



# Mexican Mafia News



Joseph "Capone" Garivay, 42

## **LA man who settled in Salem guilty of murder**

Mexican Mafia 'enforcer' lived here for 2 years

By LARRY SHIELDS

POSTED: May 4, 2010

SALEM - A Mexican Mafia gangster from Los Angeles who was residing in Salem two years ago was convicted of first degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder in Los Angeles Superior Court on Friday.

Salem Police Det. Dave Talbert testified in the case in which Joseph "Capone" Garivay is expected to be sentenced to at least 50-years to life on June 2.

Talbert made five trips to Los Angeles and expects to return to testify in another case linked to the murder.

The Garivay case carries significance in Los Angeles, Talbert said, noting it is the first time a case showed a link between the Mexican Mafia prison gang and street gangs.

Garivay, 42, known as a Rosemead gang member, was residing in Salem through an extended family member and drove for Paul's Cab.

Talbert said Garivay, who resided in the 1100 block of East Pershing Street and in a house at the corner of North Union Avenue and Cleveland Street for the two years he was here, "indicated to me it was the first and only job he ever had." Garivay and his wife coached a Salem Youth Soccer co-ed team in the fall of 2007.

Garivay has a shaved head with the word "Hillbilly" tattooed on top.

Talbert said "hill" in Spanish is "lomas" and Garivay is the "billy" in "Hillbilly."

He also has the number "187" - the penal code for murder in California, tattooed on his neck.

Talbert was contacted by the L.A. County Sheriff homicide department to confirm by photos, back and forth, that Garivay was in Salem after it received information he was here.

L.A. County detectives flew to Salem to question him regarding the murder of Donald "Pato" Schubert, a former "homeboy."

L.A. detectives didn't have a warrant but "gave him the opportunity to cooperate" and advised him there would be one issued. Garivay turned himself in to Los Angeles authorities in January 2008.

"Prior to that," Talbert said, "I interviewed him regarding the homicide and he implicated himself, co-conspirators and basically he was the 'shot caller' with the Lomas Rosemead gang.

"As a shot caller in the Mexican Mafia he had connections, ran the neighborhood as a tax collector for prostitution, drug dealers and unlicensed vendors.

"You paid taxes to the Mexican Mafia, if you didn't, Mr. Garivay was an enforcer."

Talbert explained, "Eulalio 'Lalo' Martinez sent an order, or a kite, from his prison cell in Pelican Bay, to Garivay to kill Donald 'Pato' Schubert, an order that was carried out on Nov. 25, 1998, the day before Thanksgiving.

Martinez, 48, had been locked up for more than 15 years and investigators believe he ordered a half dozen murders.

Garivay, investigators said, along with two other gangsters, Raul Pedroza, 32, and Daniel Ahumada, a crack dealer, executed "homeboy" Schubert, whom they'd known for most of their lives.

Schubert was gunned down in the carport of his apartment complex with a shotgun blast to the head and one to the stomach, and was also shot with a handgun.

Deputy L.A. County district attorney Martin Bean said the crime scene photos were the worst he had ever seen.

Schubert, the father of two children with one on the way, had dropped out of the gang and was working as a plumber.

According to myFOXla.com, "insiders" said Martinez felt Schubert was connected to the death of his own brother, Avelardo.

According to a December 2007 L.A. Times story, investigators believe Schubert may have given a ride to a man who helped kill him without knowing the killing had just taken place.

The L.A. Times reported that Martinez was due to be paroled after serving 14 years and just hours before his release investigators faxed the prison the case connecting him to Schubert's death.

Ahumada pled guilty in Schubert's slaying and was sentenced to 15 years to life in prison in May 2002.

"Martinez goes on trial this summer," Talbert said, "I expect to go out for that. They (Garivay and Martinez) were originally going to be tried together, but jury seating led to a mistrial."

The jury took four days to convict Garivay.

## **DA tries to seize inmate drug money**

Written by [Nick Grube](#), [The Triplicate](#)

April 02, 2010 06:00 am

### **State ties funds to Mexican Mafia**

The Del Norte County District Attorney's Office recently began asset forfeiture proceedings against a high-ranking Mexican Mafia gang member who is currently being housed inside Pelican Bay State Prison's Security Housing Unit.

According to court records, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation seized more than \$26,000 held in inmate Danny Roman's prison trust account after an investigation determined he allegedly received much of the money as a result of gang and drug activity.

"Through the investigation on this process the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation believes they are illicit funds tied to the Mexican Mafia," Pelican Bay public information officer Lt. Ken Thomas said. "To my understanding, it's the first asset forfeiture proceeding that we've gone forward on."

The CDCR's investigation revolved around checks and money orders going into Roman's trust account over the past several years — with amounts ranging from \$10 to \$600 — that are believed to be from heroin and methamphetamine transactions. Court records show prison investigators were able to tie some of these transactions to Mexican Mafia associates.

Officials also intercepted several packages addressed to Roman that had illegal drugs, such as heroin and cocaine, hidden inside of them. Some of the mail that was intercepted

also allegedly contained coded messages to Roman related to payments from illegal activities.

“What’s so unique about this is we don’t have a pending criminal case against this guy,” District Attorney Mike Riese said. “We know he’s unemployed, he’s sitting in a maximum security prison and he’s getting in excess of \$25,000 sent to his inmate trust account.”

With typical asset forfeiture cases, Riese said there’s usually an isolated incident where a drug dealer makes a single transaction, is arrested and the money associated with the sale is seized. In Roman’s case, Riese said he doesn’t have that type of evidence.

“I don’t have the drugs and I don’t have the actual proceeds from the sale,” Riese said. “What we’ve got is a Mexican Mafia establishment that is, for lack of a better term, an ongoing criminal enterprise, and they’re bringing in assets and they’re bringing in money while entrenched in Pelican Bay State Prison.”

At trial, Riese said he’ll have to delineate between the money in Roman’s trust account that came from legitimate sources and those that came from illegal means. The legally obtained funds will go back into Roman’s account, and the rest, if any, will be forfeited.

Roman was convicted in Los Angeles County in 1984 for first-degree murder, armed robbery, attempted murder and assault with a deadly weapon. He was sent to Pelican Bay after being validated as a Mexican Mafia prison gang member in 1988.

## **Trial begins for man suspected of ordering Rosemead murder from prison**

By Brian Day, Staff Writer

Posted: 04/09/2010 09:34:21 PM PDT

Jury selection got underway Friday in the Los Angeles Superior Court murder trial of a reputed Mexican Mafia "shot caller" accused of ordering the slaying of a Rosemead man in 1998.

