arrested during Operation Groundhog, a year-long Watsonville police investigation into a violent Sureno street gang, have been sentenced to state prison, District Attorney Bob Lee said Monday.

Another four have been convicted of charges and sentenced to local jail time or probation, according to Lee.

In total, 45 suspected Poorside gang members were arrested during the probe and two others are wanted, according to Watsonville police.

Gang investigators said they targeted Poorsiders after seeing an increasing number of violent acts linked to the gang, believed to be the largest Sureno gang in Watsonville with about 200 members. Watsonville Police Chief Manny Solano said the gang is responsible for at least 10 violent incidents - drive-by shootings, assaults, armed robberies and stabbings - in the past year.

"Gangs are the No. 1 problem we have in this county," Lee said.

"Because gangs respect no boundaries, we too respect no boundaries," Solano said.

While there are more Norteno gang members in Watsonville than Surenos, police went after the Southerners because recent gang operations in Watsonville and the region - such as Operation Red Bull in September 2007 or Operation Knockout in Salinas last month - targeted Northerners.

Poorside Watsonville members were getting more violent and doing "real brazen things," Solano said.

Using informants and other investigative tactics, a team of five Watsonville police officers went after the gang's leadership and most active members. As the operation grew, police sought assistance from the FBI, the District Attorney's Office and the county's Anti-Crime Team. Some Watsonville police officers were even deputized as federal agents and put on the FBI payroll during the investigation, Solano said.

"This investigation is really just the end result of organizations working together for a common goal ... fighting gangs," Lee said.

They called the probe "Operation Groundhog" because they didn't want gang members to know where police would pop up next, according to Solano. During the final days of the investigation, police served search warrants in Watsonville, the rural areas surrounding the city and even on the Santa Cruz's Westside.

Officers seized 18 guns, seven of which had been reported stolen, as well as brass knuckles, a butterfly knife, shanks, heroin and methamphetamine during the operation. Police filled tables with the recovered weapons during a press conference Monday afternoon.

Gesturing at the pile of guns, Watsonville Mayor Luis Alejo said, "We all know these guns that are here before us represent lives saved."

The guns had been stolen during car break-ins and home burglaries. Some of the suspected gang members were arrested for allegedly trafficking firearms, something Solano characterized as small-time selling or trading among the gang, not gun smuggling.

The results of ballistic tests that could link the rifles, shotguns, revolvers and semiautomatic pistols to violent crimes are pending.

The operation stretched out for more than a year, in part, to reduce personnel costs for police and attorneys involved in the investigation, Lee said. His office did not rack up any overtime hours handling the cases, Lee said, and Watsonville police kept their costs to a minimum, according to Solano.

To date, eight people have been convicted, Lee said.

In the most severe case so far, Victor de la Torre, 19 was convicted of a gang-related assault and will serve 10 years in state prison.

Angel Magana, 20, was convicted of gang participation and gun possession. He is serving a two-year state prison sentence. Jose Gonzalez was convicted of gang participation, conspiracy to commit assault and evading police. A judge sent him to state prison for five years, according to Lee.

Jesus Rocha Zamora, 19, was convicted of gang participation and served a 270-day jail sentence. Francisco Nova, 30, was convicted of possessing drugs for sale and served a 180-day County Jail sentence, according to Lee.

Jose Guadalupe Raya, 18, admitted a probation violation and is serving a 93-day jail sentence. Juan Garcia, 32, and Rudy Cobos, 52, each were convicted of possessing drugs and sentenced to a Prop. 36, a drug treatment program. They are out of police custody, Lee said.

Ricardo Fernandez, 18, was convicted of gang participation and conspiracy to commit assault. He is awaiting sentencing, but already has agreed to serve four years in state prison, Lee said.

Honorato Rincon, 31, was convicted of gang participation and gun possession. He was sentenced to 270 days in County Jail, which he is serving, and also is one of four men arrested who have immigration holds on their cases. Federal authorities are reviewing the immigration status of Rincon and the three other suspected illegal immigrants. It's possible they will be deported once their local cases are adjudicated, Lee said.

Among the 45 arrests, two suspected gang members are juveniles. Also, 22 of the men arrested face strikes, which means their offenses could carry longer prison sentences if convicted, Lee said.

"Those cases give us a lot more leverage," he said.

At least four suspected gang members will be in court this week for preliminary hearings, Lee said.

