

Texas Gangs News



Ex-Mexican Mafia hit men detail gruesome killings

They testify against 3 former bosses about the ordered slayings

**By CRAIG KAPITAN
SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS**

May 13, 2010, 10:57PM

SAN ANTONIO — Three former Texas Mexican Mafia hit men engaged in a matter-of-fact, business-like tone Thursday as they described for federal jurors their participation in five San Antonio slayings.

Onetime mafia sergeant Ricardo Saenz said he agreed to testify against three high-ranking members who were once his bosses because he's seen too many people die. He also has nothing to lose, he added, explaining that the organization has already called for his assassination.

"They put the green light (for a hit) on me before I even cooperated," he said from the witness stand at the San Antonio federal courthouse. "They decided I know too much. I'm always going to have that light on me, until they kill me or I disappear."

The trial, which began Monday and could last up to a month, focuses on racketeering charges against accused Mexican Mafia general Jacinto "Cache" Navajar and lieutenants Mike Garcia and Jose "Bam Bam" Martinez.

They are the last defendants to stand trial after a four-year, FBI-led investigation that resulted in 34 arrests in 2008. Most of the defendants took plea deals, and now some are starting to appear on the witness stand.

Initiations involved

Saenz described three slayings he said he was ordered to participate in while a member of the gang from 1996 to 2002. In each case, he brought a prospective member with him as part of an initiation, he said.

"If you're going to kill me, just do it," Saenz recalled Jaime "Speedy" Lopez telling him.

"No, that's not what it's all about," Saenz responded as they drove to a vacant house.

Saenz said he and a new recruit beat Lopez to death with a hammer. Saenz later shot Lopez's corpse as it was being buried in the back yard of the vacant home because a lieutenant wanted bullets in him, he said.

Former members Victor Huerta and Frank "Frosty" Velasquez Jr. detailed two other killings that they said were ordered by gang leaders.

Huerta recalled putting on latex gloves as another member wiped his gun of prints in preparation for killing Jesse "Psych" Medina as part of Huerta's initiation. Medina, he said, was already bloodied and lying face down in a back yard with his hands bound when he met him. Huerta was given a rock and told to hit the man in the head if he regained consciousness, which he did. He later shot Medina four times, Huerta said.

Velasquez recalled participating in the hit of Mafia member Robert "Beto" Gleason, accused of ignoring an order to leave town. Velasquez said he and a recruit were able to get into Gleason's apartment and shoot him in the head and heart.

Defense attorneys pointed out Thursday that each of the witnesses were hoping for reduced sentences — giving them motivation to lie.



John H. Woods Federal Courthouse in San Antonio, Tx.

One of three defendants accused of being Texas Mexican Mafia portrayed as a sinner, but not guilty

May 12, 5:59 AM • [San Antonio Headlines Examiner](#) • Jack Dennis

The last three of over 30 defendants accused of being members of the Texas Mexican Mafia, began trial in U.S. District Judge Orlando Garcia's court on May 11, 2010 for murder and racketeering charges in the San Antonio area.

Jacinto "Cache" Navajar, Jose Martinez, and Mike Garcia, are charged by the federal government of being high level leaders of the Texas Mexican Mafia gang.

State and local law enforcement officials, working with the FBI, indicate the three were part of a leadership board that directed and ordered the murders of possibly dozens of people in south central Texas.

In 2008, many of the 34 defendants took plea bargains to avoid prison life sentences.

Attorney Steven Price, representing Navajar, cautioned the jurors to be alert about the unreliability of the "largest parade of killers and thieves" the government will present as witnesses.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Joey Contreras introduced the Texas Mexican Mafia in his opening statement as existing only "to commit crime after crime after crime, including murder."

Price indicated Navajar was a sinner, who spent 29 of his 54 years on earth in jail, but was not guilty of the charges in this case.

The parade of witnesses will be concerned about their own interests suggested Price.

Contreras, who is prosecuting the case with Bexar County Assistant District Attorney Mary Green, readied the jurors for the trial by indicating there will be testimony regarding drug distribution, forced tax fees on drug dealers, and other illegal tactics.

Attorney Kevin Collins, representing Martinez said the government's witnesses are unreliable because they have the motivation to lie for reductions of prison sentences.

Collins suggested some of the witnesses are being paid and the case is based on "hearsay, innuendo and outright lies."

The three defendants face up to life in prison.

Joe Stenberg, the attorney for Garcia, did not make an opening statement.

Dallas gang member sentenced to 20 years for assaulting federal officers

Ethiopian Review

April 22nd, 2010 at 12:42 am

DALLAS – A local gang member who shot at four law enforcement officers last June during a drive-by shooting was sentenced Monday to 20 years in federal prison. This sentence resulted from an investigation conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Dallas Police Department (DPD).

Rene Salazar, 20, of Dallas, was sentenced April 19 by U.S. District Judge Sam A. Lindsay, Northern District of Texas, to 20 years in prison. Salazar was convicted at trial in January on two counts of assaulting a federal officer, and one count of possessing a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence.

The government presented evidence at trial that on June 24, Salazar, a member of the East Side Homeboys street gang, shot at four law enforcement officers. The officers Salazar shot at included two ICE special agents and two officers from the DPD Gang Unit. All four were taking part in “Operation Community Shield,” an ICE operation targeting gang members.

According to evidence presented at trial, that evening, at about 9:45 p.m., these officers had arrested a known gang member in the 400 block of Grandview Ave. The two DPD officers were in a marked squad car, wearing blue police uniforms with a badge on the front, a “Dallas Police Department” insignia on the shoulder, and “GANG UNIT” or “DALLAS POLICE” prominently displayed in large white letters on the front and back of the uniform tops. The two ICE agents were driving an unmarked government vehicle and wearing body armor with the words “POLICE ICE” prominently displayed on the front and rear.

After the arrested gang member was transported from the scene, the two ICE agents and DPD officers remained at the scene to continue the investigation. One DPD officer was inside the squad car and one ICE agent was next to the car speaking with that officer.

The other DPD officer was located on the curb speaking with a citizen about an unrelated incident, while the second ICE agent was near his vehicle providing cover.

