

## **TXGANG OVERVIEW**

Chapter 61, Texas Code of Criminal Procedure sets out the statutory guidelines for law enforcement agencies to gather information regarding criminal combinations and criminal street gangs. The statute authorizes (and in some instances requires) local law enforcement agencies to gather such information, but also states that the agencies must follow the guidelines of Title 28, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 23 when they do so. Those federal regulations establish very specific requirements for gathering, storing, disseminating, and using intelligence information by law enforcement agencies. The Texas statute also states that if a local law enforcement agency collects information on criminal gangs into a local database, they must forward that information to the DPS for storage in a statewide database.

TXGANG is the database created by DPS to fulfill that function. The TXGANG system is designed to help law enforcement agencies identify and track gang members in Texas. The Texas Department of Public Safety oversees the policies and procedures for this system to govern the submission, query, dissemination, and retention of records in an electronic gang and gang member index. The index is designed to provide for timely sharing of criminal intelligence information among criminal justice personnel through rapid access and response to statewide gang-related queries. While protecting the privacy and constitutional rights of each named individual, the index contains, within a statewide repository, a record summary of certain criminal intelligence information relating to an individual gang member and that individual's gang. As for the local law enforcement systems discussed above, TXGANG must comply with Title 28, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 23 for intelligence databases.

## **PURPOSE AND GOALS OF TXGANG SYSTEM**

1. TXGANG serves the criminal justice community by providing access to a computerized index of gangs and gang members. The community served includes criminal justice personnel involved in the investigation, prosecution, or supervision/ corrections for offenses relating to gangs.
2. The primary purposes of TXGANG are receipt, storage, and sharing of criminal intelligence information related to gangs and gang members.
3. The goal of TXGANG is to improve the effectiveness of the criminal justice community by providing for the timely exchange of documented and reliable information regarding gangs and gang members.

## **PRESENT STATUS OF TXGANG**

TXGANG has been operational since 1999. TXGANG is available via the internet to all Texas law enforcement agencies. At present, DPS realizes that TXGANG is underutilized by local Texas agencies. In order to make TXGANG a more viable law enforcement tool for statewide gang enforcement DPS signed a contract for a major re-design and rewrite of the system. The system will be implemented in two Phases, with the first Phase in August 2009 and the second Phase in October, 2009.

## **TXGANG ENHANCEMENTS 2009**

The following items are being added to TXGANG in the 2009 upgrade, as a result of information gathered in meetings with gang investigators.

### **1 More Efficient Reporting to DPS**

Currently, law enforcement agencies have the option of performing a “one-time” bulk upload of their gang data into the TXGANG system. From that point forward, they are required to manually enter new records, and update and retire existing records. For those agencies that maintain their own gang database, this results in a time consuming duplication of effort that negatively affects the utilization of the system.

DPS is streamlining the process by creating ongoing, automated data interchange functionality within TXGANG. This functionality will allow law enforcement agencies to automatically update, modify, and delete their gang data in the state-wide system based upon transactions in the local database. DPS is using standardized formats for the updates. One important standard being employed is the use of XML transactions based upon the extensive national work being done under the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM). NIEM is a joint effort of the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to build a national information sharing strategy. If an agency is not ready to employ NIEM-based transactions, DPS will work with that agency to employ another standards-based approach for the data exchange. Comma Separated Values (CSV) will be another strategy employed.

### **2 Addition of Photographs**

Discussions with local agencies made it clear that incorporating photographs into the TXGANG application would be highly beneficial to criminal intelligence officers, because it would improve the identification process of gang members.

DPS has added the photo capability to the TXGANG file.

### **3 More Efficient Validation**

Validation of information contained within the TXGANG database is required by Federal Regulation (28 CFR Part 23). Currently the TXGANG system provides a listing of all records due for validation for a specific agency upon login by a user from that agency. To validate the records, the user is required to go to each individual record and either retire or validate that specific record. Gang record validation within the system is currently behind due to both lack of manpower at participating agencies as well as the current cumbersome method of validation within the application.

In the new TXGANG System, DPS will provide a report of records approaching their validation deadline to each participating law enforcement agency on a periodic basis. Notifications could be disseminated via mail, secure email or other method, as desired by local agencies.

### **4 TXGANG As a Local Database**

Many agencies are collecting their gang information in PC spreadsheets or small database programs. These lists do not interact with the current TXGANG, and act simply as a local file of documented gang members. Even though they are simple lists, they still fall under the requirements of state law and 28CFR Part 23.

TXGANG will provide the capability to serve as an agency's sole method of collecting and tracking gang information for criminal intelligence purposes. That is, TXGANG will be able to serve as the local agency's gang system. To make this most effective, TXGANG will provide the user agency the ability to create fields that are unique to that agency. The agency can then make those fields either "private" so that they are viewable only to the agency, or "public" so they return in responses to other agencies, as well.

### **5 TXGANG via TLETS**

Information contained within TXGANG is currently limited to use by Gang Unit Investigators and other detectives. Due to officer safety, there is significant interest in making the gang database information available to all law enforcement officers, especially to patrol officers via TLETS.

As a result of a widespread call from local agencies, DPS is making TXGANG available via TLETS inquiry.

### **6 Link Analysis in TXGANG**

The ability to graphically represent the relationships among gangs, gang members, and associated events can provide a significant investigative value. Many currently used criminal justice systems employ analytical link analysis tools for various purposes.

TXGANG will include link analysis as a new feature in October 2009.