



CALIFORNIA STATE THREAT ASSESSMENT CENTER

INFORMATION NOTE

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(U) Training Utilized by Gangs to Enhance Tactical Readiness

(U) SCOPE

(U) This STAC information note is intended to enhance law enforcement community understanding of training venues observed to have been used by gang members and to provide insight into their reasoning for engagement in these observed activities.

(U) INTRODUCTION

(U//LES) Recent observations by law enforcement officials throughout the state have revealed that gang members have increasingly engaged in formal martial arts and firearms training. Whether a gang member is incarcerated or on the streets, he is encouraged, if not required, to acquire an assortment of training to benefit the gang. A well-trained cadre of gang members may embolden the group and create a more dangerous environment for law enforcement officials when encountering gang membership involved in criminal activity.

(U) TRAINING SOURCES

(U//LES) Examples of training observed include Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), traditional boxing, firearms and tactical maneuvers. Some gang members have also enrolled in college or certificate courses to obtain knowledge in criminal justice. Other gang members may read books and literature on tactics of war and other relevant topics.^{1,2} In prison, inmates communicate with fellow gang members through micro script notes, also known as kites^a, and share attack methods, training tips, and diagrams that identify parts of the body that are particularly vulnerable to attack to cause significant harm or death.

(U) PURPOSES OF TRAINING

(U//LES) Gang members train to better equip themselves for the “war” they see themselves in – whether the war is for turf, the drug trade, or survival.

(U) CONFIDENCE LEVEL
(U) High Confidence
 generally indicates that judgments are based on high-quality information from multiple sources or from a single highly reliable source, and/or that the nature of the issue makes it possible to render a solid judgment.

^a Kites are written correspondence passed from one inmate to another, often viewed as contraband by prison officials based on the content of the kite.



(U) Hells Angels member/Pro Boxer – HA symbol on his belt

(U//FOUO) Similar to previous incidents involving individuals associated with known terrorist organizations, gang members take advantage of public shooting ranges, as well as recreational paintball, to enhance their weapons training and skill.³ They utilize public shooting ranges, to sample a variety of guns and enhance their shooting accuracy, just as law enforcement maintains a standard of weapons expertise. Paintball guns emulate real weapons and provide a ‘safe’ way to simulate an attack utilizing a similar weapon, tactics and gear.

(U//LES) Multiple gangs, such as the Mongols, Hells Angels (HA), Newhall 13, and Public Enemy Number One (PENI), are known to utilize MMA and boxing rings to enhance their fighting skills.^{4,5,6} It is not always clear if they began training and fighting prior to associating with the gang, during the process of becoming a member, or subsequent to their membership.^{7,8} Regardless of their initial reason for beginning a training regimen, and similarly to individuals associated with terrorist groups who participate in martial arts training, they consequently learn fighting techniques, maneuvers, and submission holds that can be used in the commission of a crime or against law enforcement personnel.⁹ Incarcerated members from a variety of gangs often occupy their free time with physical fitness training. Sureño gang members, however, are required by their superiors to maintain physical fitness by participating in a fitness routine while they are on the prison yard.

(U//LES) Incarcerated gang members continually train their bodies and their minds. In addition to physical fitness, they circulate and study kites which contain the gang’s bylaws, history, and attack methods. The kites also often contain instructions for making weapons, planning attacks and targeting individuals (to include officers).^{10,11} Sureños have been known to read *Gray’s Anatomy* to learn the location of vital pressure points and main arteries as aim points during an attack.¹² Criminal street gang members, prison gang members and individuals associated with Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) study books such as *The 48 Laws of Power* and Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* to understand military tactics and to mentally prepare for the “war”.^{13,14} Gang members may also enhance their knowledge and mental training by reading books such as *Blood in My Eye* (a book written by George Jackson, one of the founders of the prison gang, Black Guerilla Family), *The Book of the Five Rings* (a book on kenjutsu and martial arts), and *The Turner Diaries* (a book written by William Pierce, former leader of National Alliance – a white nationalist organization – and used by Timothy McVeigh in planning the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City).¹⁵

(U//LES) Additionally, known gang members have enrolled in criminal justice college courses to obtain additional training and education.¹⁶ These courses are typically open to the public and provide gang members with easy access to book knowledge as well as current or prior law enforcement and criminal justice personnel. This venue enables them to ask trained professionals about policies, procedures, tactical methods and prescribed levels of hand-to-hand combat training.