A man, later determined to be Rene Salazar, drove down Grandview Ave., past the officers, in a gold four-door sedan with a passenger. Salazar stopped at the Grandview and Santa Fe avenues intersection, pointed a pistol out of his car window, and fired three shots at the officers. He then slowly turned onto Santa Fe Ave. and fired two additional shots at the officers. All four officers took cover to avoid being hit by the gunfire. The two ICE agents and one of the DPD officers drew their weapons and aimed them at Salazar. However, they were unable to safely return fire because of the densely

populated neighborhood. This intersection is just down the street from Woodrow Wilson High School.

The DPD officers jumped into the squad car and sped away in pursuit of Salazar and soon thereafter, located the gold four-door sedan, driving with its lights turned off, down Alton Ave. The officers chased Salazar to a residence in the 300 block of South Henderson Ave., where Salazar jumped out of the car and ran into a residence.

After waiting for additional support, officers entered the house and removed the other occupants for their own safety. Officers located Salazar in the shower and arrested him. After obtaining consent to search the house from Salazar's father, officers located the gun in the freezer.

Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Hector M. Valle and Assistant U.S. Attorney Charles Brown, Northern District of Texas, prosecuted this case.

This investigation was conducted as part of Operation Community Shield, ongoing national ICE effort to target foreign-born violent gang members. As part of this initiative, ICE partners with other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to target the significant public safety threat posed by transnational street gangs. Partnerships with local law enforcement agencies are essential to the initiative's success, and they help further ensure officer safety during the operations.

Since ICE began Operation Community Shield in February 2005, more than 16,700 gang members belonging to more than 900 different gangs have been arrested nationwide. Of those arrested, 206 were gang leaders; 196 have been charged criminally, and 9,546 have been charged with immigration violations and processed for removal. Through this initiative, ICE has also seized 1,060 firearms. More information on the National Gang Unit at ICE is available at: www.ice.gov.



Texas Dept. Of Criminal Justice: Texas prison officials routinely take photographs of gang tattoos to add to a Web-based database.

Feds chase Mexico cartels' U.S. partners

Pressure is mounting against Texas prison and street gangsters who help drug war

By DANE SCHILLER
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

April 5, 2010, 5:46AM

With Mexican drug cartels now operating in more parts of the United States than any other trafficking syndicates, federal agents and police are trying to cut them down by going after their American partners and foot soldiers.

After U.S. Consulate employees and their families were recently gunned down in Ciudad Juarez, an army of American police and federal agents raided the homes and hangouts of the Barrio Azteca gang, based across the border in El Paso.

The gang — known for tattoos of Aztec Indian heads — has done plenty of work in the U.S. and Mexico for the cartels.

Law-enforcement officials contend the Texas-based gangsters had a hand in the mysterious killings for motives that remain unclear.

In the past three years, officials from Houston to Laredo have prosecuted at least 77 upper-echelon gangsters and associates for ongoing conspiracies of moving drugs, weapons and cash in connection with Mexico's cartels.

Some of the more well-known organizations that are aligned with cartels and have been taken on by authorities include the Mexican Mafia; the Texas Syndicate; Tango Blast; *Hermanidad de Pistoleros Latinos* (Brotherhood of Latin Gunmen;) and *Raza Unida* (People United).

The pressure, the feds contend, is forcing the gangsters to think twice before using flashy cars or showing their infamous tattoos that might draw the attention of law enforcement.

"They may be proud they are members, but they are not wearing it like they once did," said Brian Ritchie, who leads the Multi-Agency Gang Task Force located at the FBI's Houston Division.

Ritchie isn't declaring victory in the drug war, but said the groups were sent a message that they can't openly operate in this city and the surrounding area.

"We are taking out leadership at the top of the food chain," he said, noting almost every major gang has been targeted.

Local killing connected

Two dozen Laredo-based gangsters pleaded guilty as part of what federal authorities contend was an ongoing operation to bring at least 1,000 pounds a month of cocaine into the United States.

While the group's Laredo leader was sentenced to 25 years in prison last year, the murder of its Houston captain — whose headless torso was found floating in a trunk in Galveston Bay six years ago — remains unsolved, but is believed to be a payback for skimming drug proceeds.

There are so many crimes and so many organizations that authorities concede it is tough to keep a scorecard.

The relationships building between Mexico's cartels and Texas gangs are in many ways a natural progression since the Mexican drug cartels took over for the Colombians back in the late 1980s. They began pushing more and more drugs across the U.S.-Mexico border rather than trying to sneak them in from the waterfront edges of the country.

And they did it with U.S.-based gangs.

All told, 15,795 gang members have been identified in Texas, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety, which maintains a Web-based database to help police agencies share information. Last year, the system, known as TxGang, was enhanced to add photos of gangsters faces and tattoos.

The Brotherhood of Latin Gunmen gangsters are known for guns tattooed at their waists; Texas Syndicate members for the letters TS; and Tango Blast's Houston members for Astros type insignias and the 713 area code.

They've got nicknames, like Butcher, Clown, Sleepy, Green Eyes and Jacker.

All over the Southwest

The Lone Star State isn't alone, as gangs primarily in Southwest border states are gaining more clout — including cash and power — by working directly with Mexican cartels, according to a Justice Department's National Drug Intelligence Center report released last month.

Gangs now are trafficking at the wholesale bulk level, instead of just the retail plastic-bag level, notes the report, titled the National Drug Threat Assessment 2010.

The bond has helped Mexican cartels to be more active in more U.S. cities than any of their rivals.

“Wholesale-level drug-trafficking organizations, especially Mexican (groups) constitute the greatest drug trafficking threat to the United States,” notes the intelligence center report.

Play by their own rules

The use of street and prison gangs has worked over and over for the cartels.

The relationship means big money — and it also puts the fear of God into gangsters.

The cartels don't play by traditional rules about peace treaties between gangsters or not killing families, said Emil Garza, who focuses on gangs for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

There have been more than a few stories of hard-core U.S. prison gang members scrambling for their lives to escape a cartel after having drugs or cash seized by police.

“These guys get a lot of pressure from the drug cartels themselves — ‘If we tell you to take care of business, you need to take care of business,’” Garza said. “There are no questions asked.

“Right now that is one of the biggest dynamics law enforcement is trying to deal with — all bets are off when you are dealing with a drug cartel,” he said. “Some of our domestic groups are scared of them,” he said.



Eduardo Ravelo- Barrio Azteca Gang Member

He's called the face of Ciudad Juarez terror

Authorities say Eduardo Ravelo has helped turn the border city into Mexico's homicide capital. Now investigators think he played a role in the U.S. Consulate slayings.

