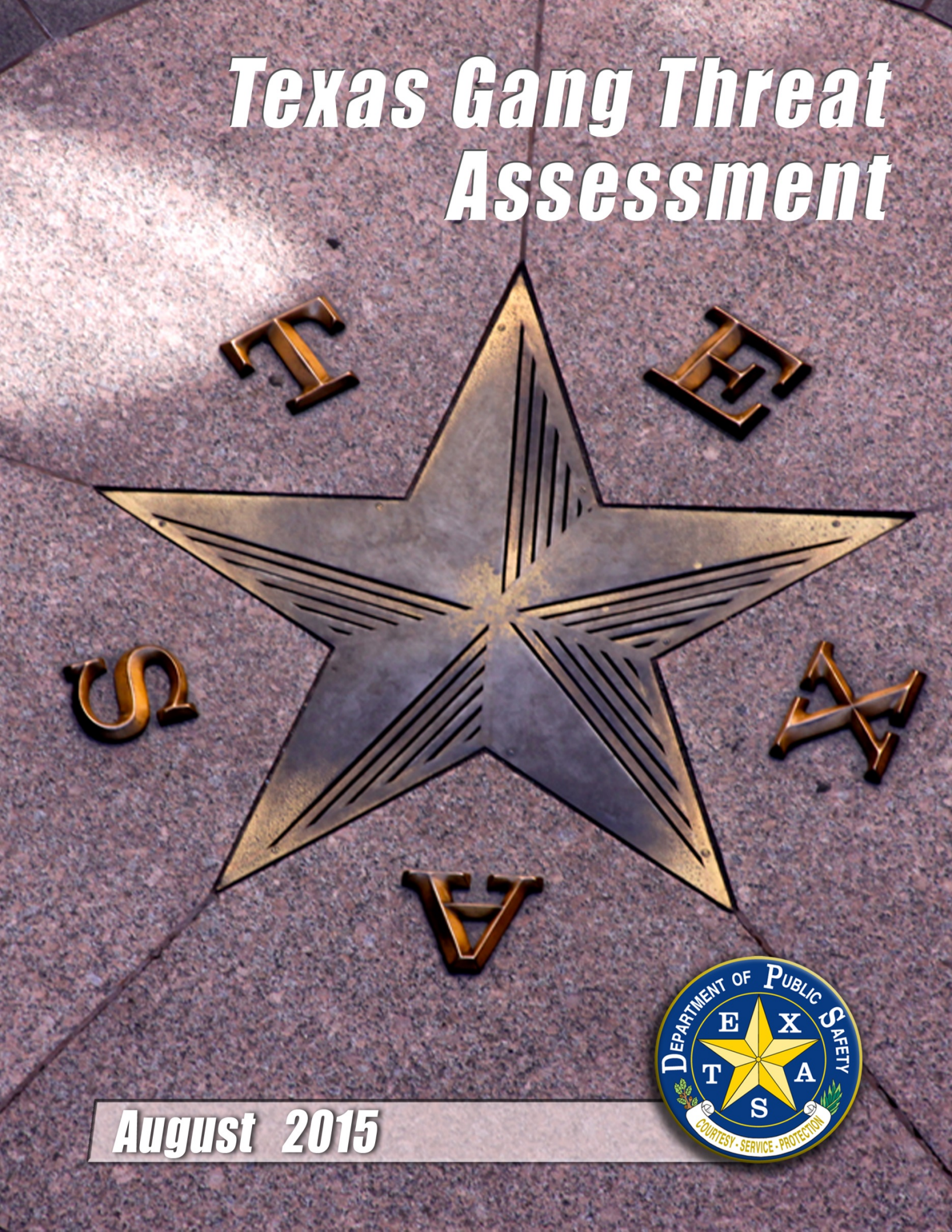
Texas Gang Threat Assessment



August 2015

Department of Public Safety
Texas
Courtesy - Service - Protection

Texas Gang Threat Assessment

A State Intelligence Estimate

Produced by the Texas Joint Crime Information Center
Intelligence & Counterterrorism Division
Texas Department of Public Safety

In collaboration with federal, state, and local law enforcement and criminal justice agencies

August 2015

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Executive Summary

The key analytic judgments of this assessment are:

- Gangs continue to represent a significant public safety threat to Texas due to their propensity for violence and heightened level of criminal activity. Of the incarcerated gang members within Texas Department of Criminal Justice prisons, over 60 percent are serving a sentence for violent crimes, including robbery (24 percent), homicide (16 percent), and assault/terroristic threat (15 percent). We assess there are likely more than 100,000 gang members in Texas.

- The Tier 1 gangs in Texas for 2015 are Tango Blast and Tango cliques (estimated 15,000 members), Texas Syndicate (estimated 3,400 members), Texas Mexican Mafia (estimated 4,700 members), Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) (estimated 800 members), and Latin Kings (estimated 2,100 members). These groups pose the greatest gang threat to Texas due to their relationships with Mexican cartels, high levels of transnational criminal activity, level of violence, and overall statewide presence.

- Gangs in Texas remain active in both human smuggling and human trafficking operations. Gang members associated with human smuggling have direct relationships with alien smuggling organizations (ASOs) and Mexican cartels. These organizations were involved in and profited from the recent influx of illegal aliens crossing the border in the Rio Grande Valley in 2014. Gang members involved in human trafficking, including commercial sex trafficking and compelling prostitution of adults and minors, exploit their victims through force, fraud or coercion, including recruiting and grooming them with false promises of affection, employment, or a better life. Gangs identified as being involved in human trafficking in Texas in 2014 include Tango Blast, Texas Syndicate, Bloods, Crips, Gangster Disciples, and MS-13.

- Mexican cartels regularly use Texas gangs for the purposes of illicit cross-border smuggling. Members of Tier 1, Tier 2, and other gangs are sometimes recruited and tasked by cartels to carry out acts of violence in both Texas and Mexico. The relationships between certain gangs and cartels fluctuate based on cartel structures and cell alignments, gang alignment with specific cartels, threats or coercion, and familial ties.

- Traditional rivalries between gangs continue to diminish as members take advantage of opportunities to collaborate and achieve common criminal objectives, typically for financial gain. Members of gangs such as the Bloods, Texas Syndicate, and Texas Mexican Mafia are working together to smuggle and sell drugs and weapons, among other crimes. In addition, law enforcement continues to observe gang members with hybrid memberships, where gang members claim multiple affiliations, which presents challenges in identifying and investigating gang activity.

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Acknowledgments

The Texas Joint Crime Information Center collaborated with law enforcement and criminal justice agencies across Texas and the United States in the production of this State Intelligence Estimate. Their contributions were invaluable in developing a comprehensive assessment of the threat posed by gangs in Texas, and they underscore the commitment among law enforcement and criminal justice agencies in Texas to share information and intelligence in order to effectively combat crime and improve public safety. The Joint Crime Information Center thanks these agencies and centers for contributing to the production of this assessment.

It is also important to acknowledge the essential contributions of the many law enforcement agencies throughout Texas that routinely report gang and border-related incidents, which also contributed to this report. This includes Operation Border Star participants and agencies that contribute information to the Texas Gang Investigative Database (TxGang). Contributing agencies are listed in Appendix 2.

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State Intelligence Estimates

In order to enhance the state's ability to detect, assess, and prioritize threats to the safety and security of its citizens, the Texas Department of Public Safety implemented a State Intelligence Estimate process after consultation with the National Intelligence Council, based in part on the model of the National Intelligence Estimate.

State Intelligence Estimates are multi-agency assessments on issues relating to homeland security and public safety in Texas. They serve as the most authoritative and comprehensive analysis of these issues, and they are designed to provide law enforcement and government officials with the most accurate evaluation of current information on a given topic. State Intelligence Estimates are intended to provide an assessment on the current status of an issue, but they may also include estimative conclusions that make forecasts about future developments and identify the implications for Texas.

Unlike reports and assessments produced by an individual agency or center, State Intelligence Estimates draw on the information and expertise of multiple law enforcement and homeland security agencies across Texas. Such an approach is essential to developing a comprehensive assessment of issues that affect the state as a whole. By incorporating the perspectives and information from multiple agencies, the Texas Department of Public Safety is better able to produce assessments that support the development of proactive strategies and policies needed to address current and evolving threats to the state.

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Preface

This threat assessment is submitted to the Governor and Legislature of Texas in response to the requirements of Texas Government Code §421.082. In addition to meeting these requirements, this threat assessment provides a broad overview of criminal gang activity throughout the state of Texas.

Texas Penal Code §71.01 defines a criminal gang as three or more persons having a common identifying sign or symbol or an identifiable leadership who continuously or regularly associate in the commission of criminal activities.

This assessment was produced by the Texas Joint Crime Information Center in the form of a State Intelligence Estimate. It includes the contributions of a wide range of law enforcement and criminal justice agencies in the state.

The statements, conclusions, and assessments included in this report were reached based on a review and analysis of information from a variety of sources, including federal, state, and local reports of varying degrees of sensitivity and reliability, and open-source reporting.

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Introduction

This assessment updates the Texas Gang Threat Assessment released in April 2014, and serves as the annual evaluation of the gang threat in Texas. While many of the underlying trends and characteristics of gang activity have not changed substantially since last year, this report includes relevant updates and detailed information on several key aspects of gang activity.

Quantitative information regarding gangs and gang activity is somewhat limited, and the available data is not necessarily comprehensive. For example, the number of gang members in Texas is dynamic, with gangs regularly seeking new recruits, and existing members traveling or moving. Some law enforcement agencies may vary in their reporting, as well as in their awareness of gangs and indicators of gang activity. In addition, not all gang members are known to law enforcement, making the available information on identified gangs and gang members representative of only a portion of all gang activity.

Finally, some law enforcement and criminal justice agencies currently maintain gang intelligence information in separate databases, several of which are not interoperable, creating impediments to the sharing of gang-related criminal intelligence information. Based on the requirements of Chapter 61 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, the Texas Department of Public Safety was directed to create an online catalog to encourage and expedite the exchange of gang intelligence information between criminal justice agencies. The Texas Gang Investigative Database, or TxGang, is an online intelligence database available for all levels of law enforcement to track gang members. Any local, state, or federal law enforcement agency who engages in the administration of criminal justice is permitted to use TxGang.[1] The Department continues to work with its law enforcement partners to increase the level of participation.

Despite the above-mentioned limitations, the available quantitative information, combined with intelligence information derived from investigations and multiple sources, provides a reliable overview of gang activity in Texas.

The purpose of this assessment is to identify and evaluate the threat posed by gangs and gang-related crime in Texas by examining several key aspects of gang activity. The first section explains the criteria and factors that the Joint Crime Information Center uses to assess the threat posed by an individual gang. The subsequent sections examine law enforcement strategies in targeting gangs, gang activity in various regions of the state, gang organizational issues, gang relationships, and an analysis of gang involvement in criminal activity. Finally, this assessment presents an outlook of gang activity in Texas.