(U//LES) Some gang members have sought formal law enforcement, military, and paramilitary training. A former Los Angeles Police Department officer, who is also a former Marine, is now known to be a member of the



(U//LES) Avenues gang member, photo courtesy of LAPD Officer Safety Alert

Avenues gang.¹⁷ Gang members join all branches of the U.S. armed forces in order to obtain military training, which they subsequently use to train fellow gang members. Some gang members have also traveled to other countries, including Mexico, to obtain training from outside sources, including Transnational Criminal Organization (TCOs).¹⁸ The Drug Enforcement Agency in Texas found a close quarters combat/small unit tactics training manual on the persons of deceased Los Zetas members.¹⁹ Los Zetas members have been known to operate in California.²⁰ The Logan Heights gang in San Diego has well known affiliations with the Arellano Felix Organization (AFO), a TCO, and has reportedly received paramilitary training from AFO members. The AFO has also allegedly employed Logan Heights gang members as assassins.²¹

(U) OUTLOOK

(U//LES) As long as gang members believe they are at war with society, law enforcement or rival gang members, and involved in criminal activity, they will likely continue to enhance their training opportunities. Although gang members can legally engage in mixed martial arts, boxing, and training with paintball guns, law enforcement should be mindful of the potential threat trained gang members may pose. Gangs often target law enforcement and members may use their training to harm law enforcement personnel, evade arrest, or avoid detention.

(U) ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE

(U) For comments or questions related to the content or dissemination of this document, please contact the STAC at (916) 874-1100 or STAC@calema.ca.gov

(U) **TRACKED BY:** HSEC -9.5.2-ST-2010, HSEC-9.8-ST-2010

(U) **FEEDBACK:** The STAC encourages your feedback using the survey found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JT56SHW>

¹ (U//LES) Email communication with Federal Bureau of Prisons Senior Officer Specialist. 15 June 2011.

² (U//LES) Email communication with California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Assistant Institutional Gang Investigator. 16 June 2011.

³ (U//LES) "Terrorist Use of Paintball and Martial Arts Training to Simulate Combat." San Diego Regional Terrorism Threat Assessment Center. Intelligence Bulletin 10-011. 11 May 2010.

⁴ (U//LES) Email communication with Spokane Violent Crime Gang Enforcement Team Intelligence Officer. 15 June 2011.

⁵ (U//LES) Email communication with Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Gang Intelligence Center Analyst. 16 June 2011.

⁶ (U//LES) Email communication with Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Detective. 16 June 2011.

⁷ (U//LES) Email communication with Spokane Violent Crime Gang Enforcement Team Intelligence Officer. 15 June 2011.

⁸ (U//LES) Email communication with Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Gang Intelligence Center Analyst. 16 June 2011.

⁹ (U//LES) "Terrorist Use of Paintball and Martial Arts Training to Simulate Combat." San Diego Regional Terrorism Threat Assessment Center. Intelligence Bulletin 10-011. 11 May 2010.

¹⁰ (U//LES) Email communication with California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Assistant Institutional Gang Investigator. 16 June 2011.

¹¹ (U//LES) Email communication with Federal Bureau of Prisons Senior Officer Specialist. 15 June 2011.

¹² (U//LES) Email communication with Federal Bureau of Prisons Senior Officer Specialist. 15 June 2011.

¹³ (U//LES) Email communication with California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Assistant Institutional Gang Investigator. 29 June 2011.

¹⁴ (U) "Mexican Cop Applies Sun Tzu to Drug War in New Book." Available at http://www.borderlandbeat.com/2011/06/mexican-cop-applies-sun-tzu-to-drug-war.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+BorderlandBeat+%28Borderland+Beat%29. 27 June 2011.

- ¹⁵ (U//LES) Email communication with California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Assistant Institutional Gang Investigator. 29 June 2011.
- ¹⁶ (U//LES) Email communication with San Diego Sheriff's Department Detective. 15 June 2011.
- ¹⁷ (U//LES) Officer Safety Alert. Los Angeles Police Department, Northeast Division, Special Problems Unit. 23 January 10.
- ¹⁸ (U//LES) Officer Safety Alert. Los Angeles Police Department, Force Investigation Division, Criminal Apprehension Team. 7 January 10.
- ¹⁹ (U//LES) "Small Unit Commands" Training Manual." Texas Department of Public Safety, Intelligence and Counterterrorism Division, Texas Fusion Center. December 2009.
- ²⁰ (U//LES) Officer Safety Alert. Los Angeles Police Department, Force Investigation Division, Criminal Apprehension Team. 7 January 10.
- ²¹ (U) YouTube Video. "Gangland: The Assassins 1 (Logan Heights)." Available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oj_CJ6h3_4. 29 June 2011.