Eulalio "Lalo" Martinez, 48, is suspected of ordering the slaying of Donald "Pato" Schubert from his prison cell at Pelican Bay, where Martinez has been locked up for more than 15 years.

Testimony in the case may show a link between the Mexican Mafia prison gang and street gangs, something Deputy District Attorney Martin Bean said has been difficult to prove in the past.

"It's not common that we are able to prove the connection between a street gang and any prison-type gang," he said.

Investigators have accused Martinez of controlling the Lomas Rosemead street gang from behind bars.

Martinez's attorney could not be reached for comment after-hours Friday.

In previously published reports, Martinez's former lawyer, Michael Belter, has said that the prosecution is hinging its case on the testimony of unreliable witnesses.

One witness who Bean said he plans to call is Daniel Ahumada, who has already pleaded guilty in Schubert's slaying. He received a sentence of 15 years to life in prison in May 2002, according to court records and officials.

Also charged with Schubert's killing are Joseph Garivay, 42, and Raul Pedroza, 32, Bean said. Garivay will be tried along with Martinez as a co-defendant, while Pedroza will be tried separately.

In addition to the murder charge, Martinez and Garivay are also charged with conspiracy.

Garivay and Pedroza are both accused of the special allegations that a gun was used during the killing and that it was done for the benefit of a criminal street gang, according to a felony complaint filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court.

Martinez is not charged with the gang allegation, Bean said, but he is charged with the firearm enhancement. The defendant is accused of having previous violent felony convictions.

He was convicted of three counts of robbery in 1993; carrying out an assault while in prison in 1989; 16 counts of robbery, burglary and assault with a deadly weapon in 1986; and assault with a deadly weapon in 1979, Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office spokeswoman Shiara Davila-Morales said.

The trial is expected to continue through most of April, Bean said.

Martinez's current prison term was just about up when prosecutors filed the new murder charge against him, he said.

## **State Attorney General announces successful prosecution of La Brea cell**

By Dennis Romero, Thursday, Mar. 25 2010 @ 1:47PM

State Attorney General Jerry Brown on Thursday announced the last of a series of successful prosecutions against a Mexican Mafia cell that worked in Imperial and San Diego counties.

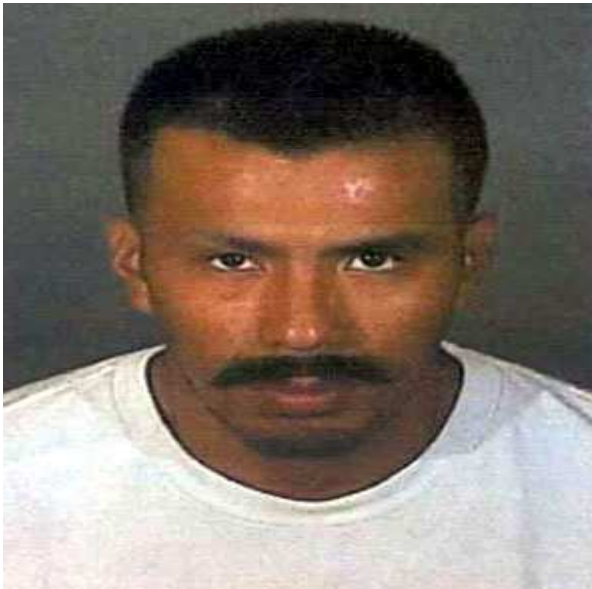
Imperial County resident Patrick Ralph Ponce, 44, pleaded guilty this week to drug, weapon, kidnapping and extortion charges, Brown's office states. He's described as the leader of a cell that was apparently a key piece of the "Eme's" underworld reign in Southern California.

Ponce was the last of 31 gang members convicted under the A.G. office's "Operation Gangland" effort, which started in 2005. The 31 have collectively been sentenced to more than 200 years behind bars, the office states.

"This Mexican Mafia cell was one of the most violent extortion and drug trafficking rings California's border region has ever seen," Brown said. "With the convictions of all 31 gang members, we've dealt a fatal blow to their criminal enterprise and they will spend a long, long time in prison."

Authorities said they captured phone conversations, via wiretaps, in which Ponce plied his trade, including ordering violent attacks, moving drugs and setting extortion prices. Brown's office states that the man trafficked heroin and methamphetamine.

The Eme cell collected "taxes" on drug sales and immigrant smuggling in El Centro, Calexico, Brawley, Heber, Holtville, Calipatria, and Niland.



Pancho Real, former Mexican Mafia tax collector

### **Former shot-caller is now spilling gang's secrets**

Showing no emotion, a former leader of the Avenues clique testifies about murder, extortion and drug deals. Ailing and in custody, he is vilified by his family, which once terrified a neighborhood.

By Sam Quinones

*February 8, 2010 5:44 p.m.*

Pancho Real was at Our Lady Queen of Angels Church with his wife and daughter one Sunday in October 2006 when his cellphone rang.

He was summoned to a park near his home on Drew Street, a drug and gang haven in Northeast Los Angeles, to kill a man he didn't know. The Mexican Mafia wanted a paroled Avenues gang member named Frank "Kiko" Cordova dead.

Real left church with his family and called another gang member, Carlos Renteria.

At the park that afternoon, they figured out who Cordova was but saw he was among children.

Outside the park, Real said, he told the mafia's representatives, who conferred with others by phone. They told Real to shoot Cordova anyway.

Real and Renteria returned and saw Cordova walking away from the kids.

"We said, 'There he goes. Let's roll,' " Real testified.

Real said he fired in the air to scare onlookers as Renteria walked across the park and shot the parolee. (Renteria was charged last summer with Cordova's murder.)

Back on Drew Street minutes later, Real changed his sweat shirt, met his wife and daughter at his stepfather's and went about his Sunday.

That scene, described step by emotionless step, captured the life of opposing impulses of Francisco "Pancho" Real, former leader of the Drew Street clique of the Avenues gang and a member of a notorious crime family.

He ordered up extortions and robberies and taxed drug dealers, but said he didn't use drugs, attended church every Sunday and attempted, as an attorney skeptically put it in cross-examination, to be a "kinder and gentler shot-caller."

In testimony over two weeks in Los Angeles County Superior Court, Real, 28, offered a firsthand account of life in one of Southern California's most notorious Latino gangs. The Avenues gang has roamed Northeast L.A. since the 1950s. Its Drew Street clique, of newer vintage, dates to the 1990s.

A short man in a white jumpsuit, shackled and with slicked-back hair falling to his shoulders, Real spoke slowly, leaning into a microphone on the witness stand next to Judge Lance Ito.