Los Angeles Times

By Richard A. Serrano

April 5, 2010

Reporting from El Paso

Authorities think he had his fingertips altered to disguise his prints and plastic surgery to mask his face. Except for his dark eyes, federal officials doubt he looks anything like his 12-year-old FBI most wanted photo -- round face, trim mustache and a scar along his cheek.

Eduardo Ravelo, known on the street as "Tablas," or "lumber," for his ability to crush, allegedly rules thousands of acolytes in an operation that authorities say specializes in killing, conspiracy, extortion, drug trafficking and money laundering.

Though he is thought to live across the border in Ciudad Juarez and regularly cross into Texas, he has eluded arrest.

"He's a butterfly, a moth," said Samantha Mikeska, an FBI special agent leading the hunt for Ravelo. "He takes care of his people and that keeps him under the radar."

Ravelo, 42, is said by law enforcement to have been a major factor in turning Ciudad Juarez into the homicide capital of Mexico, with nearly 5,000 people slain there since 2008 and more than 600 this year. He is thought to be responsible for dozens of the slayings.

Now he has risen to new prominence as authorities in the U.S. and Mexico investigate whether he was behind the recent drive-by killings of three people associated with the U.S. Consulate in Ciudad Juarez.

Arthur H. Redelfs, a detention officer at the El Paso County Jail, and his wife, Lesley A. Enriquez, a consulate employee, were ambushed and killed March 13 as they drove home from a birthday party. A third person, who was married to a consulate employee, was apparently killed by mistake as he drove from the same party in a vehicle similar to the Redelfs'.

The U.S. is determined to find Ravelo, and his wanted picture is plastered on billboards around El Paso. But in Mexico, he appears to have protection.

Robert Beltran, a former gang member who runs a private protection firm on both sides of the border, said the Mexican government, with scores of army troops stationed at the border, should be able to catch Ravelo

"Anybody can be found in Juarez," Beltran said. "If the government puts enough pressure, or the right price is put out, someone will give him up."

But Mikeska, the FBI agent, said Ravelo was no easy target. "He is at the highest rank you can get," she said. "He has a lot of pull, a lot of juice. He has done a lot to survive."

The violence is spilling across the Rio Grande, said Jesse Tovar of the El Paso County

Sheriff's Office.

He pointed to the killing of Sergio Saucedo, 30, in September because of a Mexican drug deal, allegedly involving Ravelo, that went bad. Saucedo was kidnapped from his home in El Paso in front of his family and a school bus filled with children. His body was dumped on a street in Ciudad Juarez with his arms severed and placed on top of a cardboard sign on his chest.

In El Paso, Ravelo's gang is called Barrio Aztecas. It started small, evolving from the so-called Mexican Mafia of inmates in Texas prisons. Authorities said its initial aim in the late 1990s was street robberies to collect funds for the prisoners' commissary accounts.

Today, authorities say there are 2,000 or more hard-core Barrio Aztecas roaming El Paso, a city of 600,000 beset by drug trafficking and illegal immigrant smuggling. In Ciudad Juarez, Ravelo's gang is known simply as the Aztecas. Its numbers are difficult to count but are probably three times those in El Paso. Maybe more.

Both gangs largely work as one outfit, investigators said, primarily moving drugs from the Mexican side into the U.S. Officials said members from both sides, under Ravelo's eye, serve as hit men for the larger Juarez cartel and its Vicente Carrillo Fuentes drug trafficking operation that claims this part of the border region as its turf.

Authorities said Ravelo, who was born in Mexico but has permanent resident status in the U.S., rules the gangs with a firm hand. They said *sicarios*, or hired killers, are easy to find; he pays them less than 500 pesos, or \$40, a week. Gang members who sell heroin for him and then get hooked on the drug are killed. When drug loads turn up missing in El Paso, suspects are kidnapped and taken to Ciudad Juarez. Some are shot; some are tortured and then shot. Some are beheaded.

But it is not always about drugs. Authorities think retaliation and intimidation were the motives behind the consulate shootings. Their operating theory is that Redelfs was the intended target because Ravelo and other gang leaders thought the detention officer was too tough on gang members in the El Paso County Jail.

The violence did not begin with the consulate ambush; it likely will not end there. Last week, Azteca members in Ciudad Juarez sent an e-mail to some residents warning them to expect more violence in the next three or four months.

"People from Juarez," the e-mail said, "get ready because the problem comes hard, the murders are coming heavy and hard. And don't cry with your blankets because nobody cares about you."

Authorities said Ravelo assumed leadership after a series of killings along the border eight

years ago. To get to the top, they said, Ravelo betrayed his predecessor, repeatedly stabbing him and then shooting him in the neck.

His ascent was helped, authorities said, by the 2008 arrests in El Paso of six Barrio Azteca leaders, all of whom were handed sentences of life in prison. Ravelo was indicted with the others in the sweeping federal racketeering case. In all, 26 gang members were convicted or pleaded guilty, except for Ravelo, who was never caught.

Authorities said he has slipped undetected between Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, sometimes coming with bodyguards and an armored truck to recruit hit men or simply to visit family members on the U.S. side.

For the most part, however, authorities say Ravelo lies low, living modestly with his common-law wife and their children in the Ciudad Juarez hillsides. Investigators think his base of operations is a tattoo parlor, though they said he rarely frequented the shop now, especially after the consulate shootings.

U.S. authorities have no jurisdiction in Mexico, and must rely on officials there to find and arrest him.

"He knows he is looking at life in prison with no parole in this country," said Mikeska of the FBI. "He's not a dumb man. And he's not the kind of person who would come in and surrender. Instead he's saying, 'Come get me.' "

Carmen Coutino, a Drug Enforcement Administration agent in El Paso, said the agency recently ran a three-day operation with more than 200 federal agents, arresting 54 gang members.

Ravelo's gang threatened to retaliate against El Paso police if it continued.

"The consulate shootings, that's one of the reasons we did this," Coutino said. "There was a lot of intelligence-gathering, a lot of new leads. We're trying to find out what else we don't know."

FBI TEN MOST WANTED FUGITIVE

ENGAGING IN THE AFFAIRS OF AN ENTERPRISE, THROUGH A PATTERN OF RACKETEERING ACTIVITIES; CONSPIRACY TO CONDUCT THE AFFAIRS OF AN ENTERPRISE, THROUGH A PATTERN OF RACKETEERING ACTIVITIES; CONSPIRACY TO LAUNDER MONETARY INSTRUMENTS; CONSPIRACY TO POSSESS HEROIN, COCAINE AND MARIJUANA WITH THE INTENT TO DISTRIBUTE

EDUARDO RAVELO



Mexico detains suspect in killings of 2 Americans

By OLIVIA TORRES (AP) – Mar 29, 2010

CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico — Mexican soldiers have arrested a gang member suspected in the killings of three people linked to the U.S. consulate in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua state police said Monday.