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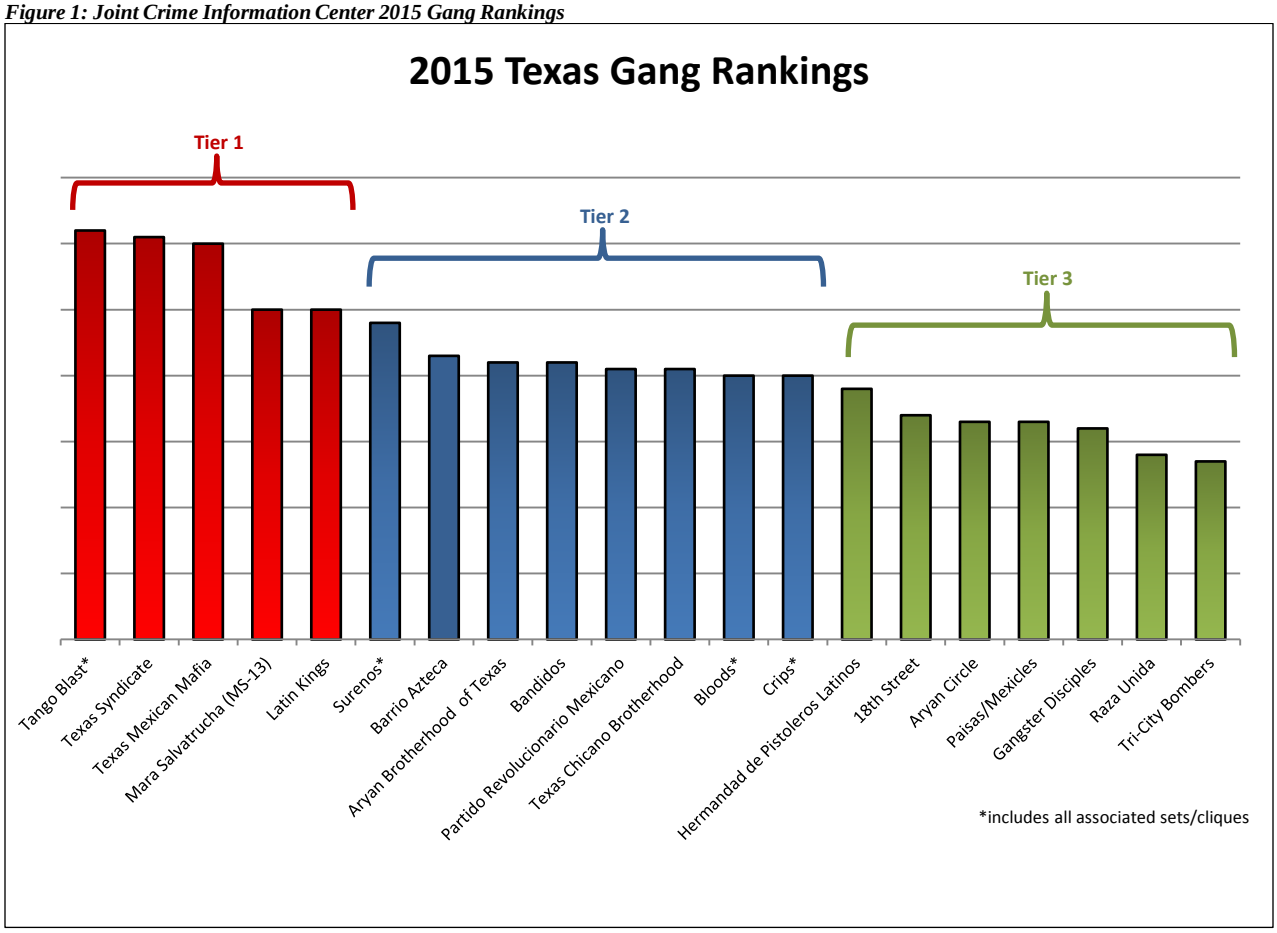
Prioritization and Criteria

The Texas Joint Crime Information Center uses a threat assessment matrix to compare and evaluate the threat posed by individual gangs at a statewide level. The matrix consists of 11 factors used in determining each gang's threat potential. The factors are rated using a weighted, point-based system to achieve a composite score. This score provides a measurement of the overall threat level of each gang. Gangs with the highest scores are deemed the most significant and are classified as Tier 1, with other significant gangs classified as Tier 2 and Tier 3. Considering that thousands of gangs have been identified in Texas, this threat assessment matrix is an essential tool in prioritizing which gangs pose the greatest threat on a statewide scale.

The rankings in *Figure 1* show the threat posed by these gangs to the state as a whole. The gangs that constitute the greatest threat at a statewide level do not necessarily pose the greatest threat in every community. Similarly, the gangs that pose the greatest threat in one particular community may be local and do not represent a threat elsewhere. Some of the gangs listed in *Figure 1* are composed of multiple sets and cliques that adhere to a common culture and identity, though the individual cliques may operate autonomously. The threat posed by any particular gang is often dynamic, and a threat assessment tool such as this is designed to be fluid.

Figure 1: Joint Crime Information Center 2015 Gang Rankings



The factors included in the Joint Crime Information Center's 2015 threat assessment matrix include:

- **Relationship with Cartels:** Examines the degree to which a gang is connected to Mexico-based drug cartels. Gangs are assessed as having no or limited relationships, relationships based on third-party contacts, or as having direct contacts.

- **Transnational Criminal Activity:** Considers whether a gang has transnational criminal connections, as well as whether a gang's criminal activity has spread into transnational territory.

- **Level of Criminal Activity:** Rates the type and frequency of crimes perpetrated by the gang. Crimes are rated on a scale covering a range of offenses, from misdemeanors to various levels of felonies.

- **Level of Violence:** Assesses the overall level of violence perpetrated by the gang in its criminal activity. It ranges from generally non-violent offenses, such as money laundering, to crimes involving extreme violence, such as torture and murder.

- **Prevalence throughout Texas:** Determines the extent to which a gang is active throughout the state. The geographic reach of some gangs is limited to specific cities or regions of Texas, while others are widespread across the state.

- **Relationship with Other Gangs:** Examines the nature of a gang's alliances and influence with other gangs. This may involve limited and temporary contacts, formal alliances, or the direct oversight of some gangs by others.

- **Total Strength:** Assesses the known size of the gang, measured by the number of individuals confirmed by law enforcement and criminal justice agencies. This number is usually an underrepresentation of the true size of the gang since many members are unknown to law enforcement.

- **Statewide Organizational Effectiveness:** Examines the gang's effectiveness in organizing members under its leadership across the state.

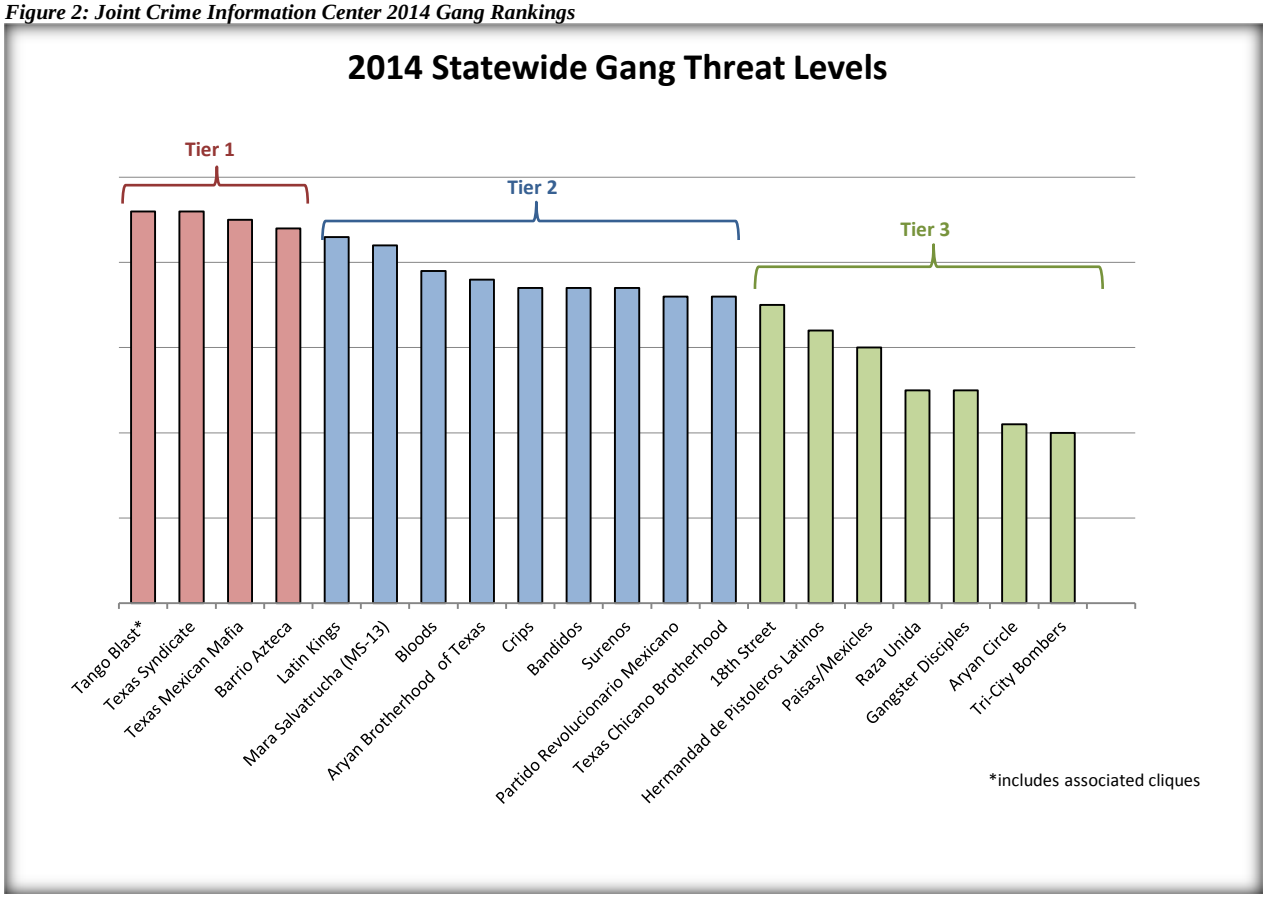
- **Juvenile Membership:** Considers the extent to which the gang recruits juveniles and is active in schools, as recruitment of minors is a unique threat.

- **Threat to Law Enforcement:** Considers the extent to which the gang represents a threat to law enforcement. Some gang members may only use violence to resist arrest or to flee from law enforcement, while others may actively target officers.

- **Involvement in Human Smuggling and Trafficking:** Examines the gang's involvement in human smuggling and human trafficking activities, including the sex trafficking of juveniles.

In order to provide the most accurate assessment of the threat posed by gangs in the state, the Joint Crime Information Center monitors gang-related information and updates the rankings on at least an annual basis. The 2015 rankings in *Figure 1* reflect changes from the previous gang rankings, which are shown in *Figure 2*.

Figure 2: Joint Crime Information Center 2014 Gang Rankings



While some gangs received similar rankings over the past year, the evaluation of these gangs is ongoing and will evolve over time as law enforcement works to reduce their effectiveness. The most noteworthy highlights regarding gang rankings from the past year include:

- Tango Blast and Tango cliques, Texas Syndicate, and Texas Mexican Mafia remain Tier 1 gangs in Texas, with the addition of Latin Kings and Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13). These five gangs pose the greatest gang threat to Texas due to their relationship with Mexican cartels, consistent transnational criminal activity, statewide presence, and a high propensity for violence, among other significant factors.

- Tango Blast and Tango cliques continue to represent the greatest statewide gang threat. The gang continues to grow in membership both inside and outside the Texas prison system, and their members engage in a variety of crimes across the state. When combined together, Tango Blast and Tango cliques have the largest membership levels in Texas.

- The threat from Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) has increased since last year, resulting in the gang now being ranked in the Tier 1 category. MS-13 is a violent transnational gang whose presence in Texas is growing.

- The Latin Kings also advanced into Tier 1, as they have a significant presence in many suburban and rural areas of Texas, enabling them to engage in the illicit drug market and other criminal activity. Their connection with the Chicago-based Latin Kings provides them with advantages afforded by a national organization, a structure most other Texas gangs lack.