He was ostensibly there to testify, immune from prosecution, in a preliminary hearing for three alleged Drew Streeters charged in the shooting death of a member of a rival gang on

Feb. 21, 2008.

Minutes after that attack, a fourth suspect in the shooting -- Real's half brother Daniel "Clever" Leon -- was [killed in a shootout on Drew Street](#) with Los Angeles police gang detectives, allegedly after firing at them with an assault rifle.

Leon's death was ruled a justifiable homicide. At the time, by all accounts, Pancho Real ran Drew Street. He knelt by his brother's body, then challenged officers to kill him as well. Four months later, he was arrested and charged with racketeering. Now he is an informant and is being treated for cancer. So Ito allowed prosecutors and defense attorneys wide latitude in questioning him.

"In the event this witness is not available in the future, this is your opportunity," Ito said at the hearing, which concluded two weeks ago.

Real testified for days. Kids on Drew Street, he said, were raised as drug dealers amid a swirl of half brothers, baby mamas, aunts, second cousins and stepfathers. They hid guns, drugs and money in a maze of apartments while spotters alerted Real to every police car; a neighborhood auto shop worked on most of their shot-up cars, he said.

The whims of incarcerated prison-gang members, expressed in rectum-smuggled notes, translated into Drew Street killings or beatings. Gang members knew one another by nicknames that seemed to reflect a cross between "A Clockwork Orange" and the Seven Dwarfs: Droopy, Nasty, Tricky, Flappy, Creeper, Menace, Pest.

Not everything Real said could be confirmed. But as his testimony stretched on, law enforcement representatives slowly filled Ito's gallery: four homicide detectives; two uniformed officers; six, then eight sheriff's deputies. From the stand, Real clinically issued shards of chilling detail:

Daniel Leon had laser eye surgery to make himself a better street marksman. The gang had a hard-core crew -- known as the A Team or the Killer Squad, including Leon -- that would go on "missions" against rival gangs. A Mexican Mafia prison gang member, held in maximum security, had a "secretary" handling his affairs on Drew Street.

Real admitted having smuggled immigrants and selling drugs for years. But he painted himself a reluctant shot-caller -- unwilling even to become a Drew Street member when beaten into the gang in 2004.

He was anointed the street's shot-caller in the fall of 2007 by representatives of the Mexican Mafia, who asked him to take the job after another leader was arrested.

He said his main responsibility was collecting "taxes" for the Mexican Mafia from about 40 drug dealers in the 12-square-block neighborhood surrounding Drew Street -- a total of \$150,000 to \$200,000 in his nine months as gang leader. He said he gave the money to mafia associates every Thursday.

He never carried a gun, even in rival gang territory, because any gang member "would be crazy" to shoot a mafia tax collector, he said.

Real also named attorneys who, he alleged, provided him with addresses of witnesses so that he and others could threaten them. Sandi Gibbons, a spokeswoman for the Los Angeles County district attorney's office, declined to comment.

A network of families related by birth and marriage cemented the gang. They hail from Tlalchapa, Guerrero, a town in a violent region several hours west of Mexico City.

Real's mother, Maria Leon, an illegal immigrant from Tlalchapa, had 14 children on Drew Street, including 10 sons, with four men, he said. She had sold drugs there since the late 1980s, Real said, as did his uncles, aunts, cousins and stepfathers. He and his brothers each joined the gang as they entered their teens.

Real tried to break from his family and go straight, even receiving First Communion alone at 17, he said. But, "every time I try to get out, they pull me back in."

On April 30, 2008, while several members of his family were in jail, Real said, he went to the FBI -- finding the number by calling 411. He said agents interviewed him but never got back to him. Two months later, his name led a [158-page federal indictment](#) of more than 70 Drew Streeters.

In custody, Real began cooperating with investigators. In return, his mother told him she hated him, his sisters and uncles stopped taking his collect calls, his brothers were asked to kill him.

"I never thought my family would turn like that on me," he said.

The Real-Leon family saga seems done. [Their house](#), once guarded by laser trip wires and cameras, is gone, the property a vacant lot. Real's brothers and mother have pleaded guilty to drug conspiracy or immigration charges.

Crime is down on Drew Street. Trees are no longer spray-painted with graffiti. At Drew and Estara Avenue, an optimistic homeowner is offering a house for sale -- unthinkable two years ago.

After years amid Drew Street tumult, Francisco Real must be housed in solitary confinement at the federal Metropolitan Detention Center in downtown Los Angeles. He can't go outside to exercise or go to church, and gang members in nearby modules rain down insults well into the night.

"I don't have a friend," he testified.

He stared at the ceiling and fought emotion describing how his younger brother and sister

were beaten and had to be relocated.

Yet, when defense attorney Jim Hallett asked if he regretted cooperating, Real shook his head.

He should, he said, have done it "a long time ago."



## **Six Florencia 13 gang members sentenced to life in prison**

**Court action may close the door on a rampage that began in 2004 and evolved into what some residents saw as a race war.**

*Los Angeles Times*

By Sam Quinones

February 8, 2010

The sentencing of six Florencia 13 gang members to life in prison appears to bring to a close a prolonged and terrifying spate of violence in the Florence-Firestone district allegedly brought on by orders from a prison gang member in solitary confinement 700 miles away.

Beginning in 2004, the unincorporated Los Angeles County area north of Watts was the site of one of the region's worst gang sieges since the early 1990s, evolving into what some residents felt was a race war.

The violence left dozens of people dead, including many with no gang affiliation, and required enormous county resources to combat.

"Things have gotten a lot better," said Chris Le Grande, pastor of Great Hope Missionary Baptist Church on Compton Avenue in Florence-Firestone.

U.S. District Judge David Carter sentenced Florencia member Francisco Flores, 24, to life in prison on Wednesday, saying that he "preyed on victims because they were black and for no other reason," according to a U.S. attorney's office news release.

Earlier this year, Carter had handed out life sentences to Florencia members Jesse Vasquez, 36; Alberto Hernandez, 28; Gilberto Oliva, 41; Manuel Hernandez, 27; and Noe Gonzalez, 28. Arturo Cruz, 34, was sentenced to 60 years in prison. Jose Gonzalez, 36, received a 20-year sentence. Two more gang members are scheduled to be sentenced later this month. An 11th defendant, Alejandro Rincon, will be retried in April.

Their trial, which took place in federal court in Santa Ana in 2008, grew from an indictment of 104 Florencia gang members on charges that included racketeering, conspiracy to sell drugs and murder.

Of those indicted, 94 have pleaded guilty or have been convicted. Four more await trial; two have died and four are fugitives.