The announcement came a day after gunmen in another northern state killed 10 young people riding in pickup truck when they didn't stop at a gang's illegal roadblock, authorities said.

Police spokesman Enrique Torres said the consulate shooting suspect arrested Friday was a member of the Barrio Azteca gang, which authorities say works for the Juarez drug cartel on both sides of the border.

Torres did not release the man's name. But a Chihuahua state investigator who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the case identified the suspect as Ricardo Valles de la Rosa, 45.

Consulate employee Lesley A. Enriquez and her husband, Arthur H. Redelfs, were killed March 13 in Juarez when gunmen opened fire on their sport utility vehicle after they left a birthday party. Their 7-month-old daughter was found wailing in the back of the vehicle.

Jorge Alberto Salcido, the husband of a Mexican employee of the consulate, also was killed by gunmen after leaving the same event in a separate vehicle.

Torres said the suspect is a leader of the Barrio Azteca gang, but gave no other details. He said the suspect could be presented to the media Tuesday.

U.S. and Mexican authorities say the Barrio Azteca gang works for the Juarez drug cartel and operates on both sides of the border.

Initially a Texas prison gang, Barrio Azteca expanded across the Rio Grande into Juarez in the late 1990s, U.S. authorities have said. Last week, El Paso police and Texas state troopers arrested 25 people in a sweep of suspected gang members.

Ciudad Juarez, across from El Paso, Texas, is one of the world's deadliest places. More than 2,600 people were killed last year, and another 500 so far this year in the city of 1.3 million.

Elsewhere in Mexico, at least 21 people were killed Sunday in drug violence.

In the northern state of Durango, gunmen killed the 10 youths traveling in a pickup because they refused to stop at the roadblock set up by a criminal gang, state investigators said in a statement.

The youths, ages 8 to 21, were heading to the town of Los Naranjos to collect federal financial aid given to students when they were shot at and attacked with grenades. Four of the victims were siblings from one family.

"There were false roadblocks set up by criminal gangs, intended to protect a piece of territory," said federal Interior Secretary Fernando Gomez-Mont, adding that such roadblocks have been detected in the past.

Gomez-Mont said the Sinaloa drug cartel is in a turf battle in the region with the Zetas, hit men who broke away from the Gulf cartel to form their own drug trafficking organization.

"If you think that the Mexican government is going to retreat in the face of events like those of the weekend, in which criminals attack helpless children and youths, you're wrong," Gomez-Mont said.

Also Sunday, three gunmen died in a clash with soldiers near a park crowded with families in the border city of Nuevo Laredo, across from Laredo, Texas, authorities said in a statement.

Tamaulipas state investigators said police on Sunday also found the bodies of three men who had been shot to death in the town of Miguel Aleman, about 60 miles (100 kilometers) southeast of Nuevo Laredo.

Tamaulipas and neighboring Nuevo Leon state have seen a surge of violence in recent weeks that authorities blame on the fight between the Gulf cartel and the Zetas.

In the Nuevo Leon city of Santa Catarina, three men and two women were killed in a shootout with soldiers inside a motel, the army said in a statement.

It said one of those killed was a gunman who participated in the Nov. 5 killing of an army general who had been appointed police chief of the town of Garcia and in last week's attack on Rene Castillo, an army major and Santa Catarina's security chief.

The clash happened just as thousands of people wearing white gathered in Monterrey, near Santa Catarina, for a peace rally.

Drug-related violence in Mexico has claimed 17,900 lives since President Felipe Calderon declared war on the drug gangs when he took office in December 2006. Powerful drug cartels have been battling not only authorities but each other for turf and drug routes.

The groups have become increasingly bold, an attitude that was on display Monday in the border state of Sonora, when a 25 men walked into the state police office in the city of Magdalena de Kino, just south of the border, beat up two officers and held the rest at gunpoint. They warned the officers to leave the gang alone, before leaving in four vehicles.

Ex-con calls for change after inmate is beaten to death behind bars

by RUCKS RUSSELL / KHOU-TV

Posted on February 19, 2010 at 7:19 AM

FORT BEND COUNTY, Texas — The recent beating death of an inmate at the Fort Bend County Jail ought to serve as a wakeup call, said an ex-con and former gang member who spent more than 17 years behind bars.

“We have a problem that has gotten rampant behind bars,” said Reggie Gordon, who heads OG One, an organization that is geared toward steering young people away from gangs.

Last Sunday, Emmanuel Baines died from injuries he sustained at the Fort Bend County jail. Authorities say the 18-year-old was beaten repeatedly by inmates in what may have been a gang initiation.

“When you’re in these institutions, you’re all alone,” added Gordon. “I can feel the pain of what he must have been going through.”

Texas Rangers have been called in to assist in the investigation. The Medical Examiner has ruled the death a homicide, but so far no one has been charged. Gordon believes gang initiations on the street are brutal enough, but nothing compared to the way they’re handled behind bars.

“That’s because inmates are frustrated and mad, and they take their anger out on the person they’re initiating,” he said.

Officials confirm the gang involved in Sunday's incident was the Bloods. Gordon said he hopes politicians do something dramatic to address the problem before another inmate becomes a victim.

"This will definitely happen again because gangs are so widespread throughout the system," he said.

F.B.I. teaming up with S.A.P.D. in an improved task force

by Karen Grace / KENS 5

Posted on December 21, 2009 at 5:50 PM

Putting Mexican Mafia members behind bars and dissolving the drug trade is a huge part of the Safe Street Task Force. Last June the F.B.I. AND S.A.P.D. swept up Mexican Mafia members accused of enforcing a drug tax or killing people if they didn't pay up.

"Everybody brings something different to the table," said Agent True Brown, the Assistant Special Agent in Charge. "S.A.P.D.'s gang unit and T.R.U. are very good and they are out there every night gathering key information and intelligence.

Most recently 12 Mexican Mafia members were indicted for extortion," said Brown. "We look to take down the whole group and hierarchy."

No longer are there jurisdictions to worry about as gang members infiltrate smaller towns that may have fewer police resources.