- This is the first year that Barrio Azteca has been ranked as a Tier 2 threat, after previously being ranked in Tier 1. Factors contributing to their downgrade include the severed exclusive relationship with the Juarez Cartel, and recent law enforcement investigations that severely disrupted the gang.

- The growth of identified Sureños members throughout the state has significantly increased the gang's ranking to the top of Tier 2. The Sureños' ranking is expected to sustain, and potentially increase, as more members continue to migrate into Texas while continuing transnational criminal activities.

- Bloods, Crips**,** Bandidos Outlaw Motorcycle Gang (OMG), Aryan Brotherhood of Texas (ABT), Partido Revolucionario Mexicano (PRM), and Texas Chicano Brotherhood remain Tier 2 gangs this year. Although these gangs vary in size and structure, they are responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime across urban, suburban, and rural areas of Texas.

Increasing Threat from MS-13 in Texas

Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) has emerged as a top tier gang threat in Texas for 2015. The influx of illegal alien gang members crossing the border into Texas in 2014, along with reports of extremely violent murders committed by its members in the Houston area, positions the gang as one of the most significant gang threats in the state for this upcoming year.

Since 2011, the number of MS-13 members encountered by U.S. Border Patrol in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) sector has increased each year, accelerating in 2014 and coinciding with increased illegal migration from Central America during the same period.

Although a large number of MS-13 members have been captured along the border, it is likely many more have successfully crossed into Texas and remain hidden from law enforcement. Gang members from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador could be destined for locations in Texas with large Central American communities, including the Houston and Dallas areas. Law enforcement agencies in Houston already report the highest number of identified MS-13 members in the state.[2]

Reports of increased MS-13 gang activity have already surfaced in the Houston area. MS-13 gang members are known for highly violent crimes, including brutal murders and dismemberments. Several recent crimes in Texas illustrate the criminal threat associated with MS-13.

- On September 15, 2014, the mutilated body of a 14-year-old middle school student was discovered in the woods near Houston after he was murdered with a machete.[3] Initial information from the investigation indicates the victim was a U.S. citizen and an MS-13 member who was murdered after trying to leave the gang. In October 2014, a 14-year-old and three adult males were arrested and charged with murder in this case. The adult males are from El Salvador, and at least two are documented MS-13 gang members.[4]

- In mid-August 2014, a 29-year-old 18th Street gang member was stabbed to death in Houston by a 16-year-old El Salvadoran member of MS-13.[5] The victim suffered multiple stab wounds outside of a bar and was discovered a few days later in a bayou.[6] According to investigators, the juvenile suspect revealed he illegally crossed into the U.S. in March 2014.

Barrio Azteca Statewide Threat Decreases

A significant change to this year's gang threat rankings is the downgrade of Barrio Azteca to Tier 2, after having been previously ranked in Tier 1 since 2010. Contributing factors to their downgrade include the broken exclusive relationship with the Juarez Cartel along with recent law enforcement investigations that have severely disrupted the gang in and around the El Paso area.

In previous years, the relationship between Barrio Azteca and the Juarez Cartel had played a major role in its ranking in Tier 1. This evaluation has changed with the occupation of the Sinaloa Cartel in Ciudad Juarez, and the arrest of the Juarez Cartel's leader, Vicente Carrillo Fuentes, in October 2014.[7] At present, Barrio Azteca must share trafficking areas with the Sinaloa Cartel and Juarez Cartel, resulting in a reduction of the gang's influence in both Ciudad Juarez and El Paso. While this does not necessarily reduce their capacity to commit transnational crimes, their effectiveness in controlling both sides of the border is diminished, and it places the gang on a more even playing field with other Texas-based gangs.

2014 also marked the end of a three-year investigation targeting Barrio Azteca, resulting in the indictment of 55 members and associates.[8] The investigation and indictments represent a major setback to the gang's operational effectiveness, which further contributed to its downgrade in the rankings. However, Barrio Azteca remains a significant Tier 2 threat to the state and, in particular, to West Texas, due to their size and organizational style, propensity for violence, high level of criminal activity, and their continued relationships with the Mexican cartels.

Law Enforcement Strategies

The multi-jurisdictional and evolving threat posed by transnational organized crime requires a fully integrated approach to affect the most problematic gangs in Texas. It is essential to recognize that many of the consequences of an unsecure border do not affect only the border region but have a substantial impact on communities throughout Texas.

Such organized crime throughout the state can be reduced using proven strategies that dismantle the command and control networks of those criminal organizations that most threaten public safety in Texas. Effectively reducing this threat requires the employment of a variety of initiatives that harness the various capabilities of local, state, and federal law enforcement, as well as both state and federal prosecutors. Combining intelligence, patrol, investigative, and prosecutorial resources is essential for any strategy to be effective. Working together from the onset of these investigations, investigators and prosecutors must continue to successfully utilize all available state and federal statutes that can aid in the successful prosecution of senior and mid-level leadership.

This approach is recommended, and it is most effective when agencies across jurisdictions integrate their efforts as has been done successfully in Houston to target gangs at the Texas Anti-Gang Center (TAG), where area gang enforcement resources are co-located to facilitate collaborative investigations. Multi-agency partnerships among law enforcement and prosecutors at the local, state, and federal level are essential to fully disrupt and render ineffective the gangs that constitute the greatest threat to Texas. Using this approach, law enforcement agencies in Texas have successfully collaborated during the past year in multiple investigations designed to disrupt and deter gang-related criminal activity.

Below are several examples of successful anti-gang operations and investigations that involved the Texas Department of Public Safety and other agencies.

- In early 2014, DPS in Garland, along with local and federal law enforcement agencies, initiated a joint investigation into the organized criminal activities of the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, Aryan Circle, Peckerwoods, Featherwoods, Dirty White Boys and Irish Mob/Irish Mob Gangstas. Thirty-seven defendants related to the investigation were indicted on federal charges of conspiracy to manufacture/deliver a controlled substance on October 7, 2014. Of the 24 arrested, 13 were already in custody, two fugitives absconded and two search warrants were executed, resulting in the seizure of additional methamphetamine, marijuana, unidentified pills, and firearms.

- In February 2014, pursuant to an ongoing criminal investigation into the Tango Blast Major Criminal Enterprise organization, DPS Special Agents in Garland, along with the U.S. Marshals Service, arrested a Puro Tango Blast gang member for a Federal Probation Violation Warrant (absconder) at a residence in McKinney, Texas. As a result of the arrest, DPS Special Agents developed probable cause and obtained a state search warrant for the main target of the retail theft case. The search of the residence resulted in the recovery of approximately two pounds of high-grade marijuana, which the defendants attempted to flush. Additionally, several stolen clothing items and clothing accessories were recovered, which were reported stolen from several retail stores in the Dallas Metroplex area. DPS Special Agents also arrested two Tango Blast associates who were at the residence. As of June 2, 2014, the Mac Town Tango Blast case was presented to the Collin County Grand Jury resulting in the indictments of four suspects. The approximate value of the stolen items recovered was $18,500.

- From 2011 to 2014, DPS Special Agents in Eagle Pass, along with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Administration, Eagle Pass Police Department, Texas Highway Patrol (THP), U.S. District Court-Western District of Texas Del Rio Division and other local agencies initiated a joint investigation into the organized criminal activities of the Texas Mexican Mafia (TMM). On May 21, 2014, 17 TMM members were indicted on five separate federal charges including, but not limited to, conspiracy to conduct the affairs of an enterprise through Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) and Violent Crimes in Aid of Racketeering (VICAR)– (Murder & Assault). Five search warrants were executed, which resulted in the seizure of cocaine, marijuana, heroin, three weapons, and $181,819. Eleven fugitives were apprehended.

- In mid-2014, DPS Special Agents, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement - Homeland Security Investigations, and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives conducted a buy-bust operation in Corpus Christi targeting local methamphetamine distributors. The targeted distributors were confirmed members and associates of the Texas Syndicate, Raza Unida and Tango Blast/Corpitos prison/street gangs. As a result of the buy-bust operation, DPS Special Agents were able to successfully seize a half pound of methamphetamine, resulting in three arrests and the seizure of one prohibited weapon (short-barreled shotgun). DPS Special Agents continued to develop information, which led to the seizure of an additional 1.84 pounds of methamphetamine, miscellaneous pills (controlled substance), 12 grams of psilocybin mushrooms, and a small amount of hydroponic marijuana located in a storage unit. All four defendants were charged with possession of a controlled substance, with additional charges pending.

- In May 2014, DPS Special Agents concluded a multi-agency arrest operation of the Texas Mexican Mafia (TMM) gang members and associates in the Rio Grande Valley area. Other agencies included U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Kentucky and McAllen. DPS Special Agents successfully conducted a buy of 1.75 pounds of black tar heroin from TMM members in McAllen, resulting in the arrest of a TMM Rio Grande Valley captain and two other TMM associates for federal conspiracy to possess and distribute heroin. Three TMM members incarcerated within the Federal Bureau of Prisons were also charged. U.S. Customs arrested the heroin supplier, who is a Gulf Cartel member and TMM Associate.

- In September 2014, a long-term joint investigation initiated in 2012 between the Department of Homeland Security Investigations (El Paso), Federal Bureau of Investigation (El Paso), Drug Enforcement Administration (El Paso), United States Marshals Service (El Paso), El Paso Police Department, El Paso Sheriff's Office, Socorro Police Department, El Paso County Constables, and the Horizon Police Department was concluded. The investigation into the organized criminal activities of the Barrio Azteca (BA) criminal enterprise organization resulted in the arrest of 16 Barrio Azteca gang members and 16 Barrio Azteca gang associates, without incident, on violations of drug distribution conspiracy and Racketeer Influence and Corrupt Organization (RICO). In addition, four consensual searches and one search warrant were executed resulting in the seizure of controlled substances and a large sum of U.S. currency.

- In October 2014, DPS Special Agents in San Angelo, along with the San Angelo Police Department, executed a state drug search warrant at a private residence occupied by a gang member and associate of the Nazi Lowriders gang out of California. The search resulted in the seizure of over 98 grams of heroin, heroin syringes, over 11 grams of methamphetamine, drug packaging materials, digital scales and cutting agents. Two suspects were arrested and charged

with Manufacture/Delivery of a Controlled Substance. Follow-up investigation by the DPS Special Agents identified two residences in San Angelo used to distribute heroin and methamphetamine. Two search warrants were obtained and a search of the residences resulted in the seizure of over 8 grams of heroin, over 11 grams of methamphetamine, over $1,500 in cash, two handguns (one stolen), several hydrocodone tablets, packaging materials, digital scales, cutting agents, and a glass smoking pipe. Moreover, four suspects identified at the residences were arrested and charged with Unlawful Possession of a Firearm by Felon and Manufacture/Delivery of Controlled Substances.

- In June 2012, DPS Special Agents in Lubbock developed leads and actionable intelligence regarding the Texas Syndicate (TS) criminal enterprise organization operating in and around the Lubbock area. As a result, a joint investigation between DPS Criminal Investigative Division, Lubbock County Sheriff's Office, Lubbock Police Department, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives was initiated, leading to the identification of members and associates of the TS, including ranking members, who were responsible for large amounts of drugs, weapons, and currency trafficking in and around the Lubbock area. From the inception of the ongoing joint investigation to July 2014, law enforcement initiatives proved successful as numerous key TS organizational members, to include hierarchy members and associates, were arrested for trafficking methamphetamine (in excess of 11 pounds), heroin, marijuana, and multiple weapons, to include stolen weapons, in and around the Lubbock area.

