



Drugs and Crime

Gang Profile

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U. S. D E P A R T M E N T O F J U S T I C E

Crips

The Crips, one of the largest and most violent associations of street gangs in the United States, is an association of structured and unstructured gangs that have adopted a common gang culture. Crips membership is estimated between 30,000 and 35,000; most members are African American men from the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Crips gangs are most active in the Southwest, Pacific, West Central, Southeast, and Great Lakes regions of the United States. Their main source of income is street-level distribution of powdered cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, and PCP. The gangs also are involved in many other types of criminal activity including assault, auto theft, burglary, carjacking, drive-by shooting, extortion, homicide, identification fraud, and robbery.

Background

Originally called the Avenue Crips, the Crips street gang was formed in Los Angeles, California, in the mid-1960s. Raymond Washington, a student at Fremont High School in Los Angeles, founded the gang as a political organization and later used it to provide protection from other gangs and to profit from criminal activity. Washington organized the Crips in imitation of the Black Panther Party and the Avenues, an older Los Angeles street gang. Washington, along with the other original members Michael Concepcion, Raymond Cook, Melvin

Hardy, Bennie Simpson, Mack Thomas, and Angelo White, recruited more young men and increased the gang's involvement in violent criminal activity. The original gang adopted the name Crips when a newspaper article published in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* in February 1972 referred to some Crips members who carried canes as "Crips" (for cripples).

During the 1970s in an effort to wrest control of neighborhoods from rival gangs and to increase its profit-making potential, the gang recruited additional members and increased its involvement in criminal

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activity. Initially Crips leaders did not occupy formal leadership positions but were recognized as leaders because of their personal charisma and influence. These leaders gave priority to expanding the gang's membership to increase its power. By 1978 there were 45 Crips gangs, called sets, operating in Los Angeles. Some of these Crips sets began to produce and distribute PCP (phencyclidine) within the city. They also began to distribute marijuana and amphetamine in Los Angeles.

In the early 1980s Crips sets began distributing crack cocaine in Los Angeles. The huge profits resulting from crack cocaine distribution induced many Crips members to establish new markets in other cities and states. In addition, many young men in other states adopted the Crips name and lifestyle. As a result of these two factors, Crips membership increased throughout the 1980s, making it one of the largest street gang associations in the country.

In the 1990s Crips membership and involvement in drug-related activity continued to increase. Crips sets tried to intimidate rival gangs and law enforcement in order to control and further expand their drug distribution enterprises. In addition, some Crips sets reportedly attempted to deal directly with Mexican and Colombian drug trafficking organizations to smuggle cocaine into the United States. (It is unknown whether this activity is continuing.) In 1999 at least 600 Crips sets with more than 30,000 members and associate members were identified as transporting or distributing drugs in the United States.

The Crips remains one of the largest and most violent associations of street gangs in Los Angeles and the United States. Crips members transport multikilogram quantities of cocaine and marijuana and smaller quantities of methamphetamine and heroin from Southern California and Texas for distribution in cities throughout the United States. Crips members continue to produce PCP for distribution throughout the country. Over 800 Crips sets distribute drugs in 48 states, primarily in

the Southwest, West Central, Pacific, Southeast, and Great Lakes regions and increasingly in the New England, New York/New Jersey, and Mid-Atlantic regions.

Alliances

Crips belongs to the Folk Nation gang alliance. The alliance was established in the 1980s as a means of protecting gang members incarcerated in state and federal prison systems. The alliance is strong within the prison system but less effective after members are released. The Folk Nation also includes Gangster Disciples, Black Disciples, Black Gangsters, Imperial Gangsters, International Posse, La Raza, Latin Disciples, Spanish Gangster Disciples, Party People, and Satan Disciples.

Adversaries

The primary Crips rivals are the Bloods street gangs. The Crips-Bloods rivalry began in the late 1960s when Raymond Washington and several other Crips members confronted Silvester Scott and Benson Owens, students at Centennial High School in Los Angeles. Scott and Owens fought off Washington and his associates. In response to the attack, Scott, who lived on Piru Street in nearby Compton, established the Piru Street Gang, the first Bloods gang, and Owens established the Westside Pirus.

Other Crips adversaries include gangs belonging to the People Nation alliance, particularly the Latin Kings. The People Nation is the rival alliance to the Folk Nation alliance and was created to protect alliance members in the state and federal prison systems. As with the Folk Nation, the alliance is strong within the prison system but less effective once a member is released. The People Nation alliance includes the Black P Stones, Bloods, Cobra Stones, El Rukn, Insane Popes, Gaylords, Future Stones, Insane Unknown, King Cobras, Latin Counts, Latin Dragons, Latin Kings, Latin Pachucos, Latin Saints, Spanish Lords, and the Vice Lord Nation.