"As time goes on see we are seeing more gangs move to the suburbs," said Brown. "It helps them when they are a part of the Safe Street Task Force."

Nationwide, there are 150 Safe Street Task Forces. In Texas, there are three, including one in Rio Grande and in Austin.



Logo of the Aryan Circle, one of the largest white supremacist groups in the United States.

Report: Texas-born prison gang a growing threat

White supremacist group likened to Mafia.

By [Mike Ward](#)

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Updated: 10:18 p.m. Friday, Dec. 18, 2009

They go by nicknames like Droopy, Radar and Thumper. Members of their governing board are known as "ugly boys," their regional vice presidents "clowns."

But those names hint at a sense of humor that masks the seriousness of their enterprise.

Members of the Aryan Circle, a Texas-born prison gang that has become one of the fastest-growing and most dangerous white supremacist groups in the U.S., trade in murder, drug dealing and stolen property, according to a new report by the Anti-Defamation League, a human rights organization.

"The Aryan Circle sets itself apart from the other white supremacist groups by running a profit-driven and often-violent criminal enterprise, both in the prison system and on the streets," Dena Marks, a Houston-based associate director for the Anti-Defamation League, said in a statement.

John Moriarty, inspector general of the Texas prison system, where the Aryan Circle was born in 1985, compared the group to the Mafia: "If anyone doesn't believe these people aren't as dangerous as the traditional mob, they're crazy."

According to the report, many of the group's estimated 1,400 U.S. members are concentrated in Texas — in an arc that goes from Wichita Falls to Fort Worth to Waco to Austin to San Antonio to San Angelo.

Many Aryan Circle members have service or manual labor jobs, and many work in the oil fields, the report states.

Recently, Aryan Circle members were accused of stealing Ford pickups and taking them to Brownsville, where a Mexican crime group allegedly picked them up.

Two months ago, Aryan Circle members were among 47 people arrested in San Angelo on federal and state charges in an anti-gang crackdown.

Among the 33 confirmed gang members who were busted were members of eight other active Texas gangs — many of whom the Aryan Circle would not associate with in prison because of gang rivalries.

"It comes down to drugs and money, like it usually has," said Homer Burson, a prison investigator who specializes in tracking gangs and security-threat groups. "Once they get out and get together having meetings, it's a whole collection of different criminals — burglars, people doing time for robbery, drugs, homicides — that get together in this criminal organization."

Mark Pitcavage, an investigative researcher for the Anti-Defamation League in Ohio, said the pace of the group's growth is alarming; membership has increased about 50 percent in prisons during the past decade. The Aryan Circle now reaches into Arkansas, Colorado, Indiana, Louisiana, North Carolina, Tennessee and Wisconsin, according to the report.

By 2008, there were 780 "confirmed" members in Texas prisons, up from 500 to 600 a few years before, according to the report. More than 150 additional members are in federal prisons.

Unlike other prison gangs, the Aryan Circle admits women, and authorities said that practice recently gave rise to friction between various segments of the organization after a female member was put in charge of supervising men.

"Organized criminal activity ranges from methamphetamine production and distribution to a variety of theft rings," the report states.

"As is also the case with its rival gang, the Texas Aryan Brotherhood, a number of arrests for methamphetamine production or sales have been 'hotel busts,' in which the perpetrators rent a hotel room at an inexpensive hotel and use the room to cook and/or sell meth."

Case in point is a bust in Round Rock: George Steven Owen — identified by police as an Aryan Circle member — was arrested in a room containing marijuana, meth and chemicals to make meth. In late 2005, Owen was sentenced to 40 years in prison.



Joseph Allen Garcia,22, alleged hitman

Zeta Hitman Possibly Hiding in the Valley

Last Update: 12/16 5:43 pm

MCALLEN - U.S. Marshals say a suspected cartel hitman could possibly be hiding in the Valley.

We're told the 22-year-old works for the Zetas and the Mexican Mafia.

U.S. Marshals consider Joseph Allan Garcia, aka Joseph Garza, armed and dangerous. He has a violent criminal record.

Authorities say Garcia was only 16 years old, when he shot and killed a man. It allegedly happened in December 2003 in Laredo.

Garcia was released on bond. He then allegedly shot and nearly killed another man during an argument a year later.

Garcia was arrested on drug charges in 2005 and posted bond. He hasn't been seen since.

The 22-year-old is five-feet, six-inches tall. He weighs 150 pounds. He's best recognized by scars to his left eye, right ankle, and chest.

If you have any information on Garcia's whereabouts, call the U.S. Marshals Service communication center at 1-800-336-0102.

If your information leads to Garcia's arrest, you could be eligible for a \$25,000 reward.



Mexican Drug Cartel Recruitment of Teenagers in the USA

Mexidata. info

By Samuel Logan

Monday, December 14, 2009

When Laredo police finally arrested teenage assassin Rosalio Reta in 2005, he was 17 and had been working as a hit man for Mexican organized crime in Texas since he was 13, when he killed his first victim.

Reta's case has been widely covered by US media outlets, which point to the ongoing threat of a spillover effect of Mexican violence into US cities and states.

Texas is one of the most vulnerable states, with border cities such as El Paso and Laredo just across a thin line from some of the historically most violent Mexican cities.

Many in Texas were not surprised when on 17 November the state's Department of Public Safety (DPS) cited the Rosalio Reta case when warning Texan parents that Mexican cartels were actively recruiting their teenagers.

According to one DPS spokesperson, Tela Mange, who [spoke with The Monitor daily](#) from McAllen, Texas, Mexican cartels are directly recruiting young people from Texan communities to act as smugglers, and in some cases, assassins.

Some members of law enforcement, however, were immediately skeptical. Sheriff Guadalupe Treviño of [Hidalgo County, Texas](#), remarked that he'd "never heard of this," adding that he'd "really like to see anecdotal evidence that supports this allegation."

Yet while the reality of teen recruitment across Texas fluctuates according to geography and proximity to the border, there remains a solid record of teen recruiting in at least two border cities — Laredo and El Paso — where the tendency for teen recruits to handle smuggling duties remains fairly constant, and the case of one non-gang-affiliated teen acting as a hired assassin for Mexican *patrones* appears to be more the exception than a statewide trend.