There are cases pending against other suspects, according to Watsonville Deputy Police Chief Rudy Escalante. In total, 51 alleged gang members were identified during Operation Groundhog, he said.

Still, police acknowledged that the culmination of Operation Groundhog does not signal the end of gang violence in Watsonville.

"We recognize this isn't going to solve everything," Solano said.

He, Lee and others from the justice system were meeting Monday afternoon to discuss their next collaboration. Before the day was over, suspected gang members shot a laborer on the Pajaro River levee during a botched robbery.

Vacaville shooting leaves 3 wounded

By Cecil Conley/ CConley@TheReporter.com

Posted: 05/04/2010 01:48:51 AM PDT



Vacaville paramedics wheel a shooting victim to an ambulance. The victim was airlifted to UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento. (Rick Roach)

Two Hispanic males and a Hispanic female were shot Monday afternoon in what Vacaville police are investigating as a gang-related incident.

The shooting occurred at about 4:30 p.m. in the 100 block of Rocky Hill Road, an area that police have said is well-known for Norteño gang activity. A green Ford Explorer parked in front of the victims' house is tagged with "XIV," or 14, a telltale symbol of the Norteños.

The three victims -- Edberto Flores, 21, Jose Villasenor, 19, and Martha Avila, 17 -- were among eight people standing in a driveway when the two suspects approached

them, Lt. Jan Makowski said. Two children were among the group as one person was washing a car, according to a press release.



Vacaville police officers on Monday examine a bullet hole above the garage of a home in the 100 block of Rocky Hill Road. (Joel Rosenbaum)

The suspects parked what was described as a red or maroon Dodge Caravan near the intersection of Rocky Hill Road and Markham Avenue, Makowski said, and walked to the house.

Once the suspects arrived, a verbal exchange ensued during which the suspects made a reference to the Norteños and then one suspect opened fire, Makowski said. The victims did not know the suspects, he added, and ran into the garage along with the others in the driveway as the gunfire erupted.

Flores and Villasenor are members of the Sureño gang, Makowski said.

A lockdown was conducted in the after-school program at nearby Markham Elementary as police and paramedics raced to the scene. Crime scene tape was stretched between cars, trees and light poles to cordon off Rocky Hill Road from Brown Street to Highland Avenue.

As of press time, the suspects remained at large after fleeing in the van. The suspect that police believe was the shooter was described as a 5-foot-10 Hispanic male, 19 or 20 years old with a medium build. He was wearing a black T-shirt and black pants.

The second suspect matched the physical and age description of the first suspect and has a shaved head. The second suspect was wearing a blue shirt, black pants and a red belt.

Red is the Norteños' color.

Police spotted a bullet hole in the house's garage door and one in the garage door's trim. As investigators combed the scene, a white T-shirt soaked with blood remained in the driveway.



A Vacaville paramedic walks Martha Avila, 17, one of three shooting victims, to an ambulance. She was struck in the left forearm. The other victims were both hit in the torso. (Rick Roach)

Villasenor was shot multiple times in the torso, Makowski said, and was transported by helicopter to UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento. Flores was taken by ambulance to the center after being shot once in the torso. Avila was transported to Kaiser Permanente in Vacaville after being shot in the left arm.

The victims all underwent surgery, Sgt. Jeff King said, and none of their wounds were life-threatening.

Monday's shooting occurred five blocks north of where 17-year-old Beto Padilla was gunned down March 5 in what police called a gang-related crime. Police have said the three young men charged in that incident are associates or members of the Sureño gang in Fairfield.

Two other males were injured in that incident.

Wilsonville gang member convicted of attempted murder

By [Rick Bella, The Oregonian](#)

April 29, 2010, 4:54PM

OREGON CITY -- A Clackamas County jury found a Sureño gang member guilty Thursday of attempted murder for shooting at a rival Norteño gang member last summer during a 3-year-old's birthday party at Wilsonville's Memorial Park.



Roberto Pantoja Bucio Roberto Pantoja Bucio, 28, of Wilsonville also was convicted of unlawful use of a weapon, menacing and recklessly endangering another. Under Oregon law, Pantoja Bucio will receive a minimum of 7 1/2 years in prison, said Clackamas County Deputy District Attorney Chris Owen, who prosecuted the case.

Sentencing is set for May 7.