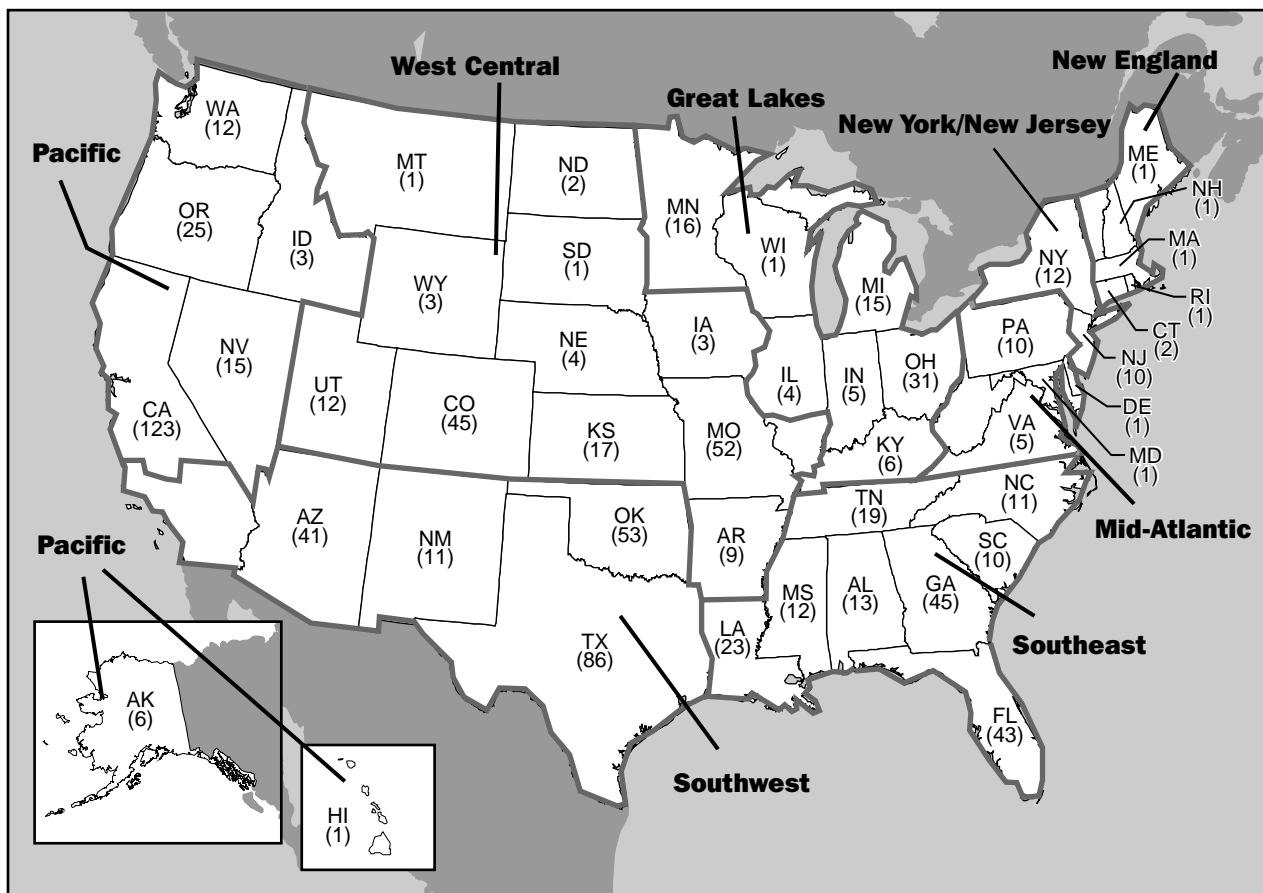
Organizational Structure

The Crips is an association of numerous structured and unstructured gangs, also known as sets, that have adopted a common gang culture. A set may have from three to several hundred members. There is no known national leader or national charter. Crips sets in the Los Angeles area usually consist of a leader assisted by several lieutenants, a drug coordinator, soldiers, and drug couriers. Some Crips factions outside Los Angeles have a leadership core consisting of four or five individuals from an original Los Angeles-based set and include numerous local members and associates. For example, five members of the Los Angeles-based Shotgun Crips form the core of the Shotgun Crips in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Minneapolis faction maintains ties to the Los Angeles-based gang but conducts its own criminal activities.

Membership

The Crips is one of the largest and most violent street gang associations in the United States. It has over 800 sets with 30,000 to 35,000 members and associate members, including more than 13,000 members in Los Angeles. Over 230 law enforcement agencies representing every state except West Virginia and Vermont have reported the presence of Crips in their jurisdiction. The states with the highest estimated number of Crips sets are California, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas. (See map.)