- In July 2014, DPS initiated an investigation of members of Texas Syndicate (TS), West Texas Tangos (WTT), and Crips members in the Amarillo area for conspiracy to distribute controlled substances and numerous other federal crimes. As a result of the investigation, one TS member, two WTT members, and one Crips member were indicted on federal drug violations, for a total of 26 members being arrested during roundup operations. DPS Special Agents also executed multiple search warrants, resulting in the seizure of cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana, firearms, and U.S. currency. Also participating in the investigation were the Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement - Homeland Security Investigations, Randall County Sheriff's Office, Potter County Sheriff's Office, and the Amarillo Police Department.

- In November 2014, Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agents arrested a former ranking member of the Texas Mexican Mafia (TMM) in connection with the alleged murders of three high-ranking TMM members. The TMM member was charged in a federal criminal complaint with one count of using or discharging a firearm during a crime of violence, specifically, Violent Crimes in Aid of Racketeering (VICAR). According to the complaint, on January 13, 2014, the TMM member shot and killed three TMM ranking members for their alleged mishandling of approximately $60,000 and making poor decisions in regard to TMM daily operations. The complaint further alleges that the TMM former ranking member transported and buried the three bodies in Pearsall, Texas. The complaint resulted from an investigation conducted by the FBI, in conjunction with the San Antonio Police Department, DPS, Bexar County Sheriff's Office and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

- In June 2013, DPS Special Agents in the Austin area, along with the Federal Bureau of Investigation Safe Street Task Force, Austin Police Department and Round Rock Police Department, initiated a joint investigation targeting the criminal activities of the Aryan Circle (AC) prison/street gang operating in the Travis and Williamson County areas. DPS Special Agents developed and pursued investigative leads, and applied various investigative techniques during the course of the investigation. The investigation led to the identification of the AC

organization members and associates, to include ranking members, and the criminal activities committed, such as drug and weapons trafficking and property theft. In August 2014, seven AC members, including ranking members, and 16 AC associates were arrested and charged with various violations, to include weapons, drugs, property theft, and fugitives from justice. The long-term joint investigation also resulted in the seizure of over 1.17 pounds of methamphetamine with an estimated value of $46,374, multi-gram amounts of marijuana, heroin and LSD, Vicodin pills, five stolen vehicles, and four firearms. The arrest of the AC captain, along with other AC members and associates, as well as seizures of evidence, led to the disruption of the AC gang's criminal activities in and around the Travis and Williamson County areas.

Texas Anti-Gang (TAG) Centers

An essential tool in disrupting gang activity in Texas is the creation of Texas Anti-Gang (TAG) Centers in key areas throughout the state. These centers provide an opportunity for agencies at all levels to pursue collaborative investigations against the most significant gangs throughout Texas.

The first TAG was established in Houston in 2012, and in February 2015 the Criminal Justice Division of the Office of the Governor awarded a grant to the City of North Richland Hills to establish, furnish and equip the North Texas Anti-Gang Center, which will be tasked with combatting organized gang activity within an eleven-county region in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

The establishment of the Houston TAG has achieved positive results, including multiple joint investigations and arrests. It comprises various law enforcement agencies, including the Texas Department of Public Safety, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, FBI, DEA, ATF, Houston Police Department, Harris County Sheriff's Office, other county sheriffs and constable offices throughout the region, and the Harris County District Attorney's Office, among others. The center serves as the unified headquarters for the region's most knowledgeable and experienced federal, state, and local gang investigators, analysts, and prosecutors, with several noteworthy cases in 2014.

In April 2014, DPS Criminal Investigations Division (CID) Special Agents in Houston, along with Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agents, Harris County Sheriff's Office, and Texas Department of Criminal Justice - Office of Inspector General, assigned to the Multi-Agency Gang Task Force (MAGTF) at the Texas Anti-Gang (TAG) Center conducted a gang operation in the Houston, Harris County area, targeting a confirmed member of the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas (ABT) prison/criminal gang. As a result of the execution of a search warrant in Northeast Houston, 12 handguns, 2 long rifles, 2 shotguns, and approximately 13.5 grams of methamphetamine were seized. Out of the 16 weapons seized, 10 were confirmed to be stolen, along with the recovery of two stolen vehicles. A confirmed ABT member and a confirmed Gangster Disciple member were arrested at the residence for possession of stolen property, and federal drug conspiracy charges have been filed.

In September 2014, DPS Criminal Investigations Division (CID) Special Agents assigned to the Texas Anti-Gang Center in Houston, along with other law enforcement personnel from Federal Bureau of Investigation, Alcohol Tobacco Firearms and Explosives, Houston Police Department, and Harris County Sheriff's Office, initiated an investigation targeting members of the 59 Bounty Hunter Bloods, Skyline Piru Bloods, 52 Hoover Crips, and Young Mob Gorillas. Special Agents and officers conducted several local operations targeting these gang members and associates involved in pawn shop/gun store burglaries and weapons distribution. As a result of these operations, 52 firearms were recovered of which 45 were confirmed stolen. Additionally, 16 defendants have been arrested and Special Agents have seized cocaine, methamphetamine, and marijuana. Numerous gang members were identified and are a part of the burglaries of multiple FFL (Federal Firearm License) dealerships in the greater Houston area.

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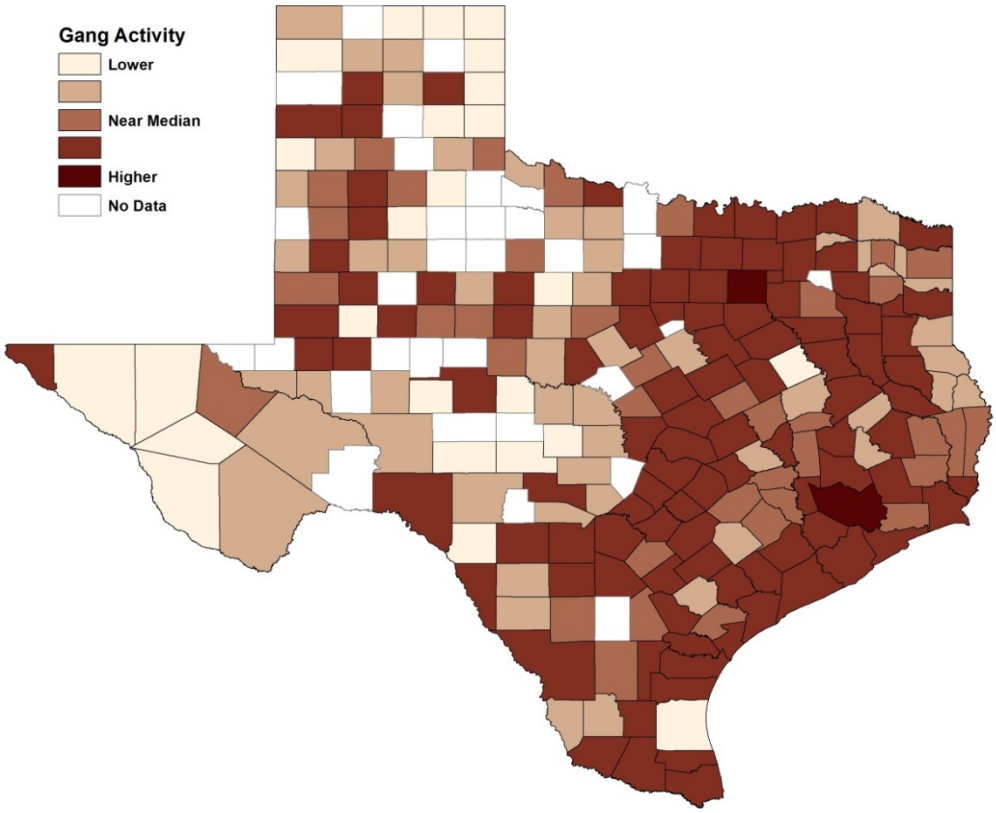
Regional Assessments

Although there are challenges associated with quantitatively measuring gang membership and activity for the entire state of Texas, we continue to assess that the total number of gang members in Texas most likely exceeds 100,000. This estimate is consistent with available information on gang membership both nationally and within Texas.[9]

Figure 3: Concentration of Suspected Gang Activity in Texas



Law enforcement agencies in Texas have identified more than 5,600 gangs statewide, an increase of over 21 percent from last year, though it is unknown how many of these are currently active. Such gangs range from small groups composed of a few members with limited geographic reach, to large organizations with thousands of members active throughout Texas, the United States and Mexico. Approximately 15 percent of the 5,600 gangs identified have a membership level of at least 11 persons. The increase in identified gangs could be attributed to a greater law enforcement focus on gang activities, resulting in increased reporting.[10]

Gang activity remains widespread throughout all areas of Texas. While the greatest concentrations of gang activity tend to be in the larger metropolitan areas, gang members are also present in the surrounding suburban and rural areas. Gang activity is especially prevalent in the counties adjacent to Mexico and along key smuggling corridors since many Texas-based gangs are involved in cross-border smuggling and trafficking. Many transnational gangs operating in Texas, such as Barrio Azteca and MS-13, engage in

criminal activity in Mexico and elsewhere. *Figure 3* provides an overview of where suspected gang activity is concentrated.[11]

Individual gang activity varies among DPS defined regions, as shown in *Figure 4*. Many gangs only operate in limited areas of the state. Conversely, several of the largest and most significant gangs are present across multiple DPS regions.

Not all significant gangs at the regional level are the most significant at the statewide level. For this reason, a gang's prevalence throughout Texas is only one of the factors used to assess its overall threat. Additionally, law enforcement agencies continue to investigate significant gangs, completing successful operations that result in the arrest and prosecution of high-level gang leaders and members. These efforts may result in changes to the most significant gangs by region during the next assessment period.

Figure 4: DPS Regional Boundaries

It is important to note that some gang members may enter the prison system and align themselves with other gangs, such as the Tangos, if there are few or no members from their own gang. This duel-membership can result in what law enforcement identifies as hybrid gang membership.

The following regional summaries provide an assessment of the most significant gangs operating in each of the six DPS regions of Texas. Available gang data from the 25 metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) of Texas was analyzed in order to evaluate gang presence and activity in each region. Data sources include local and federal law enforcement agencies, Texas Department of Criminal Justice, DPS Criminal Investigations Division, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. A detailed list of the agencies can be found in Appendix 2 at the end of this report.

Region 1

Region 1's most significant gangs for 2015 are identified as Tango Blast of Dallas and Fort Worth, Crips (all sets), Sureños (all sets), Bloods (all sets), Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, Latin Kings, and the Aryan Circle.

Located in the northeast portion of Texas, Region 1 contains five MSAs, including Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, Tyler, Longview, Texarkana, and Sherman-Denison. Their combined population is approximately 7.15 million, and forms the largest combined MSA population region in the state.

The largest and most active street gangs in Region 1 include Crips (all sets), Sureños (all sets), Bloods (all sets), and Latin Kings. The largest and most active prison gangs are the Dallas and Fort Worth cliques of Tango Blast, Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, and Aryan Circle. The Aryan Brotherhood of Texas and Aryan Circle maintain a strong presence east of Dallas in the Garland and Mesquite areas, while the Latin Kings have been increasingly active in northern Fort Worth and Denton. Law enforcement agencies around the region also report a significant presence of Gangster Disciples, Norteños, 18th Street, Mara-Salvatrucha

(MS-13), and Texas Syndicate. Officials in the Dallas-Fort Worth area note the presence of local gangs like the Eastside Homeboys and Varrio Northside.

Among all gang members entering into TDCJ during FY2014, approximately 25 percent came from counties located in Region 1. Ninety percent of those gang members originated from the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington MSA.

Region 2

Region 2's most significant gangs for 2015 are identified as Tango Blast of Houston, Crips (all sets), Bloods (all sets), Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, Sureños (all sets), Latin Kings, and the Texas Syndicate.

