

United States Department of Justice

For Immediate Release

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Central District of California

Forty-One Members and Associates of Pueblo Bishops Charged in Federal Racketeering Indictment that Alleges Murders, Robberies, and Widespread Drug Sales in Bid to Control South L.A. Community

LOS ANGELES—More than 1,000 FBI agents and LAPD officers executed arrest warrants and search warrants this morning after a two-year investigation into the Pueblo Bishops Bloods, a street gang that controls the Pueblo del Rio housing project in South Los Angeles. Authorities today arrested 19 defendants who are named in a sweeping racketeering indictment that was returned last week by a federal grand jury. Additionally, ten people were taken into custody on various state offenses. Several defendants named in the indictment were already in custody on unrelated charges.

The investigation into the Pueblo Bishops was called Operation “Family Ties” because many of the targets, in addition to residing at Pueblo del Rio, are united by family ties. Today’s takedown was announced by United States Attorney André Birotte Jr.; Steven Martinez, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI in Los Angeles; and Charlie Beck, Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department.

According to the 88-page racketeering indictment that was unsealed this morning, the Pueblo Bishops Bloods operated as a criminal enterprise, using violence and intimidation to control the Pueblo del Rio housing project. The indictment alleges that members of the Pueblo Bishops functioned as an organization with the goals of enriching members of the gang through narcotics trafficking and armed robberies, committing acts of violence to protect and expand the criminal operation, and enhancing control over Pueblo de Rio through intimidation and acts of violence against residents and members of rival gang.

“The federal racketeering indictment and today’s law enforcement operation strikes at the gang’s leadership and will drastically limit the gang’s ability to conduct business,” said United States Attorney André Birotte Jr. “The only way to effectively fight the gang problem that plagues too many neighborhoods is for local, state, and federal authorities to join together to combat the threat. This action against this dangerous gang will improve life for the residents of the Pueblo del Rio housing development.”

The federal racketeering indictment names 41 defendants, many of who would face potential life sentences if they are convicted of the various charges contained in the indictment.

Formed in the 1970s, the Pueblo Bishops derives its name from the Pueblo del Rio housing project, which is near East 55th and South Alameda streets in South Los Angeles. The Pueblo

Bishops gang, which is believed to have approximately 300 active members or associates, allegedly maintains strict control of Pueblo del Rio by intimidating and threatening residents, confronting law enforcement officers who patrol the area, and attacking rivals by engaging in shootings, beatings, murders, and attempted murders, according to the indictment.

The gang was formed to protect its members from other gangs, according to the indictment, which alleges that the enterprise has grown into a violent and profitable criminal enterprise that conducts annual meetings and enforces a strict set of rules.

Steven Martinez, the FBI Assistant Director in Charge, said, "The use of federal racketeering statutes to address the Pueblo Bishops' stranglehold on the law-abiding citizens of the Pueblo del Rio housing project exemplifies the government's commitment to addressing the gang violence that paralyzes American communities. The FBI and our partners in this investigation are optimistic that this operation will deal a significant blow to the organization's money-making enterprise and associated violence victimizing innocent citizens in south Los Angeles."

The defendants named in the federal indictment face various charges, including conspiracy to engage in racketeering activity; violent crimes in aid of racketeering; conspiracy to distribute cocaine, crack cocaine, heroin and marijuana; use and possession of a firearm in furtherance of a crime; and distribution and manufacturing of narcotics near schools, playgrounds and public housing facilities. The indictment specifically alleges a wide assortment of overt acts committed since 1999 in furtherance of the racketeering conspiracy, including numerous narcotics transactions, attacks on police officers, armed robberies, firearms sales, drive-by shootings, assaults with a deadly weapon, attempted murder, and murder.

Chief Charlie Beck of the Los Angeles Police Department stated, "We are sending a message to all gangs that if you continue on this path, you will eventually be caught."

According to the indictment, older members of the gang, known as "Original Gangstas," or "OGs," impose mandates on the younger members of the gang, who are called "Younger Gangstas" or "YGs." OGs presided over meetings to discuss the gang's business and enlisted YGs to violently guard the gang's territory, retaliate against rival gangs and commit crimes in furtherance of the criminal enterprise. The indictment alleges that members would commit murder and conspire to commit murder in order to enhance the violent reputation of the gang.

Those arrested today in the federal case will be arraigned today in United States District Court in downtown Los Angeles.

Ten federal defendants are fugitives and are actively being sought by law enforcement.

This investigation was conducted by agents and officers with the FBI and the LAPD. Considerable assistance was provided during this investigation and in today's operation by several additional agencies, including the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development – Office of Inspector General; the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office; the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation – Office of Correctional Safety; the Los Angeles County Department of Child and Family Services; and the Los Angeles County Probation

Department. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department also provided assistance during today's operation.

The investigation into the Pueblo Bishops is a result of a long-standing partnership between the FBI and the Los Angeles Police Department, a relationship that is maintained through the FBI's Task Force on Violent Crime in the City of Los Angeles. This task force is one of dozens of such partnerships throughout the United States, known as Safe Streets Task Forces, funded for the purpose of assisting local police in identifying and addressing violent crime in America.