



# Department of Justice

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**STATEMENT OF**

**STEPHEN E. RICHARDSON  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

**BEFORE THE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON COUNTERTERRORISM AND INTELLIGENCE  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**FOR A HEARING ENTITLED**

**“COMBATING TRANSNATIONAL GANGS THROUGH INFORMATION SHARING”**

**PRESENTED**

**JANUARY 18, 2018**

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Good morning Chairman McCaul, Chairman King, Ranking Member Rice, and members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) efforts to combat the transnational gang threat and the FBI’s use of task forces.

The FBI is dedicated to eliminating transnational organized crime (TOC) groups that pose the greatest threat to the national and economic security of the United States. Some TOC groups can be hierarchies, clans, networks, or cells, and may evolve into other structures. The depth and financial stability of these organizations often allow them to continue long after key members are removed. Therefore, the FBI targets entire organizations responsible for a variety of criminal activities. TOC groups are independent associations that operate by illegal means across borders, and many of these associations encompass both the Eastern and Western hemispheres. With the increase of technology available around the world, TOC groups are more commonly incorporating cyber techniques into their illicit activities.

To combat the ongoing threat posed by these groups, the FBI has a long-established transnational organized crime program dedicated to eliminating the criminal enterprises that pose the greatest threat to America. The FBI uses the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act to target entire criminal organizations and to address the full extent of the criminal conduct by the leaders, members, and associates of those organizations. Unlike typical investigations, which target a single criminal act, this multi-pronged approach allows the FBI to disrupt or dismantle the entire enterprise.

The FBI leverages political and law enforcement relationships domestically and abroad to combat the influence and reach of these organized crime groups due to the transnational nature of these criminal enterprises.

The FBI also participates in selecting TOC groups to appear on the Department of Justice's Top International Criminal Organizations Target (TICOT) List, and contributes to the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) efforts to pursue criminal enterprises. Further, to pool resources and leverage technical and investigative expertise, the FBI participates in many Organized Crime Task Forces consisting of state and local law enforcement partners in the U.S.

Specific to transnational gangs, the FBI established the first Safe Streets Violent Gang Task Force (SSVGTF) in 1992. The mission of our SSVGTFs is to fully integrate our state and local partners to address threats posed by violent criminal gangs that have a destructive effect in our communities across the country. A key component of this success involves the utilization of Task Force Officers (TFOs) who have direct knowledge of the criminal activity occurring in their jurisdictions. This collaboration of FBI Special Agents and local law enforcement creates a comprehensive approach to addressing these violent gangs from top to bottom utilizing the Enterprise Theory of Investigation (ETI). ETIs are intelligence driven investigations which seek to identify the hierarchy of a criminal enterprise and the scope of their criminal activity. The SSVGTF can then utilize state and federal statutes to address all elements of the violent criminal organization. The success of the SSVGTFs is directly related to the ability to cross-programmatically leverage all resources and expertise of the FBI.

The FBI currently operates and provides oversight to 169 SSVGTFs comprised of nearly 800 Special Agents, 1,400 TFOs, and 58 other federal law enforcement partners in all of the FBI's 56 field offices. Collectively, these SSVGTFs average approximately 5,100 arrests of violent criminal gang members annually. Additionally, SSVGTFs have averaged over 2,000 seizures of firearms in each of the past two years. Although the numbers are impressive, the ultimate goal of all SSVGTFs is to have a positive effect on communities by disrupting and dismantling the violent criminal organizations that exist within them.

In addition to our domestic task forces, the FBI's Transnational Anti-Gang Task Forces (TAGs) continue to work with international partners to eradicate transnational gangs domestically and internationally. The TAG program was first created in 2007 in El Salvador through the cooperation between the FBI and the U.S. Department of State. The TAG expanded to Guatemala and Honduras in 2009 and 2011, respectively. The TAG is currently comprised of six FBI Special Agents and 120 vetted police officers. Each TAG is a fully operational unit responsible for the investigation of MS-13 and other violent transnational gangs, such as 18<sup>th</sup> Street. The focus of the TAG is to conduct gang enforcement operations and gather actionable, strategic intelligence for domestic use by the SSVGTFs and dissemination to U.S. law enforcement partners.

Additional valuable intelligence provided by the TAG include: affiliations with other violent criminal gangs; associations with drug cartels; and illicit activity, such as human trafficking and firearms trafficking. Recently, the TAG conducted a coordinated transnational gang arrest operation in all three countries. The operation targeted members of both MS-13 and 18<sup>th</sup> Street, resulting in the arrests of 754 MS-13 and 18<sup>th</sup> Street gang members. The arrests also led to the seizure of multiple items of evidence, which are being exploited for their intelligence value.

The FBI utilizes a comprehensive approach combining intelligence with operations to more effectively combat gang violence. Apart from our task forces, the FBI has numerous analysts and agents dedicated to studying the threats posed by MS-13 and other transnational criminal gangs via the National Gang Intelligence Center (NGIC). NGIC is a multi-agency intelligence entity that supports law enforcement agencies through timely and accurate information sharing and strategic/tactical analysis of federal, state, and local law enforcement intelligence. NGIC is co-located at FBIHQ with the Safe Streets Gang Unit to further enhance integration of intelligence and operations. Additionally, the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division (CID) participates in the Special Operations Division (SOD) which is a multi-agency intelligence center wherein the FBI is one of over 30 partners. The primary focus of SOD is to identify and target command and control communications of those criminal organizations that operate across regional, national, and international boundaries and to facilitate de-confliction and coordination of law enforcement investigations.

In addition to SOD, the FBI participates in the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force's (OCDETF) Fusion Center (OFC); this collaborative integrated center is a multi-agency operational intelligence center that provides law enforcement with analytical resources, case de-confliction, and information sharing to develop the most complete intelligence picture of targeted drug trafficking organizations and other complex criminal organizations. The OFC brings together 112 datasets from 21 separate federal and international agencies, along with open source information, to generate intelligence products for FBI investigations. Furthermore, the FBI continues to be a vital participant in scores of OCDETF investigations that are countering TCOs and Transnational Gangs, like MS-13. In October 2017, the Attorney General explicitly directed that MS-13 be a priority of the multi-agency OCDETF Program, authorizing and encouraging investigative agencies and prosecutors to leverage OCDETF's funding, infrastructure, and other resources to target MS-13.

Although the vetting and possible arrest of individuals at the border is primarily a function of the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the FBI makes every effort to gather intelligence related to the movement and recruitment of these gang members prior to and upon entry into the U.S. Information sharing with our partners is critical to fulfilling this responsibility, and the FBI is continually working to improve the way in which we and our partners communicate. Please know we will continue to dedicate tremendous resources and efforts to targeting, investigating, prosecuting, and dismantling these transnational criminal gangs.

Chairman McCaul, Chairman King, Ranking Member Rice, and members of the Committee, thank you again for this opportunity to discuss the FBI's efforts to eradicate the threat posed by transnational gangs. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.