The case showed the remarkable power the Mexican Mafia prison gang holds over Southern California Latino street gangs. Prosecutors alleged that Mexican Mafia member Arturo "Tablas" Castellanos essentially created a crime wave in the Florence-Firestone district.

Castellanos was not indicted because he is already serving a life prison term in a maximum security cell in Pelican Bay State Prison. He hasn't been on the streets since 1979.

Yet he wrote letters, introduced as evidence at the trial, that presumed to control a street gang, most of whose members had never seen him.

Castellanos ordered gang members to stop rampant infighting; to tax drug dealers in their neighborhoods, as well as prostitutes, fruit vendors and vendors of phony ID cards in nearby Huntington Park; and to funnel the proceeds to him and other mafia members. He also ordered the gang to attack the local Crips gang, whose members are black.

"The Mexican Mafia has a powerful grasp on these [Latino] gangs," said Peter Hernandez, the assistant U.S. attorney who prosecuted the case.

"The prison system is a segregated place. Those rules and letters from Castellanos attempted to adhere those prison rules to the street," he said.

As Castellanos' letters appeared on the street in the fall and winter of 2004, Florencia 13 erupted in a spate of violence against African Americans.

"They just went out and started shooting" at black people, Hernandez said.

East Coast Crips responded with shootings of their own, often targeting Latinos who were not gang members.

Few actual gang members died. Instead, residents said, they lived amid a race war.

Tapped cellular phone calls introduced as evidence at the trial tracked Florencia members driving the streets looking for people to shoot.

Black men, in particular, reported not walking to the store for groceries or riding bikes.

Florence-Firestone, with a population of 60,000, had 43 homicides in 2005.

Had it been an incorporated city, that rate would have ranked it among the nation's worst.

The Sheriff's Department added about 30 deputies, and last year it brought an injunction against Florencia. The district attorney's office devoted a prosecutor to Florence-Firestone gang cases.

The Sheriff's Department has also targeted Florencia's rivals, said Capt. Jim Hellmold, supervisor of the department's Century Division, where Florence-Firestone is located.

That has reduced payback killings as well. Meanwhile, he said, "we actually have the deputies to enforce zero tolerance with active gang members."

Three years after the Florencia indictment, residents say, a measure of calm has come to Florence-Firestone. Homicides dropped to 10 last year.

"There's still some concern, and I would even say some fear, but with a little F -- not fear like there was," Pastor Le Grande said. "It was crazy -- really crazy."



## 50 arrested in Riverside gang sweep

Thirty-four agencies target East Side Riva, which has wreaked havoc for 20 years in Riverside County and beyond.

January 28, 2010|By David Kelly

Reporting from Riverside — Hundreds of law enforcement officers took part in a massive sweep against the leadership of Riverside's most notorious gang Wednesday, making 50 arrests and confiscating armor-piercing bullets, assault rifles, knives and two caged rattlesnakes.

"The weapons you see are a small sample of what is out there on the street," said Riverside Police Chief Russ Leach, standing by a table displaying guns, machetes and bullets at a Riverside news conference. "The gangs don't run the streets, the citizens do."

Advertisement

Some 650 officers representing 34 agencies, including the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Administration and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, took part in the raids, designed to decapitate East Side Riva, or ESR, a gang with a 20-year history of wreaking havoc in Riverside County and beyond.

The two leaders, Robert Zavala Carillo, 37, and Mark Alexander Gill, 35, managed to escape, authorities said.

The gang's territory sits between downtown and the edges of UC Riverside. According to the Riverside County district attorney's office, the gang has about 820 members and maintains long-standing ties with the Mexican Mafia, which protects ESR members in prison in exchange for "taxes" on the gang's illegal drug sales.

The gang is also accused of hate crimes against African Americans.

A gang-produced, profanity-laced CD was found during the sweep; on it, gang members rapped about being unfairly targeted by a 2007 gang injunction, then taunted the police to try to shut them down.

"We're still here and still standing tall. . . . The D.A. will never make us small," they rap.

Riverside County Dist. Atty. Rod Pacheco said the rattlesnakes were found in one of the targeted homes.

"I'm told one bite can kill you in about 20 minutes," he said, glancing at the coiled snakes.

Acting U.S. Atty. George Cardona said 19 of those charged face possible life sentences because of the volume of drugs, mostly methamphetamine, they sold.

"Operation Promise" began 15 months ago when Leach and Pacheco grew worried about the growing menace posed by the East Side Riva.

The operational name grew out of Pacheco's promise to residents of Riverside's gritty, often violent East Side to crack down on the gang.

"I'd say 99% of people there are decent, hardworking folks, but unfortunately, 1% are gang members," Pacheco said.

"We did damage today to the top leadership, the folks who sell the drugs."

Pacheco said the gang had engaged in a "race war" against blacks, both those in rival gangs and ordinary citizens.

"The Rivas started it and they have been going after African American males ever since," he said.

"We had a guy getting gas who was shot in the head only because of the color of his skin. A lot of innocent people have been killed," he said.

Pacheco has a history of launching massive, high-profile operations.

Last year he sent in Apache helicopters, armored cars and 700 law enforcement agents against 450 gang members in Desert Hot Springs.

The sweep was dubbed "Operation Falling Sun" and was the biggest such sweep in county history.



## DOJ: 'Mexican Mafia' leader sentenced to 17 years in prison

### San Diego Crime Examiner

Steve Perez  
December 14, 11:17 AM

A 39-year-old [San Diego](#) man with ties to the "Mexican Mafia" and the Arrello Felix cartel has been sentenced to federal prison, the Department of Justice said.

[Federal court](#) documents show Jose Rojas and associates assisted in coordinating criminal activities between the "Mexican Mafia," also known as *La Eme*, and the Felix syndicate, the DOJ said in a statement.

Authorities prosecuted Rojas as part of "Operation Keys to the City," a probe conducted by a San Diego task force aimed at violent crimes and gangs. The task force also investigates ties between the previously mentioned groups and Latino street gangs.

Rosas drew a 17-year prison sentence from U.S. District Court Judge Barry Ted Moskowitz for his conviction on conspiracy charges on Dec. 4. Rosas admitted to conspiring to conduct enterprise affairs through a pattern of racketeering activity in violation of federal statutes. He pleaded guilty to the charge earlier this year, United States Attorney Karen P. Hewit said.

Rojas is a parolee with a lengthy criminal record dating back to 1988, federal prosecutors said. During the course of the investigation, Rojas distributed over a quarter pound of methamphetamine to a federal informant, prosecutors said.