Membership typically consists of African American men in their early 30s, although members range from 10 to 40 years old. There also are an increasing number of sets with Asian, Native American, and Caucasian members, particularly in the West Central, Southeast, New England, New York/New Jersey, and Mid-Atlantic regions. All



Number of Crips sets in the United States.

members are required to take an oath and go through an initiation process. Initiation is achieved in one of three ways—by committing an armed robbery, performing a drive-by shooting, or being beaten by members in a ceremony called a beat-in, kangaroo walk, or bull pen. The initiation is intended to test the prospective member's courage and loyalty.

Members are easily identified by the symbols and clothing they wear. They often display a six-pointed star as a symbol of the gang's association with the Folk Nation. Other symbols used by the gang include inverted, crossed pitchforks; words and letters such as RSC (Rolling 60s Crips), which identify the origin of the Crips set; and numbers such as 118 for the 118th Street gang in Los Angeles. Crips members also distinguish themselves by wearing clothing that is blue—the gang's color. However, some wear colors that reflect the name of their set. For example, the Grape Street Crips wear purple. Crips members often wear the apparel of professional sports teams such as the Colorado Rockies baseball team and the Los Angeles Lakers basketball team. They also wear clothing to the right side of the body as a means of showing their relationship with Folk Nation. For example, members wear colored shoelaces (in blue or another color associated with their set) only on the right shoe, tilt their hats to the right, and roll up their right pant legs.

Drug Trafficking

The Crips' main source of income is from the distribution of powdered cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, and PCP. The larger sets collect several million dollars per year from the wholesale and retail distribution of drugs. Set members transport primarily powdered cocaine, crack cocaine, and marijuana and, to a lesser extent, heroin and methamphetamine to and within 48 states where the drugs are distributed, according to law enforcement. Crips sets,

primarily in Southern California, also produce much of the PCP available in the United States. They transport PCP in private vehicles, buses, and commercial aircraft to major distribution centers such as Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, and St. Louis. PCP is distributed to other Crips sets and associates as well as to rival gangs and local independent dealers for retail distribution.

Crips members, including some members who were recently released from prison, continue to migrate from Los Angeles to smaller towns, primarily in the Southwest, Pacific, West Central, Southeast, and Great Lakes regions, seeking increased opportunities for drug distribution. Additionally, Crips members increasingly are migrating to the New England, New York/New Jersey, and Mid-Atlantic regions. Crips sets obtain wholesale quantities of cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and methamphetamine, primarily from Mexican and Colombian criminal groups in Southern California and Texas.

Southwest Region

Crips sets transport multikilogram quantities of cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and methamphetamine from Southern California for distribution throughout the southwestern states. They obtain the drugs primarily from Mexican and Colombian criminal groups in Los Angeles and San Diego. Crips members also convert powdered cocaine into crack cocaine for distribution in most major urban areas of the region. Crips members in Southern California produce multiliter quantities of PCP for distribution throughout the region and the country. Members transport drugs in private and commercial vehicles and on commercial airlines to numerous cities in the region and throughout the United States. They distribute the drugs in public locations and private residences. The sets control distribution through intimidation and violence, assaulting or murdering members of rival gangs and law enforcement officers who interfere with their drug distribution operations.

Pacific Region

Crips sets transport cocaine, marijuana, PCP, and methamphetamine from Southern California for distribution throughout the Pacific region, particularly Washington and Idaho. Members also convert powdered cocaine to crack cocaine in most major cities in the region. They obtain multikilogram quantities of cocaine and marijuana and multigram quantities of methamphetamine from Crips sets and Mexican criminal groups and multiliter quantities of PCP from Crips sets in Southern California. Members distribute the drugs in public locations and private homes. Sets, such as Rolling 60s Crips, control drug distribution through intimidation and violence, often committing assault and murder to further their drug distribution operations.

West Central Region

The Crips is one of the primary street gang associations transporting cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, and PCP from Southern California and Texas and distributing the drugs throughout the West Central region, particularly Colorado, Utah, and Missouri. In addition, Crips members convert powdered cocaine to crack cocaine for distribution in the region. Crips members obtain multikilogram quantities of cocaine and marijuana and multigram quantities of methamphetamine from California- and Texas-based criminal groups. Crips members transport PCP obtained from Crips sets in Southern California to Texas and Oklahoma for distribution. Set members primarily use private and commercial vehicles to transport drugs from Southern California and Texas to various locations throughout the region for distribution from private residences and public businesses. Crips members in the region defend or expand their drug distribution operations through intimidation and violence.