Teenage assassin

Rosalio Reta, also known as “Bart,” worked for Miguel Treviño, the second in command of [Los Zetas, one of Mexico's most powerful criminal organizations](#). Based in Nuevo Laredo, Treviño oversaw the movement of drugs through his city into the Texan city of Laredo and destinations beyond, across the eastern half of the US.

Reta likely never met Treviño, but he did spend enough time in the bars of Nuevo Laredo to meet one of Treviño's recruiters, someone on the lookout for young American kids interested in earning a little money on the side. Reta, however, was not hired to work as a mule, the most common job for new recruits. He was hired to kill; and as court documents revealed, he killed for the first time when he was 13, in 2000 or 2001.

As he grew into his assassin role, eliminating targets for Treviño on both sides of the border, Reta began earning between \$5,000 and \$50,000 a hit. He sometimes received a bonus — a kilo or two of pure cocaine — and at the very least received a \$500 weekly retainer fee just so he was available when his Mexican handlers called.

“Back then, in 2003, 2004 and 2005, when we dismantled the Zeta hit man cells here, and also the Sinaloa Cartel cells imbedded in [Laredo], they were all youngsters. The oldest was 18,” Laredo Police Department Detective Robert Garcia, who was one of the lead detectives on the Reta case, told ISN Security Watch.

Once the Reta case went public, however, the use of teens as hired hit men quickly tapered off. “Since then, we're seeing the Mexican cartels use seasoned gangsters from prison gangs,” Garcia said.

Reta's case, while exceptional, was not an isolated one. Detective Garcia explained that while Mexican cartels now use most teens as mules or ‘*halcones*,’ the Mexican term used for lookouts, there were other cases of teens recruited to work as hit men in Nuevo Laredo.

He cited the example of an eight-man assassin team that was responsible for [killing the sheriff of Nuevo Laredo](#) and a number of his police officers in June 2005. The gunmen who killed the Nuevo Laredo sheriff at the end of his first day on the job were adolescents.

On the US side, however, Garcia sees more of the heavy work, the killing specifically, contracted out to US-based street and prison gangs. In the Laredo area, the Texas Syndicate and the Mexican Mafia are the two gangs most likely to receive contract work from Mexican contacts.

“There is no loyalty between these guys,” Garcia was careful to point out. He commented how Reta was ordered to kill members of both the Texas Syndicate and the Mexican Mafia. “And now we see the cartels working with these gangs.”

“It's all about business, and money talks,” Garcia said.

The same economics motivate teens to break the law in El Paso, where until around early 2008, scores of adolescents frequented the infamous Avenida Juarez, a street in Ciudad Juarez lined with bars known to cater to American teens visiting Mexico for a night of revelry and recklessness.

El Paso mules

For well over a decade, teens from El Paso, both rich and poor, have worked for Mexican cartels as mules.

University of Texas at El Paso professor and author of “Drug War Zone,” Howard Campbell, told ISN Security Watch that he recalled a 1991 Texas Monthly magazine feature about the children of El Paso's affluent citizens who would travel into Mexico and return with a load of drugs to drop off at some point north of the border.

On 14 August 2007, Immigration and Customs Enforcement special agents [arrested an 18-year-old high school student](#) from Horizon City, just outside of El Paso, who over the course of a year had recruited between 15 and 20 of his fellow students to smuggle a total of 30,000 pounds a marijuana from Mexico to locations as far away as Oklahoma City.

As recently as 18 November this year, a drug-sniffing dog at the Paso del Norte border crossing in downtown El Paso detected 12 black bundles of heroin underneath the floorboards of a 1999 Mercury Cougar driven by a teenager. The 30-pound haul, worth some \$340,000 in the El Paso area or up to millions of dollars in cities farther away from the border, seemed to be extremely valuable for something entrusted to two teenagers.

Such a high value in the hands of two teens suggested that the two teenage mules had been working as smugglers for a long time. "One could easily come to that conclusion," Professor Campbell said.

Campbell commented that Mexican smugglers have recruited El Paso teens from Avenida Juarez for years, and this activity has slowed down in the past two years in part due to the increased violence in Juarez, considered Mexico's most violent city in 2009.

"No one goes there anymore unless you have to," Campbell, an El Paso resident since the early 1990s, noted.

Generation lost

The Texas DPS warning comes as violence in Juarez continues to alarm observers in El Paso where many have lives and loved ones just south of the border.

According to a 3 November [Washington Post article](#), the "exploitation of children is timeless" in Mexico, and nevermore present than in cities such as Juarez.

The new US ambassador to Mexico, Carlos Pascual, commented in early November: "What struck me most in the short time that I was in Juarez was not the threat of violence. It was the threat of what occurs if you lose a whole generation."

According to a Juarez-based criminologist, police arrested 204 minors in the first quarter of 2009, and some 80 percent of robbers and assailants in Juarez are between the ages of 16 and 18. Echoing his findings, a report published by the Ciudad Juarez Youth Assessment Organization in late 2008 suggested that some 40 percent of adolescents in Juarez do not attend school and are unemployed.

Washington Post reporters interviewed one 17-year-old incarcerated outside Juarez for selling weapons, who pointed out, "young people sell drugs and weapons because they want to make the easy money." It's an environment that's "almost irresistible" for him and his friends, he said.

In Juarez, many teens have one of two options, head to the US or become traffickers, but Mexican national teens, while readily available, are not always what Mexican organized crime needs.

"US teens have local knowledge of city neighborhoods and streets [in this country]," Detective Garcia pointed out, adding, "they can travel deeper into the United States, easily passing by US Border Patrol check points north of the border."

Christ is warden at faith-based prison unit in Texas

By Laura Stone, Canwest News Service December 1, 2009

RICHMOND, Texas — The men who broke into Domingo Herrera's house six years ago left with very little, just a pair of Air Jordan shoes.

But they took a lot from him.

"They shot me in my face. They killed my dad, over me dealing drugs," Herrera said last winter, as he sat in a Richmond, Texas, prison, near the end of a four-year drug sentence.

Herrera, 28, lives with the guilt of his father's murder. He still can't forget, but at this faith-based prison unit, he is learning about forgiveness.

"The only reason that I stopped blaming myself is when I found Jesus," he said. "Jesus is just putting it into His hands."

Spirituality lies at the crux of Herrera's new life.

At the Carol S. Vance unit, God's presence infuses every message, every lesson, every day. It is called the InnerChange Freedom Initiative, a 'round-the-clock program based on Christian values.