Region 2 is comprised of counties in the eastern and southeastern portions of the state. It contains the MSAs of Houston-Sugarland-Baytown, Beaumont-Port Arthur, and College Station-Bryan. The combined population of these three MSAs totals 6.7 million, and is the second largest combined MSA population region in Texas. Although it is not the most populous region, more gang members from Region 2 are incarcerated in TDCJ than in any other region.

The largest and most active street gangs in Region 2 are Crips (all sets), Bloods (all sets), Latin Kings, and Sureños (all sets). The largest and most active prison gangs are Tango Blast (Houston), Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, Texas Syndicate, and Aryan Circle. The Latin Kings are especially active in the College Station-Bryan area. The Aryan Brotherhood of Texas maintains an active presence in the southeast counties of Jefferson, Orange, and Hardin. Other gangs in the region include Bandidos Outlaw Motorcycle Gang, Gangster Disciples, and Mara-Salvatrucha (MS-13). Houston-area officials identify several local gangs, such as Southwest Cholos and La Primera, as having a significant presence.

Among all gang members entering into TDCJ during FY2014, approximately 33 percent came from counties located in Region 2. Ninety percent of those gang members originated from the Houston-Sugarland-Baytown MSA.

Region 3

Region 3's most significant gangs for 2015 are identified as the Tango cliques of the Rio Grande Valley and Corpus Christi, Texas Syndicate, and the Texas Mexican Mafia.

The southern counties of Texas make up Region 3, including the areas from Del Rio to Brownsville along the Mexico border. The four MSAs located in Region 3 include McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, Corpus Christi, Brownsville-Harlingen, and Laredo. Their combined population is approximately 1.87 million.

The largest and most active street gangs in Region 3 are the Sureños, Tri-City Bombers, and Latin Kings. The largest and most active prions gangs are the Tango cliques within the Rio Grande Valley (Vallucos) and Corpus Christi (Corpitos), Texas Syndicate, Texas Mexican Mafia, and the Texas Chicano Brotherhood. Other gangs in this region with an active presence are the Partido Revolucionario Mexicanos (PRM), Raza Unida, Hermanos de Pistoleros Latinos (HPL), and the Bandidos Outlaw Motorcycle Gang. The Texas Mexican Mafia has a strong presence in the Del Rio-Eagle Pass-Uvalde area and in Laredo, as does HPL. The Bandidos and Aryan Brotherhood of Texas maintain a presence in the Corpus Christi area. Officials in Hidalgo County also identify the presence of several local gangs, such as the Po Boys.

Among all gang members entering into TDCJ during FY2014, approximately 11 percent came from counties located in Region 3. Thirty-nine percent of those gang members originated from the McAllen-Edinburg-Mission MSA.

Region 4

Region 4's most significant gangs for 2015 are identified as Barrio Azteca, Tango cliques of El Paso and West Texas, and the Sureños.

Region 4 encompasses West Texas and shares a significant portion of the U.S. border with Mexico, which contains the MSAs of El Paso-Las Cruces, Odessa, Midland, and San Angelo. Their combined population is around 1.4 million.

The largest and most active street gangs in Region 4 are Sureños (all sets), Crips (all sets), and Latin Kings. The largest and most active prison gangs are the Tango cliques of West Texas (West Texas) and El Paso (Chuco), Barrio Azteca, Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, and Aryan Circle. Other significant gangs active throughout the region include Texas Mexican Mafia, Texas Syndicate, and Bandidos Outlaw Motorcycle Gang. Gangster Disciples are reportedly active in El Paso.

Among all gang members entering into TDCJ during FY2014, approximately six percent came from counties located in Region 4. Forty-two percent of those gang members originated from the El Paso-Las Cruces MSA.

Region 5

Region 5's most significant gangs for 2015 are identified as the Tango clique of West Texas, Texas Syndicate, and the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas.

Region 5 includes the counties in the northwest and panhandle areas of Texas. The MSAs in this region are Lubbock, Amarillo, Abilene, and Wichita Falls, and have a combined population of around 851,000. Region 5 has the smallest combined MSA population in Texas.

The largest and most active street gangs in Region 5 are Crips (all sets), Bloods (all sets), Sureños (all sets), and Latin Kings. The largest and most active prison gangs are the West Texas Tangos (WTX), Texas Syndicate, and Aryan Brotherhood of Texas. Other gangs reported by law enforcement in Region 5 are Texas Mexican Mafia, Aryan Circle, and the Bandidos Outlaw Motorcycle Gang.

Among all gang members entering into TDCJ during FY2014, approximately seven percent came from counties located in Region 5. Thirty-nine percent of those gang members originated from the Lubbock MSA.

Region 6

Region 6's most significant gangs for 2015 are identified as the Texas Mexican Mafia, Tango Blast and cliques of San Antonio and Austin, and Bloods (all sets).

Region 6 encompasses 43 Central Texas counties and expands to the Gulf Coast. The MSAs located in this region are San Antonio-New Braunfels, Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos, Killeen-Temple-Fort Hood, Waco, and Victoria. Their combined population is approximately 4.6 million people.

The largest and most active street gangs in Region 6 are the Bloods (all sets), Crips (all sets), Sureños (all sets), and Latin Kings. The largest and most active prison gangs are Texas Mexican Mafia, Tango cliques in San Antonio (Orejones) and Austin (La Capirucha), and Aryan Brotherhood of Texas. Other significant gangs found in this region include Texas Syndicate, Bandidos Outlaw Motorcycle Gang, and Aryan Circle.

Officials report high activity by Gangster Disciples in the Killeen-Temple-Fort Hood area. Aryan Brotherhood and Aryan Circle are active from northern Travis County up to Bell County. Bandidos maintain a significant presence in Bexar and Comal counties.

Among all gang members entering into TDCJ during FY2014, approximately 18 percent came from counties located in Region 6. Fifty-five percent of those gang members originated from the San Antonio-New Braunfels MSA, and mostly from Bexar County (90 percent).

Transnational Gang Members Among Border Influx

In 2014, Texas experienced a dramatic spike in illegal aliens crossing into the United States from Mexico and Central America. Among those who illegally cross the Texas-Mexico border are gang members and associates, including those associated with large transnational gangs such as Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13). Members and associates of these gangs are involved in a range of criminal activity, including illicit cross-border smuggling and violent crimes, and they pose significant threats to public safety and law enforcement in Texas.

Available information indicates that transnational gang encounters in the Rio Grande Valley have increased significantly in 2014, which coincides with the increase of illegal aliens coming from countries other than Mexico.

A major consequence of an increase in transnational gang members crossing into Texas is the projected corresponding increase in transnational criminal activity. Transnational gangs frequently work in collaboration with Mexican cartels to help facilitate the trafficking of drugs, money, and people. Contracted home invasions and murders also occur. Several gangs in Texas, such as Barrio Azteca and MS-13, operate on both sides of the border, and often cross the border illegally.

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Gang Organization

Gangs in Texas are comprised of a variety of organizational and leadership models. These models vary in the extent to which the organization is centrally or hierarchically organized. Several of the Tier 1 gangs, for example, use different organizational models, such as:

- **Paramilitary** models include a hierarchical structure with clear distinction between ranks, and often include military titles such as general, captain, lieutenant, sergeant and soldier. Senior leaders are able to issue orders to subordinates, which are carried out as instructed. Gangs using this model include Texas Mexican Mafia.

- **Regional Cell** models are composed of several cells that are part of the same organization, but generally act independently of one another at an operational level. Each cell may have a strict internal hierarchy similar to a paramilitary model, even though there is little coordinated command and control between cells. Texas Syndicate is an example of a gang with a regional cell model.

- **Cliques** of gangs tend to adopt a common culture and identity, but have few tangible connections to each other. Each clique may have a senior member that acts as a leader, and larger cliques may have a more structured hierarchy. In some cases, cliques of the same gang may work in opposition to each other. Examples of clique-based gangs are Bloods, Crips, and Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13).

- **Loose Affiliation** gangs have relaxed membership requirements and little to no detectable leadership hierarchy. This model tends to be the most dynamic, allowing for rapid growth while simultaneously limiting the extent to which members can be effectively managed. Tango Blast is an example of a gang with a loose affiliation model.

Race and Gangs

Most large gangs have membership based along racial or ethnic lines. This aspect of gang organization is often described as a product of prison, where inmates may feel comfortable with others of their own race, or band together for protection when ethnically outnumbered. Many of these gangs cite race as their reason for having organized, and some go further by professing racial superiority over others. Some examples of predominantly white gangs include the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas and the Aryan Circle. Predominantly Hispanic gangs include the Texas Mexican Mafia and the Texas Syndicate, and predominantly black gangs include the Gangster Disciples, the Bloods, and the Crips.

While individual members of these gangs may hold racial bias or prejudice, the gangs themselves will often engage in business arrangements with gangs of another race when it is mutually convenient and profitable. Recent trends indicate that gang members will work with nearly any group in order to further their criminal objectives.

Females and Gangs

The vast majority of gang members identified in Texas are males. The National Gang Intelligence Center reports that females could represent up to 10 percent of the gang population in some parts of the nation.[12] In Texas, that number is believed to be lower. Most females with gang affiliations serve in support roles, acting as drug, money, and communication coordinators for the gang. However, there are a few street gangs allowing females to serve as associates or members. The most notable gang with female membership is the Latin Kings, where females are known as Latin Queens. Local agencies in Texas have identified active

female membership in neighborhood Blood and Crip street gangs, some committing violent crimes along with their male counterparts. Aryan gangs also have designated female memberships, known as Featherwoods, and are expected to adhere and carryout tasks ordered by ranking members. Although females are generally not considered part of most gangs in Texas, there is some evidence that they are moving from support roles to more active roles in the gangs' criminal activities.

Gang Recruitment and Identification

Gang recruitment occurs within prisons, schools, online, and from within families. The prison system and county jails offer opportunities for recruiting new members, who may join for protection during incarceration. Some gangs recruit in order to have a majority of the population and defend themselves from other gangs. Some gangs require new members to serve the gang for life, while others allow members to leave after they are released from prison.

Large gangs in Texas often direct young members of the smaller street gangs to commit crimes on their behalf. After completing these tasks, some will advance up and join the larger gang. Street gangs tend to recruit juveniles within their neighborhoods and schools, citing promises of money, popularity, and brotherhood.

A recent trend, known as hybrid membership, allows gang members to claim multiple affiliations with various gangs. As a result, smaller gangs benefit from protection during incarceration, and the larger gangs expand their criminal influence.

Gang members use unique identifiers to claim their affiliations, including, but not limited to, tattoos, hand signals, colors, and graffiti. Most gangs tend to use one or several distinctive symbols incorporated into tattoos, patches, or graffiti to identify members and turf. These symbols are often associated with each gang's heritage or hometown, and may include an image or a combination of numbers and letters. For example, the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas uses the numbers "12" to represent the first and second letter of the alphabet, "AB." Other gangs use the telephone area code of their hometown. Although gangs continue to display tattoos and insignia that clearly show their affiliation, some members conceal the symbols within other tattoos to avoid detection from law enforcement. Hand signals and the wearing of similar colors serves as other ways for gang members to identify each other. Some gangs share signals and colors, while others are unique. Street gangs commonly use graffiti to identify themselves and the territory they claim.

