

United States Department of Justice

For Immediate Release

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Central District of California

Riverside Gang with Links to Mexican Mafia Targeted in Federal Case that Alleges Methamphetamine Trafficking
Twenty Members and Associates of Eastside Riva Charged in Federal Court

RIVERSIDE, CA—Law enforcement authorities this morning arrested six defendants linked to a Riverside street gang that is alleged to act under the control of the Mexican Mafia and to engage in the trafficking of methamphetamine and other federal offenses that include hate crimes targeting African-Americans. The six defendants are among 20 charged in three criminal complaints filed yesterday afternoon in United States District Court and unsealed this morning. Nine of the defendants charged in the federal cases are already in state custody, in some cases on related charges, and five of the defendants are currently being sought by authorities.

The federal criminal cases are part of a coordinated crackdown on the Eastside Riva (ESR), a 20-year-old street gang with about 500 members that claims territory on the east side of the City of Riverside. The federal investigation, which started in November 2008, led to the criminal complaints that were unsealed today and allege numerous methamphetamine transactions, as well as tactics that ESR uses to maintain power and to cooperate with the Mexican Mafia, to which ESR pays monetary tribute referred to as “taxes” or “rent.”

Of the three criminal complaints filed in federal court, two charge single defendants—one with drug trafficking, one with being a felon in possession of a firearm—and the third complaint charges 18 defendants. The main complaint outlines the alleged structure, rules and activities of ESR, noting that:

- ESR frequently engages in “cruising,” where ESR members arm themselves with an array of deadly weapons and travel in groups to rival gang territory to attack rival gangsters;
- ESR rules require that members of the gang attack individuals who intentionally or inadvertently enter ESR territory, whether they are rival gang members or simply innocent bystanders traveling through ESR territory;
- ESR members use MySpace.com to communicate about gang business, and they use rap music videos and recordings to deliver messages of violence and intimidation;
- ESR is hostile to the presence of African-Americans in ESR territory, even if they are not affiliated with a gang; and
- ESR relies on the possession of firearms to defend and maintain its turf, to attack or defend themselves from rival gang members, and to create an atmosphere of fear in which victims and

witnesses will be reluctant to testify against gang members out of fear of retaliation.

The investigation into ESR was conducted by special agents with the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, investigators with the Riverside County District Attorney's Office and the Riverside Police Department, and special agents with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

“Federal law enforcement authorities have partnered with local enforcement to take gang members off the streets of communities across Southern California,” said Acting United States Attorney George S. Cardona. “As this action targeting Eastside Riva demonstrates, we will continue to work with local authorities to go after the worst street gangs that traffic in narcotics and terrorize neighborhoods with their violence.”

DEA Special Agent in Charge Timothy J. Landrum stated: “Our communities deserve to exist without fear and intimidation inflicted by violent drug gangs. Today’s arrests should significantly impact the violent drug related activity that has wreaked havoc throughout the eastside of Riverside. This effort, as part of Operation Promise, is a promise to our citizens of the continued commitment of law enforcement at the federal, state and local levels to keep our streets safe.”

Steven Martinez, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI in Los Angeles, commented: “Law enforcement at the local and federal levels have once again joined to disrupt a criminal organization responsible for igniting the violence which has a paralyzing effect on the law-abiding citizens of Riverside, and which devastates otherwise peaceful communities. The crimes alleged in this case have serious consequences and, if convicted, ESR gang members will spend a good part of their lives behind bars.”

Those named in the main criminal complaint are:

Salvador Orozco Hernandez, Jr. (aka “Toro” and “Tio”), 45, of Bloomington, a Mexican Mafia member currently in state prison on attempted murder charges, who is accused of issuing directives to senior ESR members on topics including “tax” collections and drug distribution in ESR territory;

Robert Zavala Carrillo (aka “Pato”), 37, of Moreno Valley, accused of being the de facto leader of the ESR gang and the president of an ESR clique, who is a fugitive;

Christopher Nevarez (aka “Flako”), 38, of Riverside, the alleged liason between the ESR and the Mexican Mafia, who is currently in state custody on a parole violation;

Ronnie Marquez (aka “Shadow”), 41, of Riverside, allegedly a senior member of ESR who is in custody awaiting trial on drug and weapons offense;

Ignacio Chavez (aka “Kartune”), 32, of Riverside, a senior member of ESR who is in custody awaiting trial on charges of attempted murder and drug trafficking;

Mark Gil (aka “Papa” and “Little G”), 35, of Moreno Valley, a senior member of ESR, who is a fugitive;

Andrew Pacheco Moreno (aka “Drew”), 37, of Fontanam, who was arrested this morning;

Daniel Henry Padron (aka “Danny Boy” and “Sneaky”), 33, of Riverside, who is currently incarcerated after being convicted of drug trafficking;

Jose Arredondo (aka “Tony”), 40, of Hemet, who is currently incarcerated after being convicted of drug trafficking;

Johnny Gomez, 44, of Riverside, who was arrested this morning;

Nateno Moreno (aka “Shorty”), 32, of Riverside, who was arrested this morning;

Vanessa Garcia (aka “Pookie” and “Erica”), 22, of Riverside, who is in custody on a parole violation;

Allexxis Olonna Smith, 24, of Riverside, who is currently incarcerated after being convicted of carjacking;

Chris James Garcia (aka “Chuco”), 42, of Riverside, who was arrested this morning;

Rudy Tovar (aka “Dinky”), 30, of Riverside, who is currently incarcerated after being convicted on drug trafficking charges;

Paul Cortez (aka “Wiskers”), 22, of Riverside, who was arrested this morning;

Allan Patrick Staley (aka “Paya”), 37, of Riverside, who is a fugitive; and

Deanna Wagner, 33, of Riverside, who is a fugitive.

The other two defendants charged are: David Martinez, 37, who was arrested this morning after being charged with possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine; and Ronnie Granado, 42, a fugitive who is charged with being a felon in possession of a firearm.

The six defendants arrested today are expected to make their initial court appearances this afternoon in United States District Court in Riverside. As for the nine defendants currently in state custody, the United States Attorney’s Office expects to file writs to have them brought into federal custody. Authorities continue to search for five of the defendants named in the federal cases

A criminal complaint contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty.

If convicted, each of the 19 defendants charged with narcotics violations faces a maximum statutory sentence of life without parole in federal prison. Granado faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted of the weapons violation.