According to trial testimony, Pantoja Bucio is a member of the Sur Treces Califas gang, a subset of the Southern California-based Sureños, who have strong ties to organized crime. During the past year, he clashed with Mark Camarena-Zamora, 19, a member of Canby's Brown Pride Norteño gang, a subset of the rival Northern California-based Norteños.

Last July 28, after about 200 people gathered for a party at the park's Murase Plaza pavilion, Pantoja Bucio grabbed his handgun and drove to the park to find Camarena-Zamora. When they saw one another, they exchanged gang signs -- an insult and a challenge.

Covering his gun with a blue bandana -- Sureño colors -- Pantoja Bucio then shot at Camarena-Zamora and his girlfriend. Chaos ensued, with mothers and children ducking under picnic tables.

The next day, witnesses called Wilsonville police and identified Pantoja Bucio as the gunman. Wilsonville police then worked with Canby officers to investigate the case.

Pantoja Bucio testified that he was not looking for Camarena-Zamora and was simply out to buy a newspaper. He said he shot his gun only when he felt threatened by Norteños.

Man shot and stabbed in San Jose's seventh homicide

San Jose Mercury News

By Sandra Gonzalez

April 22, 2010

San Jose police Wednesday night were investigating the fatal shooting and stabbing of a 21-year-old man attacked west of downtown.

The victim, who later died at a local hospital, was the city's seventh homicide this year.

His identity was not released and his assailants were still outstanding late evening in what may have been a gang-related assault.

At about 9:30 p.m., police received reports of a fight at Willard Avenue and San Carlos Street. There, they found the victim who had been stabbed and shot, said Officer Jose Garcia said.

Late Wednesday, police had blocked off the area as they searched for the potential suspects.

Wednesday's slaying was the second killing in San Jose in the past month.



Joann Duran, top right, grandmother of shooting victim Larry Martinez Jr. - covered by the yellow tarp - cries in anguish near the corner of Sixth and Church streets in November 2008. Duran's boyfriend, David, comforts her.

Gang killing case set for preliminary hearing

Apr 21, 2010

By Sara Suddes/Morgan Hill Times

The preliminary hearing for four young adults charged with the murder of a teen just blocks from the Gilroy Police Department is set to begin next week.

Attorneys expect the hearing to last two weeks. The proceedings were scheduled to begin Monday but one of the defense attorney's involvement in a car accident pushed the hearing out a week.

Nov. 11, 2008, Larry Martinez, 18, was shot and killed by a rival gang in broad daylight near Sixth and Church streets, according to police. Invoking a rarely-used

rule - the provocative act murder theory - District Attorney Dolores Carr charged not only the man police believe pulled the trigger, alleged Sure'o gang member Cristian Jimenez, but also two of Martinez's friends and a cousin for contributing to his death for the benefit of a criminal street gang.



Men and women allegedly linked to the death of Larry Martinez Jr. in November 2008. Top row: Robert Barrios, Heather Ashford, Angel Solorzano. Bottom row: Cristian Jimenez, Edgardo Centeno.

Robert Barrios, 21, Heather Ashford, 19, and Angel Solorzano, 20, did not intend to kill Martinez, their attorneys said. But even though they didn't fire the gun that killed their friend and cousin, the three face conspiracy and murder charges for contributing to Martinez's death during a clash with a rival gang. Martinez, Solorzano and Barrios were Norte'o gang members, police said.

But Martinez's grandmother, Joann Duran, who stood outside the courtroom Tuesday morning as attorneys conferred inside, said that even though the teen had a troubled past, he was working to turn his life around. Released from Preston Youth Correctional Facility just days before his death, Martinez planned to attend a job interview the day he was killed, she said.

Duran drove up from her home in Gilroy Monday and Tuesday to attend the proceedings in San Jose.

"I am here for Heather and the two boys," Duran said of Ashford, Barrios and Solorzano. "They did not kill my grandson."

Ashford and Martinez were cousins, and Barrios and Solorzano grew up with Martinez, said Duran, who is also Ashford's godmother.

"He and Heather were like this," she said, holding up two fingers pressed tightly together.

Jimenez, 22, also faces a murder charge and a felony gun possession charge for pulling the trigger of the gun that killed Martinez, according to court documents.

