

CT FEATURE

From the cellblock to the community, from the prison yard to the street corner, the gangs continue their reign of terror. Across the country, gangs continue to impact our prisons, jails and communities. All too often gangs disrupt inmate programming and prevent the majority of inmates from serving their time without the fear of gang-related violence.

Assaults, murder, fear and intimidation are the tools used by gangs to control institutions and the community. It seems like every major street gang is controlled and directed by prison gang members incarcerated in some of the country's most secure facilities. It is now common knowledge, through the media and federal prosecution, that many of the country's major prison gangs control and direct organized criminal enterprises that have tentacles reaching well beyond prison walls and deep into our communities.

Additionally, the concept that "we are all responsible for our safety" is another benefit to intelligence gathering in a correctional setting. Although an institution may have a limited number of gang intelligence officers, it is incumbent upon all staff, both sworn and support, to understand gang dynamics, be trained to identify gang activity and know how and to whom to report the activity. The line staff should be the eyes and ears of the gang intelligence officers because they are among the inmates all of the time. The line staff can provide the bits and pieces of information, and the gang intelligence officers can do the follow up.

Furthermore, the gang intelligence unit's work is essential to administrators when planning, formulating and implementing gang management policies and strategies. Administrators need reliable information in order to make sound strategic decisions, allocate resources and for requesting additional revenue to ensure the safe and secure operation of facilities.

INTELLIGENCE:

THE KEY TO GANG SUPPRESSION

According to the California Department of Justice, an agency actively combating gangs, one of the most effective methods to suppress gangs is having advanced knowledge of their activities. Intelligence gathering is the method and the cornerstone of all efforts to curb, suppress and prevent gang activity that is both criminal and disruptive to public safety and the safety and security of penal institutions.

Gathering gang intelligence in a correctional setting is like putting the pieces of a puzzle together. Bits and pieces of information in and of themselves may mean nothing but once added to the total picture may complete the puzzle. The intelligence must be gathered, organized, evaluated or analyzed, corroborated and then disseminated to the right people.

A necessary component of any correctional intelligence gathering unit is the sharing of information with other law enforcement agencies. This collaboration, sometimes referred to as police/corrections partnerships is critical to public as well as institutional safety. These partnerships are force multipliers in an era of shrinking budgets and limited resources.

Additional Benefits of Gang Intelligence

The benefits of an effective gang intelligence unit in a correctional setting are many. Some of the more notable benefits are explained below:

Staff Safety. Staff safety should be foremost on everyone's mind. Violence, threats and intimidation were in the past used by gangs exclusively against witnesses and victims to prevent them from testifying in court. Those tactics are now being used routinely against law enforcement and correctional staff. No one seems to be immune. Threats have been lodged against correctional officers, prison administrators, police, probation and parole officers, prosecutors and even judges. Last year a veteran California correctional officer was stabbed to death by a known gang member. Although the murder was not planned by a gang, the assailant was a known gang member with a history of violence.

Gang intelligence that has been regularly gathered and corroborated has uncovered plots to injure or kill. These plots

have been foiled as a result of the intelligence being transformed into action, thus being referred to as “actionable or tactical” intelligence.

For instance, in the not too distant past, the Mexican Mafia prison gang threatened to kill the now former director of the Arizona Department of Corrections. The director adopted more stringent policies toward gangs, and the gangs were determined to retaliate by plotting to ambush him. The attempt was foiled, and the plot was uncovered by some very intensive gathering of intelligence.

Likewise, more than 40 members of the Aryan Brotherhood prison gang have recently been indicted under the federal RICO Act (Racketeer Influenced and Corruption Organization). Both state and federal correctional agencies, working cooperatively with other law enforcement agencies gathered intelligence from several sources revealing plots to escape and to kill persons associated with the investigation and trial.

solution of crimes committed both in the community and inside prisons and jails.

For example, a recent letter authored by a street gang member and sent to a known gang member in a state prison was intercepted by a gang intelligence officer. The letter detailed how the author and several other identified street gang members had shot and killed an opposing gang member during a drive-by shooting. The letter even revealed where the semi-automatic weapon used in the shooting was hidden. It was shared with the appropriate police jurisdiction and led to the arrest and conviction of several street gang members.