In Canada, the Christian organization Prison Fellowship Canada — which is associated with the American branch that runs the Texas program — is in talks with the Manitoba government to start a faith-based unit at a new provincial women's jail, to built in 2011. Eventually, it would like to see similar units in institutions across Canada.

Advocates say faith-based units reduce recidivism by teaching inmates how to change their lives, and their hearts; critics say they are discriminatory to non-Christians and don't reform offenders over the long-term.

One InnerChange unit in Iowa was shut down after a U.S. federal court ruled it shouldn't be funded with public money.

"It was a 24-hours-a-day, fundamentalist, evangelical Christian program. Inmates of other religions could not participate in the program without abandoning or compromising their own beliefs," said lawyer Alex Luchenitser, who represents Americans United for Separation of Church and State, which took the Iowa government to court. The religious programming in Texas is funded by \$800,000 in prison fellowship donations.

The Carol S. Vance unit is a "pre-release program," meaning some 300 inmates attend when they have less than 18 months left on their sentences.

The minimum-security prison is surrounded with barbed wire, and groups of heavily tattooed men live behind bars in communal cells. But they also wander between rooms with ease, pray openly and give the staff hugs.

Inmates participate in a variety of activities, including morning worship, Christian teachings, mentoring, marriage counselling, choir practice and computer classes. There are aftercare programs for them when they get out, and staff estimate that 70 per cent attend them, upon release.

For the murderers, robbers and drug-dealers who have lived for years in their white prison clothes, the Carol S. Vance unit is routinely called "a blessing" where the men say they're treated better than ever before.

"Deep down inside, no matter what they've done, no matter the horrible acts they've had (done to them), everybody wants to know somebody cares about them," said program director Tommie Dorsett. "If you want different results, then you gotta treat the men like humans."

The inmates don't have to be Christian to join the program, but most say they are believers by the time they leave.

"You come over here and you see all these people you never seen in your life showing you that love, that Christ-like love and the compassion and it's just overwhelming," said Isaias Tristan, 34, a Houston man serving a four-year sentence for manslaughter.

In other prisons, there are gangs, fights, lockdowns, drugs, beatings, murders. "Them is hostile environments," said Antonio Turner, 39, who has spent 20 years inside Texas institutions for robbery and assault.

"I done had staff assaults, I done been stabbed, I done been in riots," said the curly haired father of two young adults, who have grown up without him. "I done seen people die, commit suicide. I done seen everything."

Turner, like many inmates interviewed at the unit, said his time at InnerChange has taught him there is a better way to live. "Once I got over here and seen the love and seen what the program really has to offer, I just laid it down. I wanna put God first," he said. "I don't wanna live for the streets no more."

And when he is released back into the drug-infested Dallas neighbourhood in which he grew up, he hopes his faith will endure.

Families Of Alleged Bloods Gang Members Speak Out

[Dena Richardson](#)/KFOX News Reporter

Posted: 4:06 pm MST November 27, 2009 Updated: 5:53 pm MST November 29, 2009

EL PASO, Texas -- Family members of 13 alleged Bloods gang members told KFOX a federal sting that arrested their loved ones earlier this week does not make northeast El Paso safer.

The 13 people arrested were accused of dealing cocaine and face federal drug trafficking charges.

Following the arrests, federal authorities said the sting will help stop a growing threat in El Paso and essentially dismantle the Bloods in the northeast.

But Lidia Davis, the mother of one of the suspects, and another woman who identified herself as Julie Simpson said that's not the case.

"There are many more gangs out there," said Simpson. "And many of them are known like the Crips, and they're out there laughing, laughing because they're just sitting back and doing all these things and all the attention and all the credit is going towards the Bloods."

Davis said members of law enforcement are ignoring other threats in the northeast and all of El Paso.

"If they're going to do their job, it's fine, do their job," said Davis. "But do it to all of them. Go after the other gangs. If it has to be my son, let it be, but take care of the rest of them too."

They believe law enforcement used excessive measures to target those arrested, including conducting what they called unnecessary searches.

"We never resist and always cooperate," said Simpson. "We are willing to open the door, let them come in and do whatever they do, look for whatever they want. Yet they want to take it to the extreme."

The investigation leading to the arrests was handled by the FBI, the El Paso Police Department and the El Paso County Sheriff's Office.

Special Agent Jim Bone told KFOX that law enforcement is indeed targeting Bloods gang members to take them off the streets, but also has open investigations working on other street gangs.

As for the claims of unnecessary searches, Bone said no homes or vehicles were searched without consent given first.



Teen shot, killed in 'gang-related' fight

[By Daniel Borunda / El Paso Times](#)

Posted: 11/24/2009 12:00:00 AM MST

EL PASO -- A teenager was killed by a shotgun blast Monday night in Northeast El Paso.

The 17-year-old boy was shot at 7:30 p.m. during a gathering with other young people at a home in the 3900 block of Thomason Avenue near Dyer Street, police said.

The shotgun was fired when an argument began after another group arrived at the gathering, police spokesman Officer Chris Mears said.

The wounded teen was taken to Beaumont Army Medical Center where he was pronounced dead.

Ambulance transmissions indicated the man had buckshot wounds to the torso and neck.

"We do have reason to believe it is gang-related," Mears said.

Police would not confirm comments by residents that the teen was a student at nearby Chapin High School.

There had been no arrests by late Monday night.

The shooting took place near where 19-year-old Lorenzo "Larry Boy" Favela was killed during a brawl between street gangs in July 2008.

Anyone with information on Monday night's shooting may call Crime Stoppers of El Paso at 566-8477.



Margarita Ramirez sentenced to 30 years

Trial shines light on gang activity

20 to 25 such groups active in city, police say

By Jennifer Rios

Posted November 20, 2009 at 8:46 p.m.

SAN ANGELO, Texas — Court testimony in the murder of Robert Guevara, as a defense attorney promised, shone some light on the darker side of San Angelo.

At the conclusion of a four-day trial, Margarita Ramirez was sent to prison for 30 years on a conviction of first-degree murder. She is the third person sent away on murder charges in Guevara's death, but her trial was the first — the other two entered pleas — and testimony in the trial gave a rare glimpse into the operations and reach of gangs in San Angelo.

Twenty to 25 gangs exist in the city, San Angelo Police Department Officer Bobby Elrod told the courtroom from the witness stand Thursday. They include prison gangs, street gangs and cliques, said Elrod, who is with the department's joint task force gang unit.

Sgt. Mike Hernandez, who is also with the unit, estimated that 25 percent of the city's crime can be tied back to gangs.