About half an hour before the shooting, Jimenez and two other Sure'os who are still at large - Edgardo Centeno, 20, and an unnamed juvenile - threw a rock at the car Martinez and Solorzano rode in while Ashford drove, according to police. After a brief discussion, Ashford, Martinez and Solorzano picked up Barrios and returned to confront the Sure'os, police said. Armed with a small bat, Martinez and his friends snuck up on the Sure'os from behind, provoking the rival gang members to turn and shoot, prosecutors said.

The specific details leading up to the shooting are unclear as the police reports and court file have not been made public. Police only released a three-page "statement of facts" after the incident because of the violent nature of the shooting and the gang affiliations of those involved.

The four codefendants' preliminary hearing is scheduled to begin 9 a.m. April 26 in Department 39 of the Hall of Justice in San Jose.

Life sentence for teen in gang shooting

April 19, 2010 11:55:00 PM

[By Rob Young/Appeal-Democrat](#)

To celebrate his 17th birthday last year, Francisco Javier Orozco shot a rival gang member, also 17, three times with a 12-gauge shotgun.

On Monday, Orozco was sentenced in Yuba County Superior Court to life in prison with the possibility of parole — after 17 years. He pleaded guilty in March to a charge of attempted murder.

Orozco — a validated member of the Mara Salvatrucha gang, or MS-13, according to a Yuba County Probation Department report — was unemotional as Judge Kathleen O'Connor read the sentence, which she said was being imposed in part to send a message to other young gang members.

The victim in the case, Angel Perez, could not attend the sentencing because he still must undergo three more surgeries, his mother told the probation department.

Perez, a member of the Norteños gang, was making a call outside his home at 10th and Blue streets in Marysville late the night of Sept. 24, 2009, when Orozco

fired from a car, hitting Perez in the right hand, lower back, buttocks, right shoulder and the side of his head, according to a probation report.

In an interview, Orozco told a probation officer that he fired the shots to show two high-ranking members of an area branch of the Sureños gang that "the work is put in" toward becoming a member. The two Sureños, both adults, disappeared after the [shooting](#), said the prosecutor in the case, Deputy District Attorney Mike Byrne.

Orozco told the officer he wanted to join the local Sureños branch because MS-13 leaders in Southern California wanted closer ties with Northern California Sureños gangs "to become a stronger and larger gang."

Before the shooting, Orozco sent this e-mail to a Sureños member from Biggs, according to the report: "Ey dawg u down to pick me up tomorrow night and pick some homies up n go buster huntin since my birthdays tomorrow."

A "buster" is a derogatory term for Norteños.

"Ey ese u down to blast sum busters tonight I got my strap," Orozco went on.

Orozco said he drank nine beers before the shooting.

"I don't know, (the shooting) just (expletive) happened. They passed the gun back to me," he told the officer.

Orozco himself was once shot in a gang-related incident, according to police.

"I actually do feel pretty bad because I know what it's like to get shot by rival gang members," Orozco told the officer.

According to the report, Orozco has at least 19 [tattoos](#). Most of them refer to death, he said, because MS-13 "pretty much means death."

Orozco's previous juvenile record includes theft and shoplifting. On Sept. 11, 2009, Marysville police found him with a stolen, loaded .38-caliber revolver that Orozco said he needed to defend himself from Norteños.

Orozco attended Marysville Charter School, where he was in the 11th grade.

The judge said Orozco will begin serving his sentence with the California Youth Authority, then be transferred to an adult prison after his 18th birthday in September.



Lucas Benjamin Molina, 19,

Guibrán Ramirez, 20,

Sergio Meza, 19,

GUILTY PLEAS ENTERED IN FATAL GANG FIGHT

April 17, 2010

By **Anita Burke**
Mail Tribune

MEDFORD — In a packed Jackson County Circuit Court room Friday morning, three young men admitted to participating in a gang fight in September that left a 24-year-old Central Point man dead.

Lucas Benjamin Molina, 19, Guibrán Ramirez, 20, and Sergio Meza, 19, each pleaded guilty to two counts of attempted second-degree assault and a riot charge for their roles in a melee at an apartment complex in the 600 block of Beatty Street, Medford. Each was sentenced to four and a half years in prison — 18 months for each charge — and two years of post-prison supervision.

They were the final three suspects to appear in court for their roles in the Sept. 15 fight that led to Marco Antonio Diaz's death.

Statements they signed in court outline what happened in the violent confrontation and note that the three, initially indicted on first-degree assault charges that would have carried longer sentences, cooperated with police and prosecutors.