Southeast Region

Members of Crips sets transport cocaine, marijuana, heroin, methamphetamine, and PCP

primarily from Southern California, Texas, and Florida for distribution throughout the southeastern states. Crips members also convert powdered cocaine to crack cocaine and distribute it in most urban areas of the Southeast region. Crips sets in the region obtain multikilogram quantities of cocaine and marijuana and smaller quantities of methamphetamine and PCP from Los Angeles-based Crips sets, Mexican criminal groups in California and Texas, and Colombian criminal groups in Florida. For example, Crips sets in Mississippi obtain cocaine and marijuana from sets in Los Angeles. Members primarily use private and commercial vehicles and package delivery services to transport illegal drugs from California, Texas, and Florida to various locations throughout the region for distribution from private homes and public businesses. Crips members in the region defend or expand their drug distribution operations using intimidation and violence.

Great Lakes Region

Crips sets transport multikilogram quantities of cocaine and marijuana and multiliter quantities of PCP primarily from Southern California for distribution throughout the Great Lakes region, particularly Ohio and Minnesota. In addition, Crips members convert powdered cocaine to crack cocaine in many urban areas in the region. Crips sets in the region obtain cocaine, marijuana, and PCP from Los Angeles-based Crips sets. For example, Rolling 60s Crips, a Los Angeles-based street gang, transports cocaine from Long Beach, California, to Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, for distribution. Crips members primarily use couriers on commercial airlines and package delivery services to transport drugs from Los Angeles to various locations throughout the region for distribution from private homes and public businesses. Crips members in the region use intimidation and violence to defend or expand their drug distribution operations.

New England, New York/ New Jersey, and Mid- Atlantic Regions

Crips sets are increasingly transporting and distributing cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and PCP throughout New England, New York/New Jersey, and the Mid-Atlantic regions; they are particularly active in Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Virginia. In addition, Crips members convert powdered cocaine to crack cocaine for distribution in the regions. Crips sets obtain cocaine, heroin, and marijuana from New York City-based Dominican criminal groups and cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and PCP from Los Angeles-based Crips sets. Crips sets primarily use private and commercial vehicles to transport drugs from New York City to various locations throughout the region for distribution from private homes and public businesses. Crips members in the regions defend or expand their drug distribution operations through intimidation and violence.

Other Criminal Activity

Crips sets launder their drug proceeds by investing in real estate and various cash-based businesses including barbershops, concert promotion companies, and music stores. Crips sets also use drug proceeds to fund recording companies and music groups. Members engage in many other types of criminal activity including assault, auto theft, burglary, carjacking, drive-by shooting, extortion, homicide, identification fraud, and robbery.

Violence

Crips sets are among the most violent street gangs in the United States. They have been responsible for numerous homicides in most major cities, particularly Los Angeles. Crips members regularly engage in extortion, intimidation, assault, and homicide to further or protect their criminal activities. For example, in Jackson, Tennessee, the 107 Hoover Crips gang allegedly has committed numerous homicides in an attempt to maintain and

expand its drug distribution activities. Most violence is targeted at rival gangs or at dealers who neglect to pay extortion fees.

Violence between Crips sets also is common. Most of this violence occurs due to personal conflicts between members of different sets. Violence also is used to ensure that members remain faithful to the gang's culture. Crips members who have recently been released from prison also are spurring violence between Crips sets and among Crips sets and rival gangs.

Outlook

Crips sets pose a serious threat throughout the United States. The release of gang members from California prisons will continue to result in violence between Crips sets and among Crips sets and rival gangs. Additional Crips members will continue to migrate from Southern California to pursue drug distribution opportunities in other regions of the country, partially because of California's "three-strikes law." For these reasons, Crips sets will increase their involvement in the transportation and distribution of drugs in the New England, New York/New Jersey, and Mid-Atlantic regions. The Crips will remain one of the largest and most violent street gang associations in the United States.

Intelligence Gaps

This profile has identified various intelligence gaps. When possible, information addressing these gaps is being collected for future analysis. Critical information gaps include the following:

- Scope of financial operations
- Extent of international drug connections
- Methods of communication among gang sets
- Organizational structure

If you have any information on street gang activity in your jurisdiction, please contact the NDIC Organized Crime and Violence Unit at (814) 532-4601.

Sources

Federal

U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Prisons

Criminal Division

Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Office of Justice Programs

Bureau of Justice Assistance

Regional Information Sharing Systems Program

U.S. Department of the Treasury

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms

State

Arizona

Department of Public Safety

Criminal Investigation Division

Gang Task Force

Florida

Department of Law Enforcement

Georgia

Georgia Gang Investigators Association

Tennessee

Bureau of Investigations

Washington

Seattle Police Department

Regional

High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas

Chicago

Gulf Coast

Houston

Nevada

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North Texas

Rocky Mountain

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South Florida

South Texas (Southwest Border)

Northwest Gang Investigators Association

Other

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National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations



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ADNET at <http://ndicoso> and LEO at home.leo.gov/lesig/ndic