The Evolving Tango Culture

Tango Blast and their associated cliques represent the top gang threat to Texas. The growth of the Tangos can be attributed to numerous factors, such as lack of delineated hierarchy, lack of constitution/by-laws, no "blood-in, blood-out" mandate, and others. As a result of high membership numbers, Tangos have evolved from a protection group in prison against traditional Security Threat Groups (STGs)[13] to a predatory group who now outnumber some established STGs. In some cases, membership totals in bigger cliques alone, like Houstones, outnumber other high-ranking Tier gangs such as Barrio Azteca and Latin Kings. Alternately, because the Texas Department of Criminal Justice does not classify Tangos as a typical STG, members are housed in general population instead of administrative segregation, possibly contributing to the appeal of Tangos to non-members. Moreover, some transnational gangs, such as MS-13 and Sureños, may join Tango cliques in prison if fellow members are not present, thereby potentially expanding Tango criminal enterprises across international boundaries.

Historically, Tango membership numbers have been highest in cliques located in the cities collectively known by Tangos as the "Four Horsemen:" Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Austin. However, increases within other cliques, such as Vallucos (Rio Grande Valley) and West Texas, now competes with numbers once found only in the original four Tango Blast cliques. Furthermore, as a result of increasing membership, some of the newer Tango cliques are starting to disassociate with the Tango Blast brand. This perpetuates the idea that individual cliques are self-serving and independent franchises or entities.

Due to its liberal guidelines and loosely organized structure, the membership of Tangos will continue to surpass those of rival gangs. The revolving door of Tangos being incarcerated and released poses challenges for law enforcement to monitor and disrupt their criminal activities.

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Gang Relationships

Relationships between gangs are nearly unavoidable since large numbers of gang members often live and operate in the same communities. Their relationship levels range from mutual protection and profit, to bitter rivalries resulting in inter-gang violence. Gang relationships remain dynamic and largely depend on specific areas of the state.

When comparing gang relationships in years past, gangs are becoming increasingly opportunistic and willing to have working relationships with other gangs, even those who are historically considered rivals or enemies. The focus has shifted more toward mutually beneficial, profit-motivated associations. Greater weight is placed on how criminal ventures can be expanded and less on who is assisting in that expansion. This variable relationship is also common among Texas gangs who have a relationship or an association with a Mexican cartel, or in some cases multiple drug trafficking organizations (DTOs).

One of the most serious issues facing public safety is the relationships developed between gangs and the Mexican cartels. These relationships enhance and widen a gang's scope of criminal activity. Home invasions, assassinations, and kidnapping are a few examples of the crimes committed by gang members on behalf of cartels. Cartel relationships increase resources and profitability, along with violence, for all criminal parties involved. As these relationships strengthen, so does the threat to public safety.

Hybrid gang membership is a trend documented by local law enforcement officials. Hybrid membership is characterized as an individual having multiple affiliations with various gangs, which we assess to be occurring more frequently as gang members continue to expand their criminal network of contacts. Tango Blast and Tango cliques have the greatest number of hybrid members, primarily due to their lack of a formal structure or commitment to the gang, among other factors.

Ongoing Conflict Involving Bandidos Outlaw Motorcycle Gang in Texas

On May 17, 2015, a violent confrontation involving the Bandidos outlaw motorcycle gang and members of other motorcycle clubs at a restaurant in Waco, Texas, resulted in the death of nine people and injuries to at least 20. Details of the incident remain under investigation, though the violent conflict occurred in the context of increasing tension between Bandidos and several other groups, most notably the Cossacks MC.

The conflict between the Bandidos and the Cossacks appears to have originated from territorial disputes. Cossacks members have recently started wearing the Texas patch on the bottom of their vests without the approval of the Bandidos. Traditionally, the Bandidos have been the dominant motorcycle club in Texas, and thus no other club is allowed to wear the Texas patch without their consent. The incident in Waco was preceded by a series of violent incidents reportedly associated with the Bandidos. The majority of these incidents occurred in the northern half of the state.

This conflict and the violent incident in Waco highlight the public safety threat posed by gangs and gang rivalries. Law enforcement continues to monitor the conflict involving these groups due to the potential for additional violence or further escalations.

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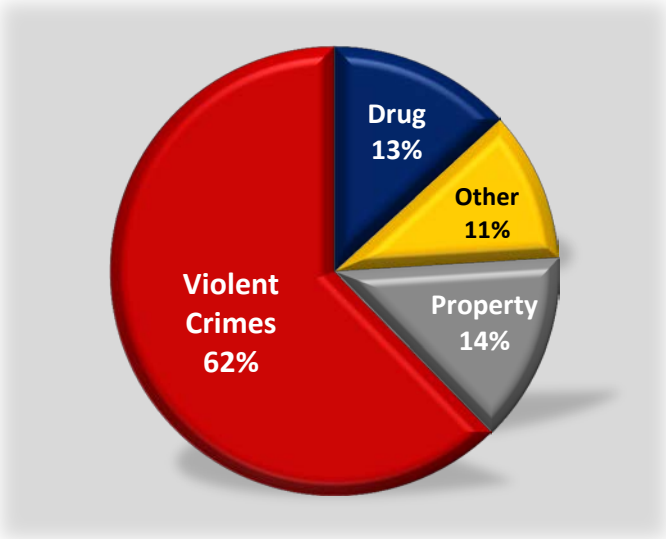
Gang Involvement in Criminal Activity

Gang members in Texas engage in a variety of criminal activities ranging from non-violent, white-collar crimes to violent murders. The overall extent of gang activity is difficult to measure with great accuracy since the documentation of gang affiliation usually is known only after an arrest has been made. Furthermore, since an arrest is not proof of criminal conduct, it is best to review final conviction data when evaluating crimes committed by gang members.

An indication of the level of violence associated with gang activity is shown in *Figure 6*, which represents the offense of record for prison gang members currently incarcerated within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice system. The offense of record is the offense that incarcerates the offender for the longest period. For purposes of this report, violent offenses are defined as those that involve force or threat of force toward persons. Property crimes are theft-type offenses involving the taking of money or property, or the damaging of property, but there is no force or threat of force against any person.[14]

Figure 6: Offense Types for Gang Members Incarcerated in Texas Prisons



More than half of prison gang members are serving a sentence for a violent crime, including robbery (24%), homicide (16%), assault (all types) (15%), sex offenses (7%), and kidnapping (1%). Other significant gang activities include property crimes, such as burglary (10%), larceny (2%), motor vehicle theft (1%), and arson (<1%). Drug-related offenses account for 13 percent of gang crimes. Crimes identified in the "Other" category include crimes against public administration, such as escape and obstruction (4%), weapon offenses (3%), driving while intoxicated (1%), and forgery/fraud (1%).

There are some limitations in using conviction data. One limitation is that it does not indicate whether the offender committed the offense as a gang member, or became a gang member after incarceration. Additionally, offense data does not always provide an accurate representation of the crime that was actually committed; they may reflect a lesser charge resulting from a plea bargain. Lastly, some convictions will not appear due to the length of time between the offense and conviction dates. Nonetheless, this data confirms that gang members in Texas overwhelmingly commit many violent crimes in the state.

Gang Involvement in Human Trafficking

Gangs across Texas continue to engage in human trafficking, including commercial sex trafficking and compelling prostitution of both adult and minor victims. The potential for high, sustainable profits and a perceived low risk of detection appeals to many gang members and their associates, who often operate independently of the gang itself. Gang members will recruit and groom victims with false promises of love, affection, employment, and family lifestyle, but continuously compel their victims through physical force, fraud, and emotional coercion.

Multiple gangs in Texas have been reported to be involved in human trafficking in 2014, including Tango Blast, Texas Syndicate, Bloods, Crips, Gangster Disciples, and MS-13. Human trafficking includes the exploitation of victims for both commercial and forced labor purposes, although reporting of gang involvement in labor trafficking in Texas is limited.

Since the Texas Legislature passed more strict human trafficking laws in 2011, the Texas Department of Public Safety has seen a steady increase in their human trafficking investigations throughout the state.[15] In 2014, more than 17 percent of DPS human trafficking investigations involved gang members or gang associates.[16]

Some examples of gang members involved in human trafficking in 2014 include:

- In January 2014, an El Paso County juvenile probation officer and four gang members were arrested in El Paso County and face federal charges for conspiracy to commit sex trafficking and sex trafficking of a minor. The juvenile probation officer allegedly recruited young girls at Samuel F. Santana Challenge Academy, a military-style program that relies on education and counseling for high-risk juvenile offenders.[17] The probation officer and four other men are all Folk Nation-Gangster Disciple members and compelled victims to have sex in El Paso and Killeen, Texas; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Las Vegas, Nevada; and Colorado.[18]

- In September 2014, 59 Bounty Hunter Bloods member Keith Williams was sentenced by the U.S. District Judge in Dallas to 262 months in federal prison for sex trafficking of a minor. Williams' girlfriend, Erin Patton, was convicted of conspiracy to commit sex trafficking of a minor and was sentenced to 87 months in federal prison. In September 2012, the 14-year-old minor female ran away from home, met Patton, and engaged in commercial sex acts after Patton had posted the minor to "Mocospace" and "Backpage." In November 2012, the minor ran away from home again and contacted Patton, who was with Williams at the time. Williams also engaged in sex with the minor.[19]

Outlook

Based on a review of current intelligence and knowledge of gang activity, we make the following assessments:

- We expect the overall gang threat in Texas will remain high during the coming year, given previous estimated increases in overall gang membership in Texas. The gangs working directly with the Mexican cartels will continue to represent a unique threat to the state as they help facilitate the smuggling of persons, drugs, and weapons into and around Texas.

- The threat posed by individual gangs will change over time. Changes in gang leadership and the impact of law enforcement action will have an effect on a gang's ability to operate effectively. We anticipate many of the Tier 1 and Tier 2 gangs will continue to be significant threats to Texas due to their large membership numbers, relationships with cartels, high levels of transnational criminal activity, and other factors.

- As Mexican drug cartels fight to maintain or increase their share of the lucrative drug and human smuggling markets, Texas-based gangs will continue to play an essential role in supporting cartel operations on both sides of the border. The cartels will likely seek to expand their existing networks in Texas by leveraging their relationships with gangs. We expect the relationships between individual gangs and cartels to remain fluid, and possibly adapt and evolve in response to changes in the cartel landscape in Mexico.

- While many Tier 1 and Tier 2 gangs currently conduct human trafficking operations in Texas, we assess other Texas gangs have and will continue to operate in human trafficking due to the potential for large and sustainable profits, and the perceived low risk of detection by law enforcement.

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Appendix 1: Overview of Tier 1 and Tier 2 Gangs

The following pages provide a brief overview of the most significant gangs in Texas. Also included are maps showing the areas of the state where each gang's presence and activities are assessed to be most concentrated, based on information provided from multiple sources. The absence of shading on a particular part of the map does not necessarily indicate that the gang does not have a presence there, and the concentration of the gang's activity varies within the shaded area.

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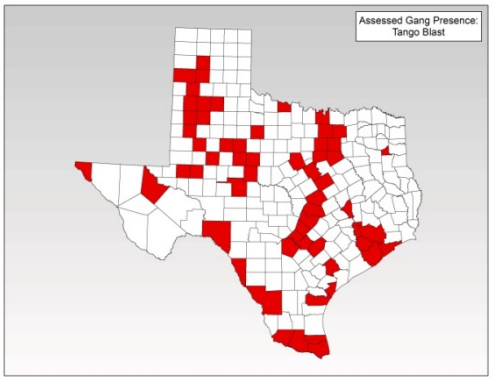
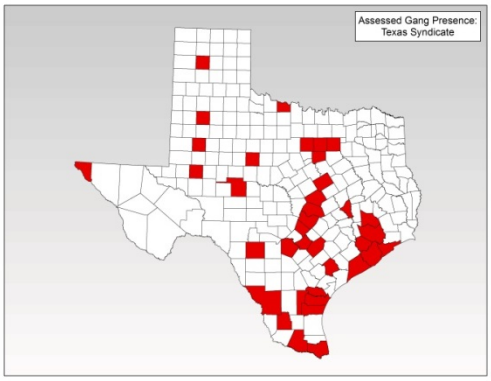
Tier 1: Tango Blast and Tango Cliques

Tango Blast and Tango cliques are located in most metropolitan areas across Texas. Tango Blast first developed as a self-protection group against more established prison gangs, such as the Texas Mexican Mafia and Texas Syndicate. They have since grown rapidly and now boast the highest membership numbers among Texas prison gangs. Due to the rapid growth of Tango Blast and Tango cliques, as well as its high level of criminal activity, propensity for violence, and relationships with Mexican cartels, this gang poses the most significant gang threat to Texas.