Good intelligence can prevent or stop planned criminal activity in the community and the institution by identifying suspects. The information or actionable intelligence can lead to the arrest of suspects or the locking up of involved inmates in an institution. It can also lead to the seizure of weapons and contraband, both in the community and in an institution. Intelligence can also lead to the prevention of a prison riot, melee or disturbance.



By Brian Parry

Most recently, several correctional agencies, working with local law enforcement, shared intelligence to determine if any civil disruption or prison unrest would occur following the California execution of Stanley “Tookie” Williams, reportedly one of the original founders of the Crips street gang.

These acts of violence, threats and plots to kill and escape only underscore the need for gathering and sharing gang intelligence.

Violence Prevention and Crime Solving. The use of gang intelligence in corrections and law enforcement enables agencies to take a proactive approach to preventing violence and solving crimes. Effective intelligence gathering and the sharing of the information can prevent gang violence against inmates, the public and all too often opposing gangs.

Where are countless examples of cases where prison gang intelligence officers sifted through bits and pieces of information, decoded cryptic messages, read numerous prison letters and listened to hours of monitored and recorded inmate telephone conversations to uncover information critical to the

The sharing of intelligence also helps agencies with limited resources prioritize their enforcement activities to deal with identified trends or patterns of gang behavior. The targeting of enforcement activities toward a specific gang in an institution or in the community can be cost effective and timely to prevent further acts of gang violence. It is good for public safety and institutional security. Knowing which crimes or disruptions gangs are planning and how the gang operates puts critical tactical intelligence to its optimum use, and suppressing gang activity equals officer safety and violence prevention.

Developing Sources of Information. Some additional benefits of gathering gang intelligence include the identification of active gang members, gang members who want to leave, renounce or drop out of the gang and the development of sources of information and confidential informants. Talking to inmates is essential to obtaining advance knowledge of planned criminal and disruptive activity. There are enough inmates in any institution who would rather confidentially “tip” staff to an impending disturbance so the activity could be prevented

rather than have their programs interrupted by extensive lock-downs. All staff need to cultivate inmate sources of information to gather intelligence about the gangs and their activities.

In addition, the gathering of gang intelligence can be used to identify gang members, leaders, shot callers, associates, wannabees and prospects. The identification can lead to the formal validation of known gang members. Good intelligence can also aid in determining the gangs' methods of operation, support structure, communication codes, methods used to circumvent prison procedures, mail drops, etc.

The identification of those gang members who want to disassociate from the gang is extremely valuable and more often than not leads to volumes of both tactical and strategic intelligence.

analysis. During this step, the staff will determine the information's relevance, timeliness, the reliability of its source and its validity. The information during this step is often incomplete, contradictory and has no discernable meaning. This step may require some form of "link analysis" to help identify the information's usefulness. The last step is the dissemination of information to the people with a need to know. The situation and value of the intelligence may dictate if the dissemination is verbal or written. If the information is relevant to a critical fast-breaking incident, the intelligence may be delivered orally and later in written form. The finished product should be reduced to a written report and disseminated according to policy. Critical decisions may be made based on the intelligence. Therefore, it is imperative that the reliability of the information, whether corroborated or not, is clearly communicated to the decision-makers.

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Another benefit of gathering gang intelligence is its value to an agency in the development of new training needs for staff. Gangs are continually changing. As corrections and law enforcement adjust tactics and policies to combat them, the gangs themselves change in order to continue to operate and conduct criminal activity. Although agencies cannot change their policies as quickly as necessary to combat gangs, they can train staff to adjust to the changing *modus operandi* of the gangs.

The Intelligence Cycle

Tactical and strategic are the two basic types of intelligence applicable to the correctional setting. Tactical intelligence is information that can be used to assist in the immediate or short-term investigation, operation or problem. When there is an immediate problem, tactical intelligence is gathered and action is taken. The action could be anything from arrest, inmate lock up, an entire facility locked down, inmates transferred and searches conducted.

In contrast, strategic intelligence can be used to support long-range planning, identification of emerging problems, gangs, gang leaders, trends and patterns of gang behavior. This type of information is useful to prison administrators for budgeting, resource allocation and policy development.