"We were prepared to go to trial, but we got everybody to agree to this narrative," said David Hoppe, the deputy district attorney who prosecuted the linked cases.

Getting members from two Hispanic street gangs to agree to the same facts was a key to finding all those involved and holding them accountable, he noted. However, prosecutors also had video from a business near where the fight happened and physical evidence collected at the scene.

The statement describes how Diaz, Meza and Jose Salvador Banuelos-Mercado, 20 — all associated with a Sureño gang called the Southsiders — went to confront members of a Norteño gang called the Northsiders.

They planned to seek out 19-year-old Manuel Enrique Castillo, who had stabbed Diaz's younger brother in January 2008 and spent 30 days in jail for the assault.

Dustin Michael Freeman, 22, dropped off Diaz, Meza and Banuelos-Mercado, all of whom had been drinking, at a KFC on McAndrews Road on the evening of Sept. 15. They walked to the Beatty Street apartments where Castillo lived.

When they arrived, members of the opposing gang yelled "Northside," and threw rocks and bottles at them, the statement says.

Banuelos-Mercado fled the confrontation, but Diaz and Meza stayed to fight, the statement says.

Diaz had a baseball bat and Meza was armed with a golf club and two knives, the statement says.

"When you show up at a gang fight with a weapon, you have agreed to it and it is mutual combat," Hoppe said, explaining that under the circumstances, the fighters couldn't claim they were defending themselves or their friends.

While Castillo and two other people stayed inside his apartment, locking doors and avoiding confrontation, four other Norteño associates joined the escalating confrontation, the statement says.

Mauricio Humberto Teran and Juan Antonio Gonzalez-Marquez, both just 14, joined Ramirez and Molina, who had been drinking and using drugs throughout the day, in fighting the Sureños, the statement says.

Ramirez carried a butcher knife to the fight, but dropped it when Meza hit him with a golf club. That knife was found at the scene of the fight, but forensic tests found no blood on it, prosecutors said.

Molina knocked Meza to the ground, sending a fillet knife clattering out of Meza's pocket, the statement says. Molina continued to hit Meza while he was on the ground, at one point opening a gash on the back of his head with the bat.

Teran, who had come to the fight with a baton, was fighting with Diaz when he picked up the fillet knife that had fallen from Meza's pocket. Teran stabbed Diaz twice in the chest, causing the wounds that proved fatal several hours later at Rogue Valley Medical Center, the statement says.

Prosecutors said that the bloody fillet knife also was found at the scene of the fight, which sprawled across an alley and parking lot, as well as in the apartment complex laundry room. DNA tests determined that the blood on the knife was from Diaz.

After being stabbed, Diaz ran with Ramirez and Gonzalez-Marquez in pursuit, the statement says. He fell to the ground and they punched and kicked him in the head and along his body.

In response, Meza rushed toward Ramirez with a pocket knife, slashing at him and causing a minor injury that didn't require treatment. Ramirez threw Meza to the ground.

Molina charged at Meza again with the bat, and Meza cut a deep slashing wound in Molina's abdomen, the statement said. Meza's stabbing of Molina and Ramirez was caught on surveillance video.

The Norteños then retreated. Meza tended to the fallen Diaz and attempted to carry him away, but then ran off, leaving him behind.

Teran also ran into the night. Gonzalez-Marquez went back into Castillo's apartment and Castillo and the two others inside came out to take Molina and Ramirez to Providence Medford Medical Center.

Neighbors called police to report the fracas just before 8 p.m. on Sept. 15. Paramedics treated Diaz and rushed him to Rogue Valley Medical Center, where he later died.

Molina underwent surgery at Providence, and hospital officials notified police of the stabbing. Ramirez fled before police arrived.

As the group returned to the Beatty Street apartment, they picked up Teran, who admitted to them that he had stabbed Diaz twice in the chest, the statement says.

Under the agreement reached with prosecutors, Meza, Molina and Ramirez were all willing to testify against Teran, the statement says.

Teran pleaded guilty March 17 to second-degree manslaughter for delivering the fatal blows. He was sentenced to up to 10 years of detention by the Oregon Youth Authority.

Gonzalez-Marquez pleaded guilty to second-degree assault and was sentenced to up to 10 years of detention by the Oregon Youth Authority.

On Friday, Meza pleaded guilty to attempted assault charges for knocking Meza to the ground and hitting him in the head with a baseball bat, then charging at him again with the bat. Ramirez's assault charges are linked to punching and kicking Diaz in the head after he had been stabbed and throwing Meza to the ground.