## **Reputed Mexican Mafia leader charged in extortion scheme**

**Ralph 'Perico' Rocha, who prosecutors say had tried to muscle in on a rival mafia leader's narcotics territory in Norwalk and La Puente, has pleaded not guilty.**

### **Los Angeles Times**

By Richard Winton

*November 28, 2009*

**A reputed Mexican Mafia leader who prosecutors said once tried to seize control of drug sales in Norwalk and the San Gabriel Valley has been charged with orchestrating a large-scale extortion scheme, according to authorities.**

**Ralph "Perico" Rocha, 42, was ordered held in lieu of \$4-million bail at the Men's Central Jail in Los Angeles. Rocha was arrested without incident Nov. 19 as he was about to leave his Moreno Valley home, said Los Angeles County sheriff's spokesman Steve Whitmore. Rocha is awaiting a court appearance Dec. 9 on two counts of extortion. He has pleaded not guilty.**

**Authorities offered few details on the nature of the extortion scheme, except to say that the charges stemmed from a larger investigation into organized crime. Investigators served two search warrants on properties connected to Rocha before his arrest, Whitmore said.**

**Two years ago, Rocha made headlines when rivals in the Mexican Mafia were charged with trying to have him killed in retaliation for his failed attempt to take over area narcotics sales, according to prosecutors.**

**Rocha was paroled from federal prison in 2007 after serving time on a federal racketeering conviction. Shortly after his release, Rocha tried to muscle in on a rival mafia leader's narcotics territory in La Puente and Norwalk, according to gang prosecutors.**

**Rocha's actions prompted the wife of rival Jacques "Jocko" Padilla, an imprisoned reputed mafia leader, to allegedly arrange the killing of Rocha and cohort Raphael "Cisco" Gonzalez. But sheriff's investigators learned of the scheme, thwarted it and made arrests.**

**Despite the arrests, however, Rocha was shot shortly afterward. He suffered only minor injuries.**

**Authorities say the plot to kill Rocha is the result of a growing division in the Mexican Mafia -- between those members serving time in state prison and those in federal prison.**

**That split began in the mid-1990s, when federal prosecutors began attacking the Mexican Mafia's street operations with racketeering prosecutions that sent many leaders to federal prison.**

## **Riverside gang member convicted of murder**

**DESERT SUN WIRE SERVICE • AUGUST 18, 2009**

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A Riverside gang member was convicted of first-degree murder and other counts today for gunning down an associate who had cooperated with Riverside County sheriff's investigators on a case.

George Anthony Hernandez, 33, could face the death penalty for the July 26, 2004, slaying of Jorge Ortiz. Jurors will begin hearing evidence Monday in the penalty phase of his trial.

The 10-woman, two-man panel deliberated just over two full days before convicting Hernandez of first-degree murder, conspiracy and solicitation of murder, and finding true the special circumstance allegations of lying in wait and committing a murder for the benefit of a street gang.

“The jury made the right decision,” Deputy District Attorney Michael Hestrin said outside the courtroom. “They did their job.”

Defense attorney Chris Jensen said he and fellow attorney Ed Welbourn were disappointed but nevertheless “respect the jury's decision.”

“Now we'll work very hard to convince them that Mr. Hernandez's life is worth saving,” Jensen said.

He said the defense will rely on biographical information, as well as a psychological profile of the defendant.

Hestrin told jurors last week that Hernandez “chose to embrace the perverted values of gang culture” and kill for power and respect.

According to the prosecutor, Hernandez received orders from an incarcerated Mexican

Mafia general, Arturo Estrada, to kill Ortiz because he had cooperated with sheriff's investigators in an auto theft case involving two other suspects. The 26-year-old victim was viewed as a ``snitch," Hestrin said.

Ortiz, like Hernandez, was a member of Arlanza 13, a Riverside street gang with ties to the Mexican Mafia, according to the prosecutor. He said Hernandez was trying to boost his profile in the gang, leading to his selection as hit man in the Ortiz killing.

According to Hestrin, Hernandez met Ortiz at a Riverside bar, asked him out to his car and shot the victim five times as the two spoke in the parking lot.

Within a month, Riverside police investigators caught up with Hernandez at a Riverside motel, where they found two 9 mm handguns and six spent shell casings -- all of which were connected to the Ortiz murder, according to the prosecutor.

The defense argued that the prosecution's witnesses lacked credibility.

A former Hernandez associate, Michael Manuel, changed his story from minute to minute during testimony, alternating between saying Hernandez was the shooter, then denying he knew anything, according to Welbourn.

Hestrin attributed the witness' challenged recollections to fear of reprisal.

Welbourn noted that the ballistics evidence introduced during the trial was produced by a private consultant in Arizona -- not the Riverside County sheriff's expert, who found the evidence was ``inconclusive."

Hernandez's then-girlfriend, Monica Barbosa, testified that she stole a bag containing the 9 mm handguns and served time for being in possession of guns while under the influence of drugs. No fingerprints were found on the firearms.

## **Violent crime by juveniles up this year, prosecutor says**

As charges were filed Thursday against four young men in Saturday night's gang-related drive-by shooting in South Park, King County Prosecutor Dan Satterberg released statistics showing a dramatic spike in violent gun crime by juveniles in King County this year.

**By Ian Ith**

*Seattle Times staff reporter*

*Aug. 13, 2009*

As charges were filed Thursday against three men and a teen in Saturday night's gang-related drive-by shooting in South Park, King County Prosecutor Dan Satterberg released statistics showing a dramatic spike in violent gun crime by juveniles this year.

Last year, 19 juveniles were charged as adults for violent crimes in King County. This year there already have been 31.

"I share the great concern of police and community leaders over this disturbing trend of teenagers turning to gun violence to settle petty grievances," Satterberg said. "We need to send a strong and consistent message to youth that gun violence is not an acceptable option."

Under state law, 16- and 17-year-olds who commit serious, violent offenses can automatically be charged as adults.

The 31st juvenile to be charged as an adult this year is Armando Gomez-Pablo, 16, of West Seattle, who prosecutors contend was the driver in the Sunday shooting in which an 18-year-old gang rival was wounded.

Also charged with drive-by shooting are Rudy Rapisura, 24, of South Seattle, Jairo Gomez-Cervantes, 19, of South Seattle, and David Bryan Santos, 18, of Burien. They are being held at the Regional Justice Center in Kent pending arraignment Aug. 25.

A fifth suspect, age 18, who was in the same white GMC Jimmy with the others at the time of the shooting, has not been charged. Prosecutors say they are still investigating his role.