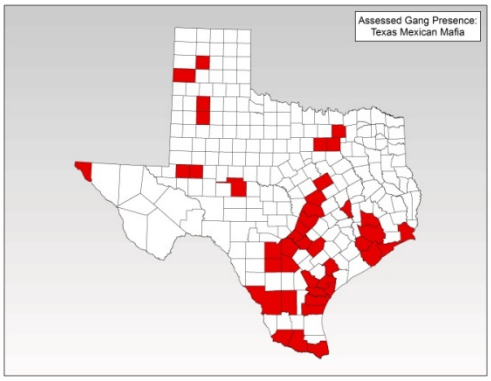
Tier 1: Texas Syndicate

The Texas Syndicate (TS) is a violent prison gang that formed in the California penal system over 40 years ago, eventually moving into Texas Department of Criminal Justice prisons and onto the streets of Texas. Although recent law enforcement investigations targeting the gang have resulted in the arrest of high-ranking members, their continued relationship with Mexican cartels makes the Texas Syndicate a resilient criminal threat to Texas.



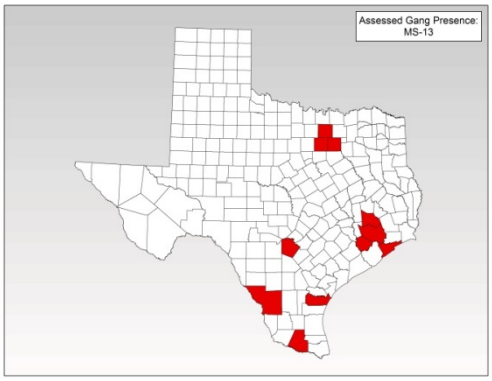
Tier 1: Texas Mexican Mafia

The Texas Mexican Mafia (TMM) formed within the Texas prison system in 1984 as a means for inmates to protect themselves from the Texas Syndicate. They have since grown into one of the most dominant and disciplined gangs in Texas. Despite continuous law enforcement targeting, the TMM has upheld its membership size, commitment to the gang, and involvement in violent crimes. The TMM will likely continue to remain organizationally effective and engage in criminal activity, and thus remain one of Texas' most significant gangs.



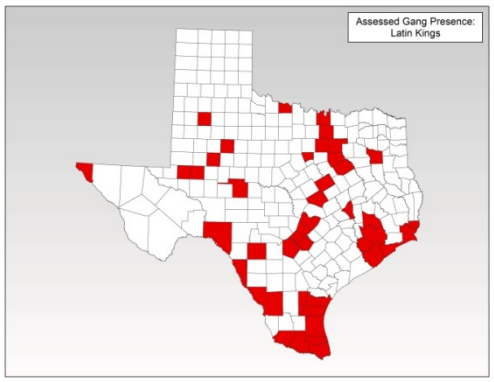
Tier 1: Mara Salvatrucha

The Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) formed on the streets of Los Angeles in the 1980s as a way for Salvadorian immigrants to protect themselves from other street gangs in the area. MS-13 is now arguably the most recognized transnational street gang in the world, with ongoing command, control, and coordination between gang leaders and cliques in several different countries. The increase in violent activity in Texas along with the influx of illegal members crossing into the state resulted in the overall increase in the gang's threat level.



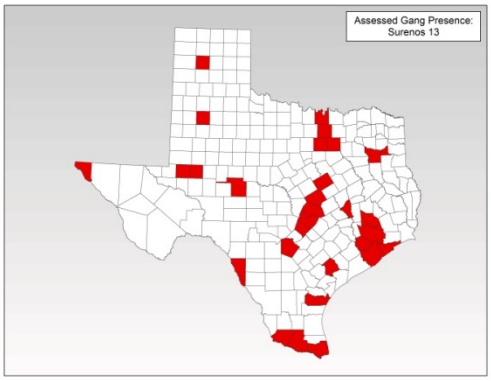
Tier 1: Latin Kings

The Latin Kings is a violent street gang originating in Chicago in the early 1960s. Originally created to overcome racial prejudice, the gang soon became a criminal force. The gang migrated into Texas shortly after its creation, and began to open local chapters. Due to its interstate structure and criminal growth, Latin Kings is an increased threat to the State of Texas.



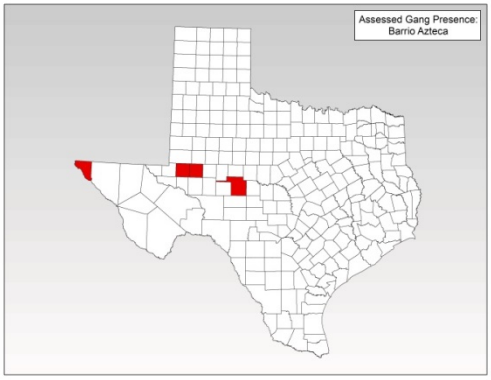
Tier 2: Sureños

The Sureños originated as a gang confederation in Southern California closely aligned under the umbrella of the California Mexican Mafia. As such, they often utilize the number 13 as a sign of allegiance to the California Mexican Mafia (the letter M being the 13th letter in the alphabet). Although many gangs in Texas may use the Sureños name, not all of them are affiliated with the California-based confederation. We assess that Sureños will continue to strive to establish a stronger presence in Texas in the near future.



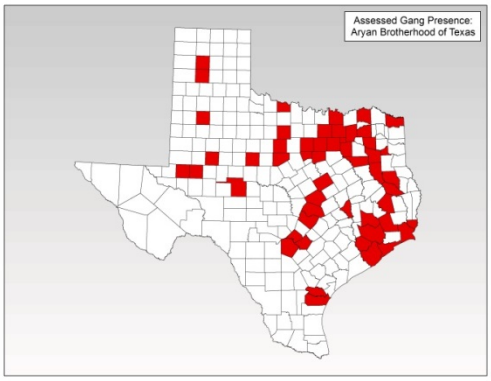
Tier 2: Barrio Azteca

Successful law enforcement efforts targeting Barrio Azteca (BA), along with the deteriorating influence of the Juarez Cartel, have lessened the gang's statewide threat. In addition, recent infighting has caused internal gang relations to be strained. Although predominantly located in El Paso and Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico, BA members have been located in the Midland-Odessa and San Angelo areas.



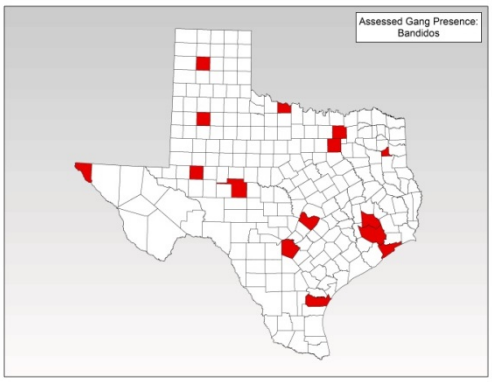
Tier 2: Aryan Brotherhood of Texas

The Aryan Brotherhood of Texas (ABT) was formed as a white supremacist prison gang, but places its racist ideology secondary to its everyday criminal activities. Although the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas is not a threat to the border areas of Texas, their threat lies elsewhere around the state because of their involvement in violent crimes, the methamphetamine business, and frequent property crimes. Multi-agency investigations continue to affect ABT's leadership structure and effectiveness, seriously affecting ABT's leadership structure and effectiveness.



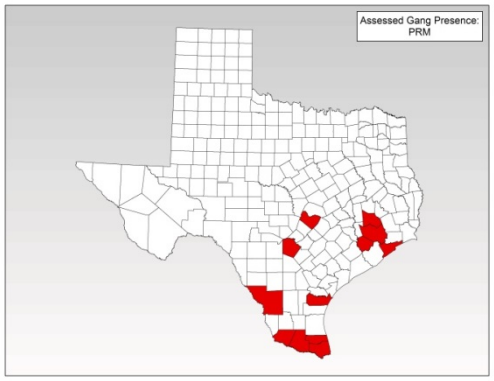
Tier 2: Bandidos Outlaw Motorcycle Gang

Formed in the 1960s, the Bandidos Outlaw Motorcycle Gang (OMG) tends to conduct its illegal activities as covertly as possible and has historically avoided high-profile activities, such as drive-by shootings, that many street gangs tend to commit. However, members are not covert about making their presence known, frequently wearing their gang colors, insignia, and riding in large groups. They have sought to turn public sentiment in their favor by organizing frequent charity runs. Bandidos are likely to focus on recruiting new members with no criminal history.



Tier 2: Partido Revolucionario Mexicano

The Partido Revolucionario Mexicano (PRM) is an organized prison gang operating in Mexico and Texas. This gang is composed of mainly Mexican nationals, many of whom were illegal aliens who committed crimes in Texas and were subsequently deported once they were released from prison. Deported Partido Revolucionario Mexicano members often re-enter the United States and establish themselves as members in Texas. Partido Revolucionario Mexicano allows U.S. citizens to become members of the gang in order to maintain their presence in Texas and eliminate the possibility of deportation.

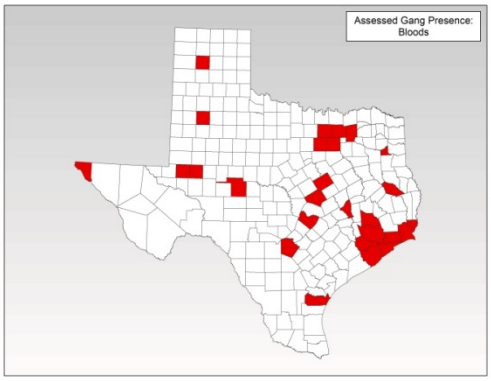


Tier 2: Texas Chicano Brotherhood

The Texas Chicano Brotherhood (TxCB) emerged in Hidalgo, Texas after its two founding members defected from the Tri-City Bombers street gang. The prison gang follows the traditional philosophy of “blood in, blood out” membership, common with other prison gangs. Historically, the TxCB recruited its members in prison; however, the gang has been forced to recruit members from the street after established, larger prison gangs prohibited them from recruiting in the prison system. Their relationships with Mexican cartels make the TxCB a significant threat to Texas.

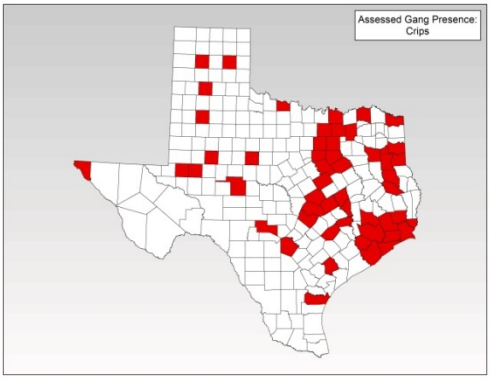
Tier 2: Bloods

The Bloods are a violent street gang originating in Los Angeles in the early 1970s, and are tied to the People Nation affiliation of gangs. The gang originally developed as an offshoot clique of the Crips gang. The Bloods' presence in Texas has been documented since the 1980s. Multiple cities in Texas have instituted gang injunctions against the Bloods and their rivals, the Crips. The Bloods' overall presence, the level of their criminal activity, and the violence perpetrated by its members qualify them as a localized but serious threat in Texas.