Meza's charges come from stabbing Molina and slashing Ramirez, court records show.

In sentencing each man, Barnack repeated that they could have faced much longer sentences if they had been found guilty at trial instead of cooperating with police and prosecutors and entering today's pleas.

"The state is being kind to you," Circuit Court Judge Tim Barnack told Meza, stressing that as a former prosecutor he believed that the cases should have gone to trial.

"I would give you more time if I could," Barnack told Molina in court.

"I don't want to see you again," Barnack said, pointing out that the actions Molina admitted were part of a fatal fight, making him partially responsible for Diaz's death, even if he didn't directly kill him.

"What you did was despicable," Barnack said to Molina, pushing the sullen young man to apologize.

Ramirez had prepared a statement offering his apologies and condolences to Diaz's family and the community.

"It wasn't our intention to cause a murder in our town," he said. "I hope I can get my life back on track."

Hoppe also read a statement from Ramirez's parents, offering their condolences to the Diaz family and asking for forgiveness for their son.

Meza was quick to tell the judge that he would strive to avoid future trouble.

"You won't see me again," he said.

The judge, prosecutors and police all stressed that gang activity would not be accepted and those involved would be held accountable.

"We don't tolerate gang activity or wannabes here," Barnack said.

Medford police Lt. Tim Doney, head of the Medford Area Drug and Gang Enforcement Team, said not only had the perpetrators been punished, but the case had pushed the community to respond with gang prevention and enforcement efforts.

"This tragedy has rallied community groups to stop this violence and keep this a great place to live," he said.

Valley gang membership, violence on the rise

Turlock Journal

By Sabra Stafford

Crime Desk

POSTED April 16, 2010 9:46 p.m.

It would likely come as no surprise to anyone to learn that criminal street gangs have become a problem for the Central Valley. Gang activity, which was once seen as a problem relegated to the larger cities, has now entrenched itself into nearly every suburb, township and city that make up the Central Valley.

As their presence has grown over the decades, so have the crime statistics. Communities can no longer solely rely on the law enforcement agencies and courts to find a solution to the problem and have had to come up with multi-prong tactics to combat gang violence and negate their influence over youth.

"We can't arrest our way out of the problem," said Lt. Gary Watts, supervisor of the Central Valley Gang Impact Task Force. "Our true hope lies in prevention and early intervention. With them, maybe we will see a different world."

If the community needed a better reminder than the graffiti and gang insignia scrawled on fences and street signs that gang violence is taking its toll, it need not look any further than last year, when Stanislaus County saw a record number of gang-related homicides, shootings and assaults.

The largest group falling victim to gang violence are 10 to 24 year olds. A 2009 Centers for Disease Control report listed homicide as the second leading cause of

death for young people between the ages of 10 to 24 years. This age group may be the largest segment of victims in gang violence, but it is also the largest age group of perpetrators. The most dangerous gang members are usually those between the ages of 14 and 18 years, because they have the most to prove, said Robert Gumm, an officer with the Modesto Police Department's gang unit and previously with the

Central Valley Gang Impact Task Force.

"We are losing a whole generation of our kids to gang violence," Gumm said. Within Stanislaus County there are at least 5,000 documented gang members with the actual number closer to 10,000 to 12,000, according to the task force. Nearly all types of gangs are represented, from Asian, African-American, white and outlaw motorcycle, but the largest gangs are Hispanic-oriented. Of the gangs present in Stanislaus County, 85 percent are classified as Hispanic. Within the Hispanic gangs, the Nortenos and the Surenos have the most influence in this region.

Both gangs grew out of prison gangs — the Nortenos are from Nuestra Familia and the Surenos are from La Eme, — the Mexican Mafia. The Surenos are associated with the color blue and the number 13, which is for the thirteenth letter of the alphabet — M. The Nortenos associate themselves with the number 14, for the letter N and typically wear red, though some have started wearing green, the color they are assigned in the county jail, Gumm said.

Statewide, the Nortenos are not as large as the Surenos, though their numbers are growing, largely in part because members do not have to be Hispanic to be part of the gang. Stanislaus County has long been considered Nortenos territory, and violence in the past was brought about by gang infighting. But now, Gumm said, as more Surenos are moving into the area, the violence is sparked by turf wars.