According to charging documents, the four defendants are members of the "Sureño Villains 13" street gang. Just before midnight Saturday they had argued with several members of the rival "Norte" gang at a South Park gas station. Apparently, the Sureños were angry that the Nortés had been marking out the Sureños' graffiti "tags."

When the Sureños warned them to leave their tags alone, the Nortés just laughed, the documents say. The Sureños talked about shooting the Nortés right then and there but decided against it because a gas-station surveillance camera might record them.

Meanwhile, the Nortés ran away, down an alley. But about 20 minutes later, the Sureños found their foes behind a house in the 1000 block of South Sullivan Street, the documents say.

Gomez-Pablo parked the SUV, and Rapisura, Gomez-Cervantes and Santos got out and ran toward the Nortés. Several shots rang out, and Joshua S. Vanhalteren was hit once in the back, the documents say.

Vanhalteren ended up at Harborview Medical Center, but his wound was not life-threatening, police said.

After the shooting, the Sureños ran back to the SUV, and Gomez Pablo drove out of South Park, intending to go to his house in West Seattle. But two Seattle police detectives driving toward the scene of the shooting spotted the SUV, and the foursome was stopped on Interstate 5.

A police report says detectives found two semi-automatic pistols — both empty — in the SUV, along with some gang paraphernalia and a small amount of marijuana.

Of the four men charged in the crime, only Rapisura has a criminal record. Prosecutors say he has twice been convicted of assault.



From left, Julio Luna Montoya, 21, Antonio Gayoso, 19, and Juan Nunez, 19, appear in court Monday. The three men and a 17-year-old boy are accused in the shooting death of a 15-year-old last week.

## Five suspects in two deaths go to court

By VIRGINIA HENNESSEY and DANIEL LOPEZ

Herald Salinas Bureau

Updated: 08/11/2009 08:31:45 AM PDT

It has become so dangerous in Salinas, a prosecutor said Monday, that picking the wrong shirt or friend can get you killed.

Investigators believe that 17-year-old Andres Chavarin was gunned down outside his Yucatan Way home Aug. 4 simply because he was wearing a red shirt, prosecutor David Rabow said. Fifteen-year-old Jose Manuel Perez was shot to death two days later because he was seen talking to a gang associate outside his home.

Both cases involved Sureño gang members hunting for rival Norteños. Neither victim had any gang affiliations, Rabow said.

The prosecutor said it is imperative for parents to talk to their children about making smart choices — avoiding red and blue clothing associated with Norteño and Sureño gangs and picking the right friends.

"I don't want to blame the victim," he said. "But there are certainly dangers in hanging out with some people. They see a friend, they don't see a gang member."

Five suspects in the two shootings appeared Monday in a Salinas courtroom packed with family and friends of the victims.

Jorge Ruiz, 22, and Raul Lopez, 19, pleaded not guilty to gang-related murder charges in connection to Chavarin's killing. A preliminary hearing was set for Aug. 21.

Three of the four defendants arrested in Perez's slaying also appeared. Antonio Gayoso, 19, Juan Nunez, 19, and Julio Luna Montoya, 21, are charged with gang-related murder, conspiracy to commit murder, attempted murder and street terrorism.

A fourth defendant, 17-year-old Carlos Espinoza, is charged as an adult and is alleged to have been the shooter. He was not transported to court from Juvenile Hall and will appear today with his co-defendants for entry of their pleas.

Rabow said the four met, obtained a weapon and went out together in two cars hunting for rival gang members to shoot.

Salinas Police Chief Louis Fetherolf said Perez was on his bicycle in the driveway of his Terrace Street home Thursday afternoon talking to a friend who is a gang associate. Identified in the criminal complaint as "John Doe 2," the friend saw the two cars pull onto the street and realized what was about to happen.

"Run!" he yelled as he fled the scene. Perez froze, and the suspects shot him multiple times before racing from the scene, Fetherolf said. Perez was pronounced dead a short time later at Natividad Medical Center.

Fetherolf said Perez was a good kid. He played football at Salinas High School and had nothing to do with gangs.

"He was completely innocent," said Fetherolf. "That just gets to my heart."

The chief praised witnesses who helped police make quick arrests in the case. One of the cars was pulled over within minutes of the shooting, and witnesses were brought to the scene to identify its occupants — Nunez and Gayoso.

Espinoza and Montoya were arrested the next night, again with the help of witness accounts. Police denied media reports that at least two men had been arrested until late Saturday.

Rabow said Espinoza, the only juvenile in the group, is believed to have been the triggerman. The conspiracy charge alleges that he and another suspect switched cars in the moments after the shooting to confound police.

Rabow said it is possible that Espinoza was appointed the shooter as a means of "putting in work," a gang phrase referring to an associate earning his way into the gang.

None of the defendants in either case has a significant record in Monterey County Superior Court.

Defense attorney Larry Biegel said Lopez, who has a pending misdemeanor domestic violence case, comes from a good family. His parents are strawberry growers, he said, and all of their children are involved in the business.

During the weekend, Salinas police received help from the Monterey County Sheriff's Office, the California Highway Patrol and county Probation Department, flooding the city with officers in an effort to quell the most recent wave of violence.

Fetherolf said four guns, including a shotgun that was tossed out of a car during a police pursuit Saturday, were seized. The four gang members and two teenagers who had the guns were arrested.

"When we have sufficient people on the street, we are able to do really good work," Fetherolf said.

The stepped-up enforcement efforts were evident Monday in court, where an unusually high number of defendants filled the arraignment calendar, overflowing the jury box and spilling into two rows of the gallery.

Outside before the session began, the hallway was packed with family members and friends of the victims in the two cases and others. Many of those people were excluded from the full courtroom.

Mayor Dennis Donohue said during his weekly news conference Monday that the city cannot let up in its work to combat gangs because the violence the city experienced in the last week is likely to repeat itself.

"Much of this is organized crime," he said. "We are not dealing with kid street gangs, this is serious stuff."

## **Retrial results in same verdict: guilty of murder**

July 14, 2009 - 10:05 AM

[JOHN C. ENSSLIN](#)

THE GAZETTE

Colorado Springs, Colo.-For the second time in four years, an El Paso County jury has found Shannon Dean Merrow guilty of murdering one man and trying to kill another in a July 2003 double shooting.

Merrow, a 35-year-old admitted former drug dealer, had been convicted once before on the same charges. However, an appeals court overturned the verdict after finding a flaw in the jury selection.

On Tuesday, a six-woman, six-man jury took four hours — half as long as the jurors in the original trial — to find Merrow guilty on all counts in the death of Anthony Aragon, 22, and the wounding of his friend Francisco Lobato.