As the name implies, prison gangs typically include people who have been incarcerated. Elrod described street gangs as "younger kiddos" who are involved in criminal activity —

fighting, underage drinking and drugs. According to a police database on gangs, members include children as young as 10.

The final type, a clique, is a group that people join in prison for protection but have no obligation to once they are released. The hierarchy that exists in most gangs does not apply.

“I guess you could say the prison gangs are more structured,” Hernandez said. “They have their hierarchy. The juveniles aren’t quite as sophisticated, yet, as the adults.

“But that’s what they graduate to.”

Bandana-style face coverings — like the ones Phillip Michael Mendoza and Larry Carson wore the night Guevara was shot — are typical of gang members who want to show their flags or colors, he said. Initiations can range from jumpings, where the prospective recruit is beaten by members, to being arrested or having the recruit assault someone.

The names of murder victim Robert Guevara and Roger Claxton, whose trial on a charge of first-degree murder is scheduled for Jan. 19, were not in the department’s gang database, Elrod told jurors. Those of Phillip Michael Mendoza, 19, who pleaded guilty in July to firing the shot that killed Guevara, and Larry Carson, 18, who pleaded guilty to murder in August and, according to testimony, disposed of the rifle used to kill Guevara, were.

Mendoza was sentenced to 40 years, Carson to 20.

Gonzalo Rios, the lead defense attorney for Ramirez, called teenagers who were at the shooting that night but not arrested to testify about how that gang worked. All identified Mendoza as a leader — someone they listened to without question. Even those who weren’t in the gang agreed to go along.

“They said, ‘Do you want to go fight?’ and I said, ‘Yeah,’ ” said a 16-year-old not charged in the case. A 14-year-old called to testify had a similar story — he just knew someone was “talking smack” and had to be dealt with.

Earlier this month, City Council members approved a request to bring back the city's juvenile curfew ordinance for another three years. Police Chief Tim Vasquez brought the item before the council, which voted unanimously to have city staff bring back the law for public readings and approval.

Vasquez has said the curfew was enacted in February 1996 during a period of escalating gang violence in San Angelo, much of which involved young people. Since it has been in effect, violent crime during those hours has declined, he said.

In order to keep gang violence under control, Hernandez said, the force takes a proactive approach — keeping tabs on people and speaking to youths about other options. Warrant roundups the task force undertakes with Immigration and Customs Enforcement is another way the unit works.

“We try to feel the pulse of things going on and stay on top of things,” he said.

A person is classified in the database as a gang member if he or she fits two of 10 possible requirements, which include being a self-professed gang member, being arrested in the commission of an offense in a group of three or more, wearing the same colors or having the same tattoos.

Overall, people rarely see a lot of gang activity in the city, Hernandez said.

“I think every city has their 5 percent,” Hernandez said. “The only reason ours would be smaller than Dallas, Houston or El Paso is because of our population.”



Gang member gets 40 years in killings

San Antonio News

11/19/2009

San Antonio, Tx.- A former leader of one of Texas' largest prison gangs was sentenced Thursday to 40 years in prison for ordering the killings of five people.

Joe "Pancho" Peña was one of more than 30 high-ranking members of the Texas Mexican Mafia who were targeted in a racketeering case by the FBI.

Peña, who briefly was a general of the gang's street operations, pleaded guilty to racketeering conspiracy, which included a pattern of drug-dealing, extortion, robbery and murder. Federal prosecutors only had enough evidence to pin him with five of 22 slayings blamed on the gang between 2000 and 2005.

Peña admitted being part of the gang's operations council that ordered hits on gang members Raymond "Nochipa" Rodriguez, Mercy Brooks, Tony Rodriguez, Roy Vera and Rudy "Scooby" Contreras.

Of the more than 30 gang members who were indicted, four are awaiting trial this spring before U.S. District Judge Orlando Garcia. The rest took plea deals.



Texas state police: Beware of Mexican cartels, gangs recruiting in schools

Posted: Nov 17, 2009 10:09 AM PST

AUSTIN, Texas -- The Texas Department of Public Safety is warning parents to be aware of Mexican cartels and transnational gangs allegedly recruiting in Texas schools.

Officials say the organizations lure teens with cars, money and notoriety and promise if they get caught they will receive a minimal sentence.

One example DPS officials cite is recent cases of El Paso teens they say were recruited to smuggle drugs across the border, many with the packs taped to their bodies.

In 2008, young people from counties along the Mexican border in Texas accounted for 9 percent of the population in Texas, but 18 percent of the felony drug charges and gang-related arrests, DPS officials said.

Officials say parents should talk to their children and pay attention to signs their children are involved in illegal activities.



Oscar Salazar (Victim) Jose De Reyna (Attacker) Cesar C. Trejo (Attacker)

Mexican Mafia member attacked in Hidalgo County Jail

Valley Central News

Oct 19,2009

Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office deputies are investigating the jailhouse assault of a member of the Mexican Mafia prison gang.

Investigators told Action 4 News that murder suspect Oscar E. Salazar was attacked at the Hidalgo County Jail around 12:40 p.m. Sunday.

Deputies identified his attackers as fellow Mexican Mafia members Jose Roel de Reyna and Cesar C. Trejo.

A motive was not clear in the attack but deputies learned the attack was sanctioned by the prison gang.

Salazar is recovering in a San Antonio hospital while Reyna and Trejo were charged with assault.

Deputies told Action 4 News that Salazar was being held under a murder charge in a Cameron County case.

Trejo was being held for a Hidalgo County murder case.

Reyna is awaiting extradition to Kansas where he faces drug and conspiracy charges.

The case remains under investigation but deputies said more arrests and charges are possible.



Jesus Gonzalez Mexican Mafia member

Jury Selection Begins in Murder Trial

Valley Central News

By Mary Avila

Tuesday, February 03, 2009 at 9:29 a.m.

BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS --

Jury selection is underway on Tuesday for a member of the Mexican Mafia.

Jesus Gonzalez, Jr. is one of 10 alleged Mexican Mafia members linked to the murder of Harlingen woman Joann Chavez.

Her remains were found in a remote area of Willacy County back in 2006.

Members of the criminal organization allegedly killed Chavez because she allegedly knew too much about their group's operations.

Gonzalez's murder trial will take place in Brownsville.

Another alleged member involved in the crime entered a plea agreement for capital murder and is expected to testify against the others.

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