Tier 2: Crips

The Crips is a criminal street gang founded in Los Angeles in the late 1960s with ties to the Folk Nation affiliation network of gangs. The name "Crips" does not define a single gang, but rather an identity with which many gang cliques associate themselves. Crips gangs have maintained a documented presence in Texas since the mid-1980s. Their criminal activities continue to threaten the larger metropolitan areas of Texas. Multiple cities in Texas have instituted gang injunctions against the Crips and their rivals, the Bloods.



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Appendix 2: Other Contributing Agencies

DPS recognizes the following agencies for their contribution to the Texas Gang Investigative Database (TxGang), as of January 2015:

Addison Police Department
Alice Police Department
Amarillo Police Department
Anderson County Sheriff's Office
Aransas Pass Police Department
Arlington Police Department
Austin Police Department
Balch Springs Police Department
Baytown Police Department
Beeville Police Department
Bell County Juvenile Probation Services
Bexar County Community Supervision and Corrections
Bexar County Sheriff's Office
Big Spring Police Department
Brazoria County Sheriff's Office
Brownsville Police Department
Bryan Police Department
Carrollton Police Department
Cleveland Independent School District Police Department
Clute Police Department
College Station Police Department
Comal County Sheriff's Office
Conroe Police Department
Converse Police Department
Cooke County Sheriff's Office
Corpus Christi Police Department
Dallas Police Department
Denton County Sheriff's Office
Donna Independent School District Police Department
Dumas Police Department
Edinburg Police Department
El Paso County Sheriff's Office
El Paso Police Department
Ellis County Sheriff's Office
Erath County Sheriff's Office
Euless Police Department
Everman Police Department
Farmers Branch Police Department
Forney Police Department
Fort Bend County Constables Office - Precinct 1
Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office
Fort Worth Police Department
Frisco Police Department
Gainesville Police Department
Galveston County Sheriff's Office

Galveston Police Department
Garland Police Department
Georgetown Police Department
Grand Prairie Police Department
Guadalupe County Sheriff's Office
Haltom City Police Department
Hansford County Sheriff's Office
Harlingen Police Department
Harris County Constables Office - Precinct 1
Harris County Sheriff's Office
Hays County Gang Task Force
Hidalgo County Community Supervision and Corrections Department
Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office
Hill County Sheriff's Office
Hondo Police Department
Houston Independent School District Police Department
Houston Metropolitan Transit Authority Police Department
Houston Police Department
Humble Independent School District Police Department
Hunt County Sheriff's Office
Irving Police Department
Jersey Village Police Department
Jim Wells County Sheriff's Office
Joshua Police Department
Katy Independent School District Police Department
Kenedy Police Department
Kerr County Sheriff's Office
Kilgore Police Department
Killeen Police Department
Kleberg County Sheriff's Office
La Marque Police Department
La Salle County Sheriff's Office
Lake Dallas Police Department
Lancaster Police Department
Lewisville Police Department
Longview Police Department
Lubbock County Sheriff's Office
Lubbock Police Department
Lufkin Police Department
Mansfield Police Department
Marble Falls Police Department
McAllen Police Department
McLennan County Juvenile Probation Office
McLennan County Sheriff's Office
Mesquite Police Department
Midland Police Department
Missouri City Police Department
Montgomery County Sheriff's Office
Nacogdoches County Sheriff's Office
Nacogdoches Police Department
New Braunfels Police Department

Nueces County Sheriff's Office
Onalaska Police Department
Parker County Sheriff's Office
Pasadena Police Department
Pflugerville Independent School District Police Department
Pharr Police Department
Plano Police Department
Primera Police Department
Randall County Sheriff's Office
Richardson Police Department
Robstown Police Department
Rockport Police Department
Rosenberg Police Department
Round Rock Police Department
Sachse Police Department
San Angelo Police Department
San Antonio Police Department
San Juan Police Department
San Patricio District Attorney's Office
Santa Fe Police Department
Seguin Police Department
Sherman Police Department
Spearman Police Department
Spring Branch Independent School District Police Department
Spring Independent School District Police Department
Sugar Land Police Department
Tarrant County District Attorney's Office
Tarrant County Sheriff's Office
Temple Police Department
Texas City Police Department
The Colony Police Department
Tiki Island Police Department
Tom Green County Sheriff's Office
Travis County Sheriff's Office
Tyler Police Department
U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives - Beaumont
U.S. Customs and Border Protection - Carrizo Springs Border Patrol Station
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
University Of Texas - Houston Police Department
Victoria Police Department
Weatherford Police Department
Wharton Police Department
Wichita Falls Police Department
Williamson County Sheriff's Office

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Agencies participating in Operation BorderStar are listed below:

El Paso JOIC Sector

USBP
CBP – OFO
ICE
West TX HIDTA
EPIC
TMF
DPS
TPWD
ATF
FBI
USMS
US Army, Ft. Bliss CID

El Paso CO SO
Hudspeth CO SO
Dona Ana CO SO (NM)
Grant CO SO (NM)
Hidalgo CO SO (NM)
Luna CO SO (NM)
Otero CO SO (NM)
Anthony PD
El Paso PD
Horizon City PD
Ysleta Del Sur Tribal PD
El Paso ISD PD

University of Texas El Paso PD
El Paso Community College PD
El Paso Office of Emergency Management
Texas Tech University PD
Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts
Texas Attorney General, El Paso
Union Pacific Railroad PD
Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission
El Paso County Constables

Marfa JOIC Sector

USBP
CBP - OFO
ICE /HSI
NPS
West TX HIDTA
TMF
TPWD

DPS
Brewster CO SO
Culberson CO SO
Hudspeth CO SO
Jeff Davis CO SO
Pecos CO SO
Presidio CO SO

Reeves CO SO
Terrell CO SO
Alpine PD
Fort Stockton PD
Pecos PD
Presidio PD

Del Rio JOIC Sector

CBP-OFO
DEA
DPS
FBI
HSI-ICE
IBWC
NPS
South TX HIDTA
Texas Military Forces
Zavala Co Constable

TPWD
USBP
USCG
US Marshals
Crystal City PD
Del Rio PD
Dimmit CO SO
Maverick CO SO
Uvalde CO SO

Val Verde CO SO
Zavala CO SO
38th Judicial Dist.
Dimmit CO Constable PCT 2
Dimmit CO Constable PCT 3
Edwards CO SO
Kinney CO So
Real CO So
Uvalde PD

Laredo JOIC Sector

CBP
ICE
TPWD
TMF
DPS

Duval CO S O
Frio CO SO
Jim Hogg CO SO
La Salle CO SO
Webb CO SO

Zapata CO SO
Dilley PD
Laredo PD
Pearsall PD

Rio Grande Valley JOIC Sector

CBP – USBP
CBP – OFO
ATF
ICE
NCIS
NICB
USCG
US Fish & Wildlife

Starr Co HIDTA
DPS – THP, CID, AVN
Texas Rangers
TPWD
Texas Military Forces
TXNG CDAE
Brooks CO SO
Cameron CO SO

Hidalgo CO SO
Kenedy CO SO
Starr CO SO
Hidalgo CO Pct 1
Hidalgo CO Pct 2
Hidalgo CO Pct 3
Hidalgo CO Pct 4
Willacy CO

Alamo PD
Brownsville PD
Donna PD
Donna ISD PD
Edcouch PD
Elsa PD
Edinburg PD
Harlingen PD
Hidalgo PD
La Feria PD
La Grulla PD
La Joya PD
La Villa PD
Los Fresnos PD
McAllen PD
Mercedes PD
Mission PD
Palmhurst PD
Palmview PD
Penitas PD
Pharr PD
Raymondville PD
Rio Grande City PD
Roma PD
San Benito PD
San Juan PD
Santa Rosa PD
Sullivan City PD
TDCJ Segovia Prison
UTPA PD
UTB PD
Weslaco PD
Willacy CO DA's Office

Coastal Bend JOIC Sector

USBP
CBP – OFO
ICE
FBI
ATF
DEA
USCG
US Marshalls
US Fish and Wildlife
US Parks Service-PINS
US Postal Inspector
TPWD
Texas Dept of Trans
Houston HIDTA
San Antonio HIDTA
TMF
DPS
Aransas CO SO
Bee CO SO
Calhoun CO SO
Dewitt CO SO
Goliad CO SO
Gonzales CO SO
Guadalupe CO SO
Jackson CO SO
Jim Wells CO SO
Karnes CO SO
Kleberg CO SO
Lavaca CO SO
Matagorda CO SO
Live Oak CO SO
Matagorda CO SO
McMullen CO SO
Nueces CO SO
Refugio CO SO
San Patricio CO SO
Victoria CO SO
Wharton CO SO
Alice PD
Bay City PD
Beeville PD
Corpus Christi PD
Cuero PD
Driscoll PD
El Campo PD
George West PD
Hallettsville PD
Kingsville PD
Orange Grove PD
Refugio PD
Robstown PD
Rockport PD
Seguin PD
Sinton PD
Three Rivers PD
Victoria PD

References

Some information within this assessment was produced based on information of a sensitive nature, and is not referenced specifically. Information from other sources is referenced below.

[1] Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Gang Intelligence Index (TxGang), Operating Policies and Procedures, 2014.
[2] Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Gang Intelligence Index, data query 2014.
[3] Barguiarena, Karla, "New Details in Aldine ISD Student's Murder," ABC 13 Eyewitness News, September 21, 2014.
[4] Price, Bob, "MS-13 Gang Members Plead Guilty in Near-Beheading of Texas Teen," Breitbart.com, April 19, 2015.
[5] Houston Multi Agency Gang Task Force. October 2014.
[6] Barned-Smith, St. John, "Witness links gang to machete slaying of Houston teen," Chron.com, October 17, 2014.
[7] Corchado, Alfredo, "Juarez Cartel Leader Captured…," The Dallas Morning News, October 9, 2014.
[8] Borunda, Daniel, "Dozens Arrested in El Paso Raids Linked to Barrio Azteca Gang," El Paso Times, September 18, 2014
[9] The National Gang Intelligence Center estimated in 2011 that there are as many as 1.4 million gang members nationwide, and found consistent estimates in the 2013 National Gang Report.
[10] Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Gang Intelligence Index, data query 2014.
[11] This map represents an analytic assessment of where gang activity is likely most concentrated in Texas. This assessment is based on data from multiple sources.
[12] U.S. Department of Justice, 2013 National Gang Report, 2013.
[13] The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) defines a Security Threat Group (STG) as any group of offenders (gang) reasonably believed to pose a threat to the physical safety of other offenders and staff. TDCJ currently recognizes 12 STGs: Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, Aryan Circle, Barrio Azteca, Bloods, Crips, Hermanos de Pistoleros Latinos, Partido Revolucionario Mexicanos, Raza Unida, Texas Chicano Brotherhood, Texas Mafia, Texas Mexican Mafia, and Texas Syndicate.
[14] Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Offense Records, Compiled August 31, 2014.
[15] Texas Department of Public Safety, Criminal Investigation Division, 2014.
[16] *ibid.*
[17] Martinez, Aaron, "El Paso County probation officer charged in alleged sex-trafficking ring had contact with victims through his job," El Paso Time, January 2014.
[18] Immigration and Customs Enforcement, "El Paso juvenile probation officer arrested on federal sex trafficking charges," ICE News Release, January 22, 2014.
[19] Northern District of Texas, U.S. Attorney's Office "59 Bounty Hunter Bloods Gang Member Sentenced to 262 Months for Sex Trafficking of Children," September 29, 2014.