Aragon was found dead in a field off Gold Camp Road. Lobato survived by playing dead. By the time he found help in a nearby bowling alley, he had lost nearly a third of all his blood.

Fourth Judicial District Judge Larry E. Schwartz, who presided over Merrow's first trial, immediately gave him the same sentence: life without parole for the murder plus 48 years.

"This was a horrible crime when it was committed. It's still a horrible crime," Schwartz said.

"Yes," shouted the victim's mother, Elaine Aragon-Luckett, after the jurors and judge had left the courtroom.

"I can't say I'm happy, because my son is still not here," she told the judge before he imposed the sentence. "Please do what you need to do to keep people like this off the streets so that other families will not have to go through what my family had to go through."

She then turned to Merrow, who sat with his fist pressed against his mouth and said, "You reap what you sow."

In a brief statement, Merrow turned to Aragon-Luckett and said, "I'm sorry for everything that transpired out of this situation."

Back in July 2003, Merrow was a drug dealer in deep trouble. Someone had broken into a safe in his home and stole 4 pounds of meth and \$20,000 in cash.

He said he owed his suppliers in the “Mexican Mafia” \$70,000 and that they had given him 48 hours to come up with the money.

Prosecutors argued that Merrow and two accomplices ambushed the two victims as a “sacrifice” to cover for the lost drugs and money.

Defense attorneys said that theory made no sense, since Merrow still owed the money after the shooting.

Merrow claimed his accomplices surprised him by opening fire on the two men. However, the jury did not believe him any more than the jury did two years ago.

## **Double homicide trial begins**

[Comments 26](#) | [Recommend 10](#)

July 8, 2009 - 1:03 PM

[PATRICK THATCHER](#) *Staff Writer*

VICTORVILLE • Sex, drugs and gangs. Add in prostitution, love trysts and the Mexican Mafia. That’s a sneak preview outlined by a prosecutor in the trial of a man accused of murdering two Victorville men.

Within days of the [double homicide on Dec. 30, 2007](#), San Bernardino County Sheriff [detectives arrested Angel Robert Salazar](#), 31, of Adelanto.

Killed were Dwight Henry Hill, 63, and Marcus Terrell Wardlow, 29, who shared a mobile home in the 14000 block of Cobalt Road in Victorville. Wardlow was released from prison about four days before the killing and was staying with Hill until he could find a place to live, according to testimony.

Officials said the two died of gunshot wounds from a 9 mm gun.

Deputy District Attorney Robert Brown explained to the jury that Salazar is a gang member who would buy drugs from Hill, but did not give a clear motive for the killings in his opening statements.

“You are going to hear a lot about gangs and gang activity, and that Salazar was a member of the Seventh Street gang,” Brown told the jury.

He said Salazar has a brazen tattoo of an Aztec shield that only select gang members are allowed to have, indicating he has “worked” for the Mexican Mafia while serving a former prison sentence.

Deputy Public Defender Susan Israel in her opening statement said that Angel Salazar is no angel, but there is no evidence to show he murdered anyone. She said the prosecution is building its case only on a couple of theories and Salazar's gang affiliation.

"They have no witnesses, they have no murder weapon and no evidence of exactly when the two men were killed," Israel said.

The trial will continue today in Judge Eric Nakata's courtroom.

## **100 people indicted of money laundering for Mexican Mafia**

**June 25, 2009**

**By GAIL WESSON**

**The Press-Enterprise**

SAN BERNARDINO - The wife of a jailed Mexican Mafia member acted on his behalf to manage narcotics sales and oversee collection of "taxes" from dealers to benefit the prison-based gang in San Bernardino County, law enforcement authorities said Thursday.

Janet Marie Hernandez, 41, of Bloomington, is among defendants charged with conspiracy and narcotics trafficking in a federal indictment.

Representatives of the San Bernardino-based Gang Impact Team announced the filing of an 18-count federal indictment and state charges naming almost 100 defendants between various cases involving trafficking in cocaine and methamphetamine dating from September 2006 through 2009.

Hernandez is the wife of Salvador Orozco Hernandez, according to multiple law enforcement sources. The sources requested anonymity because the FBI does not identify those not included in its indictments.

Salvador Hernandez, 44, of Bloomington, has been identified in court records as a Mexican Mafia drug kingpin who called the shots for the organization in the Inland area. He was sentenced to 10 years in state prison last year in a plea involving a failed 2006 murder-for-hire in Highland.

Two San Manuel Indian tribe members pleaded guilty last year for their roles in the highly publicized case linking them to the Mexican Mafia and its role in the Inland area's methamphetamine trade.

The new federal indictment alleges Janet Hernandez acted with the authority of her husband, who is only described as an "unindicted co-conspirator," and describes how she

oversaw "collection of payments of narcotics proceeds from drug dealers" operating in the San Bernardino area that were controlled by her husband, according to the indictment. Officials described the activities as spanning from Fontana to Yucaipa.

"Narcotics dealers were required by the Mexican Mafia to pay a percentage from the proceeds of their narcotics sales, known as 'taxes,' " to the woman, the indictment stated.

The Mexican Mafia used threats of violence to enforce the payments in return for permission to conduct narcotics sales within the area under the mafia member's control as well as protection from competing narcotics traffickers, according to the indictment.

Late Wednesday and Thursday, more than 200 law enforcement officers executed arrest warrants involving drug or weapons violations.

Officials announced the crackdown during a news conference at the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department headquarters in San Bernardino.

Thirty-two defendants face terms up to life without parole in federal prison if convicted and two more face up to 40 years in federal prison, said Stephanie Yonekura-McCaffrey, who spoke on behalf of Thomas P. O'Brien, U.S. attorney for the Los Angeles region, which includes the Inland area.

Because they are not charged in the federal cases, Yonekura-McCaffrey declined to identify the imprisoned Mexican Mafia members.

The task force formed about 18 months ago. The federal charges focus on criminal activities of Hispanic street gangs affiliated with the Mexican Mafia, including the Westside Verdugos, Northside Redlands and Varrío Redlands, gangs operating primarily within San Bernardino and neighboring Redlands, according to a news release from the FBI.

The investigation focused on identifying key members of the drug trafficking network in the area to disrupt the violence associated with narcotics sales and related criminal activity, according to the release.

Task force members seized \$36,000 in cash, more than six pounds of methamphetamine, two pounds of cocaine and 19 firearms, the release stated.

The team includes representatives of the FBI, San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, San Bernardino and Redlands police departments and San Bernardino County district attorney's office.