As the violence has grown, school districts, community groups and churches have taken a more active role in the areas of prevention and intervention, while law enforcement and prosecutors have come up with more innovative ways of suppression.

"There is hope," Watts said. "We can find a solution to this epidemic."

Three men to stand trial on gang charges

by Eric Firpo / Tracy Press

Apr 14, 2010

STOCKTON — Three men will stand trial on gang charges related to a Tracy homicide on Dec. 19, and a 16-year-old boy will join them on accusations related to a spree of violence

on Dec. 16, a judge ruled today.

Armondo Hernandez, 20, Robert Arias Jr., 19, and Martin Flores, 21, face homicide, street terrorism and other charges related to the killing last year of Spencer Sampson, who died hours after he was shot on his 21st birthday.

Jose Arturo Hernandez, 16, no relation to the elder defendant, faces no charges related to Sampson's death, but he will be tried on an attempted homicide charge and other accusations related to several acts of violence on Dec. 16.

The men and the 16-year-old face more than 60 counts against them, and today, Judge Bernard Garber, after a preliminary hearing that took place on four days scattered over roughly one month, found enough evidence against the defendants to rule they must stand trial.

Tracy police Detective Matt Sierra took the stand to finish his testimony today. He told the court he interviewed Jose Hernandez, who said he had taken part in an attempted shooting, a beating and was in a car when another man was shot, all on Dec. 16.

Hernandez told the detective that the defendants, all Sureño gang members, had gone out that day and night into known territory of the Norteño gang, the predominant gang in Tracy, Sierra testified. In earlier testimony, witnesses said the defendants were tired of being pushed around by Norteños.

The detective said the young Hernandez told him that Arias shot and wounded Edward Rigor at the Tracy Garden Apartments after the boy earlier in the day intentionally missed a man he shot near C Street.

"See, this is how you do it," Arias told Hernandez when he got back to their SUV, the detective said.

The Sampson shooting stemmed from an argument between Flores and Sampson early in the day on Dec. 18. Sampson, who Sierra said was a Norteño, saw Flores in the Bonfare Market and asked him if he was a "scrap," a derogatory word for Sureños.

Later that night, Flores, Armondo Hernandez and Arias saw Sampson walking down East Street with his sister and a friend, a fist fight ensued, and Sampson was shot once in the chest.

Flores attorney Ralph Cingcon tried to get gang charges thrown out against his client. Flores has no gang tattoos, was not know to Tracy police as a gang member, and had only met Hernandez and Arias a few days before Sampson was shot.

But Garber said Flores need not be in a gang to be charged with criminal acts done on behalf of a gang.

Livermore police announce numerous arrests connected to gang-related homicide, beatings

By Roman Gokhman

Contra Costa Times

Posted: 04/08/2010 05:08:28 PM PDT

Updated: 04/08/2010 05:08:28 PM PDT

LIVERMORE — Police announced today the arrests of six suspected Norteno gang members who between October and December 2009 allegedly brutally beat and stabbed several people and killed another, all who the suspects believed were rival Sureno gang members.

During the course of an investigation, police learned a Bay Area leader of the Norteno gang had issued orders to attack Sureno gang members on sight, Livermore police Lt. Ava Garavatti said.

However, none of the victims — all Latino men — were associated with a gang, she said.

"Nothing about their clothing would distinguish them from anyone else," she said.

The first attack took place Oct. 26 near the corner of Walnut Street and Livermore Avenue, where a man was stabbed to death after he was mistaken for a rival gang member.

On Wednesday, police arrested Raul Martinez Jr., 26, on suspicion of the homicide.

On Nov. 16, a man who was beaten while waiting at a bus transfer station near the intersection of First Street and Livermore Avenue, was also mistaken for a Sureno gang member. He was approached by six people who beat and kicked his face and head. The beating continued after he lost consciousness, police said.

Police arrested David M. Navarro, 27, on Nov. 19 and Anna E. Delarosa, 20, on Feb. 18, in connection to that assault.

Three others — Juan C. Preciado, 20; Fernando D. Perez, 19; and Ronnie R. Martinez, 18 — were arrested between Dec. 30 and March 30 in connection with the attempted murder of another man, who was stabbed on Dec. 30. He was also mistaken for a rival gang member., police said.

"All cases are still under investigation, but we do see additional suspects involved in three cases," Garavatti said. "We are trying (to identify them)."