# Indictment offers harrowing details of L.A. gang's workings



Richard Hartog / Los Angeles Times

Mourners and TV news crews converge on the spot where 3-week-old Luis Angel Garcia was slain in 2007.

After an infant was mistakenly slain in a shooting, the Mexican Mafia wanted those responsible killed. The shooter, attacked by members of his own gang and left for dead, is now aiding investigators.

By Scott Glover

June 18, 2009

When a stray bullet from a gang member's gun struck 3-week-old Luis Angel Garcia in the heart and killed him in 2007, police, politicians and ordinary Angelenos expressed outrage over the infant's death.

But they weren't the only ones.



## Map

Members of the Mexican Mafia, the notorious prison-based organization that authorities say controls Latino street gangs, demanded that those responsible be killed, according to an indictment unsealed this week in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles.

The edict, known as a "green light," was aimed at members of the 18th Street gang, who were thought to have killed the baby during a botched attack on a street vendor who'd refused to pay "rent" to conduct business in the gang's territory near MacArthur Park.

Hoping to avoid the Mexican Mafia's wrath, the 18th Streeters decided to take care of the problem themselves, according to authorities. In the days after [the baby's slaying](#), two gang

members lured the shooter to Mexico under the false pretense that he was being hidden from police investigating the murder, the indictment states. Once there, they attempted to strangle him and left "him for dead on the side of a road," according to prosecutors.

The shooter, identified in court papers as "unindicted co-conspirator #1," survived the attack and is now cooperating with prosecutors in their pursuit of his former gang.

Though prosecutors in the U.S. attorney's office have declined to comment, most of the account was revealed in a 114-page indictment unsealed Tuesday. The document charges about 40 members and associates of the Columbia Lil Cycos -- a clique of the 18th Street gang -- with being involved in a racketeering conspiracy that allegedly involved murder, drug trafficking, money laundering, kidnapping and other crimes. One murder victim was a 22-year-old man who was mistaken for a rival gang member, authorities allege. Also charged in the case was a defense attorney accused of serving as an intermediary between the gang and the Mexican Mafia.

Assistant U.S. Atty. Brian R. Michael said the charges filed against the gang show that it has broadened its activities by taxing not just drug dealers, but also "hard-working folks who are barely making ends meet," such as the street vendor who was attacked.

That the attack was carried out on a street bustling with shoppers, including women and children, represents "a level of violence that, even for this gang, is pretty extraordinary," Michael said.

Identified in the indictment by his initials -- G.M. -- the gang member cooperating with authorities was charged in state court last year with the baby's killing, according to a source close to the case.

That source, who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly about the case, said G.M. has been helping both state and federal authorities with their prosecutions of 18th Street gangsters and is being held in protective custody.

Deputy L.A. County Dist. Atty. Victor Avila, the lead prosecutor on the murder case in state court, said six defendants are awaiting trial. Avila declined to comment on whether any plea deals have been offered or accepted.

According to authorities, the gang's intended target in the Sept. 15, 2007, shooting was Francisco Clemente, a 37-year-old street vendor who had been refusing to pay the \$50 weekly "rent" that he and others working near the corner of 6th Street and Burlington Avenue were expected to pay gang members.

The alleged shooter, flanked by numerous other gangsters, strode up to Clemente and opened fire at close range, authorities said. Clemente was struck several times in the chest, but survived. The baby, who was in a stroller, was hit by a single bullet and died.

The killings of innocent children and women go against Mexican Mafia rules, in part because they often result in intense police activity and disrupt their criminal enterprises, according to authorities.

The source who asked not to be identified said the gangsters who took G.M. to Mexico tried to strangle him with a rope. When he lost consciousness, they assumed he was dead and rolled him down a steep hillside in a rural area.

When G.M. came to, he contacted family members in Mexico and arranged for them to pick him up, the source said. He was later found by Los Angeles police detectives at an undisclosed location and surrendered.

# Mexican Mafia gang members arrested in San Diego

By **Angelica Martinez**

UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

5:48 p.m. February 13, 2009



Four men still being sought are (top left clockwise) David Garcia, 43; Lance Agundez, 38; Jorge Lerma-Duenas, 40; and Ernest Soqui, 32 -

More than a dozen gang members connected to the Mexican Mafia prison gang were arrested early Friday and accused of attempted murder, kidnapping and drug trafficking in San Diego County, authorities said.

Officials have charged 40 people – 17 of whom were arrested early Friday – in connection with the nearly year long investigation, dubbed “Operation Keys to the City”, that targeted the notorious prison gang, officials said at an afternoon news conference downtown.

Two criminal complaints charge 36 defendants with federal racketeering, firearm offenses and drug trafficking violations.

U.S. Attorney General Karen Hewitt described the Mexican Mafia and its connection to Latino street gangs as a rigid hierarchy comprised of “members”, “associates” and “soldiers” whose criminal enterprise spills into the community.

Some of the alleged crimes involved paying “taxes”, which officials say is the term used by gang members who use violent acts to extort payments from victims.

One defendant admitted to kidnapping a man, who twice broke free, authorities said. One of the kidnapers fired at the victim, who was able to run free and call police after the second kidnapping attempt was foiled, according to authorities, who recorded the Sept. 15, 2008 incident.

The victim, who was kidnapped in San Diego, broke free in Chula Vista while being transferred to another vehicle, according to federal court documents.

FBI Special Agent-In-Charge Keith Slotter said the arrests in the operation have dealt a blow to the Mexican Mafia by disrupting the criminal enterprise.

"These operations are not just a bunch of low level criminals that were caught up in a sweep," Slotter said. "These are dangerous, extremely violent individuals."

Some of the accused are involved with 13 street gangs in San Diego and National City and have associates as far north as the Los Angeles area.

Hewitt said members of the Mexican Mafia are elected by fellow gang members and are the top of the hierarchy. They are followed by associates, many of whom are in custody and who are given the authority or "the keys," by members of the prison gang to order crimes in a neighborhood, city or prison yard, Hewitt said.

Next come the soldiers, the low-level street gang members believed to be in the thousands who carry out and enforce the orders of the associates, she said.

Four men are still being sought and are considered fugitives: David Garcia, 43; Jorge Lerma-Duenas, 40; Ernest Soqui, 32; and Lance Agundez, 38.

Hewitt said many of the defendants were already serving time in prison for other crimes.

The arrests occurred in stages over the past weeks, she said. Some of the defendants were arrested on state charges or parole violations and will be transferred over to federal custody, she said. Four of the defendants were charged in late 2008.

The exact number of those suspected of being behind bars while orchestrating the drug and violent crimes was not available, Hewitt said.

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