Anyone with information on these cases or other gang beatings can call Garavatti at 925-371-4730 or Sgt. Paul Mayer at 925-371-4846.

Testimony: Fear led man to turn in fellow gang member in Amore's shooting

By *The Record*

February 11, 2010 4:01 PM

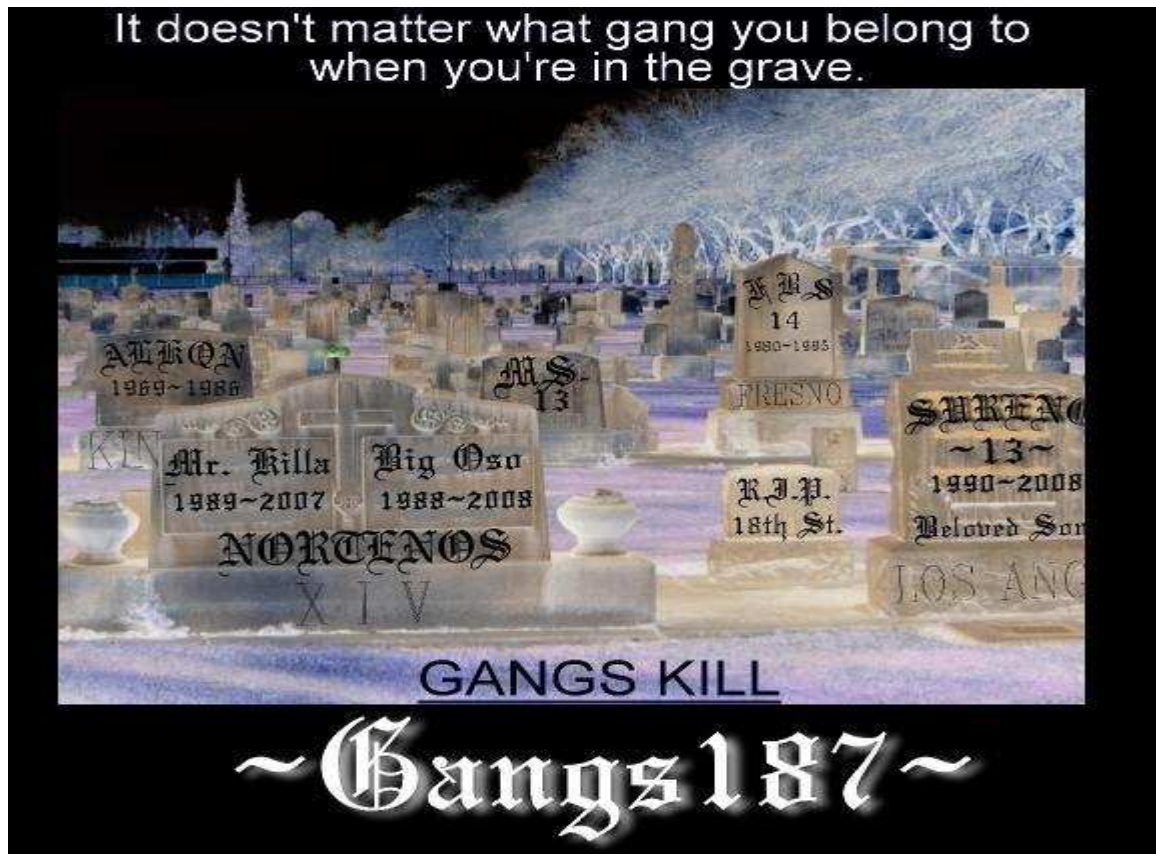
STOCKTON — A Tracy man testified today in court that the fear of getting into trouble led him to report a fellow Norteño gangster to police after an Oct. 10 shooting at Amore's Italian Restaurant that killed an innocent man.

Mark Garcia, 24, in a preliminary hearing for three of them men charged in the slaying told a judge that Michael Mau, 24, fired seven or eight times back into the restaurant after security ejected them amid a brawl.

Garcia, who is not charged in the case, said Mau's shooting scared him because he didn't want any trouble.

A total of seven people are charged in connection with the shooting that killed Naim Bey, 41, and injured six others. Elvis Mendoza, 28, and Johnny Martinez, 24, were in court along with Mau for the hearing expected to take several days.

Read Friday's Record for more on this story by staff writer Scott Smith.



© 2010 Gangz187