There are a number of steps involved in the intelligence cycle. Many law enforcement and correctional agencies label them differently, but the major steps in the cycle are as follows: gathering or collecting, processing and organizing, evaluation and analysis and dissemination.

The first step is collecting or obtaining the raw information. The second step involves organizing or processing the information, which includes putting it in a usable form that is available to the staff who will eventually analyze and evaluate it. This management of information may include entry into some kind of database, the creation of electronic or paper files and the knowledge of what current gang problems are facing the agency. This may aid in the decision of which information is timely, tactical and actionable. The third step is evaluation and

The intelligence may be classified by policy, which will determine the level of dissemination. Some of the common classifications are sensitive, confidential, restricted and unclassified. Each agency needs to define the level of classification for dissemination purposes.

In addition, the source of the information may also need to be evaluated. Most agencies have standards for evaluating sources, such as reliable, unreliable or unknown. Policy should clearly define source reliability.

Intelligence Of ficer Duties

The key to any intelligence gathering effort is the personnel assigned to the task and their training. They must possess integrity, excellent communication skills, analytical ability, initiative and commitment to the agency's goals and mission. The intelligence officer should have a working knowledge of gangs and how they operate both in a correctional setting and on the streets. The officer should be able to communicate with inmates, all staff (regardless of rank) and representatives from other agencies. The ability to develop sources of information and confidential informants and to follow all the laws and policies applicable to the intelligence gathering mission are essential.

Computer skills are a necessity because of today's technology use. Gang investigations, intelligence gathering, linking raw data and the sheer volume of information require good computer skills.

Whether the agency has one gang intelligence officer working part- or full-time or a cadre of staff, a well defined duty statement is helpful to define the activities and reporting structure of the staff. The duty statement also helps identify training and equipment needs.

Some of the basic duties should include cultivating liaison contacts with other agencies, interviewing arriving inmates who have gang affiliations, advising receiving institutions and parole staff of active gang members who may pose a threat, follow-up interviews of all staff and gang members after a disturbance or riot, sharing information with all staff on a

Lessons From a Gang Cop

Tony Moreno has worked as a Los Angeles police officer for over 30 years, spending more than half his career working some of the most violent gangs in some of the toughest neighborhoods in Los Angeles. Moreno is a supervising detective who commands an 18-person city-wide gang unit that routinely investigates and arrests gang members, many of whom are on probation or parole. These are both street and prison gangs. The Crips, Bloods, Surenos, Mexican Mafia, Black Guerilla Family, Aryan Brotherhood and Nazi Low Riders are all well known to Moreno and his squad.

Many of these gangs had their roots in Los Angeles and the California prison system but have migrated to other states, infecting communities and correctional systems. In a recent interview, Moreno discussed the value of networking with probation, parole and correctional officers. "The more information you have, the safer you are," Moreno said. He added "The more information you have when working gangs, the more effective you become."

Moreno started exchanging and sharing information with probation, parole and correctional officers early in his career and regularly trains his staff to do the same. One year he even volunteered to work in the Los Angeles County Jail because he understood the unbelievable amount of gang intelligence available in a custodial setting. He worked beside sheriffs' deputies, gathering information about gangs and how they communicate and operate both on the streets and when incarcerated. Moreno's work preceded the concept of police/corrections partnerships.

Moreno recently wrote a book entitled *Lessons From a Gang Cop*. It is not your usual blood and guts shoot-em-up book about gangs. It's far more than that. The book is about life, about becoming a law enforcement officer, about surviving the gang business, about surviving in a large bureaucracy. It is a lesson in life. Moreno wrote the book for his son, who followed his footsteps and became a Los Angeles police officer. In his book, Moreno presents principals for staying alive and being healthy in a very demanding, dangerous profession.

Moreno talks about three core principals that were important to his success and survival. Competency,

character and commitment. These important principals are applicable to the corrections professional. Treating all people, including inmates and parolees, with respect; learning as much as you can about the inmates and parolees you work with in order to understand their motives and actions; adjusting to constant change, avoiding "burn out" and not letting others put a ceiling on your ability to learn and grow in your profession, are all concepts Moreno writes about.

Moreno talks about respecting each other's role in the criminal justice system and the importance of trust. He writes "within law enforcement, the terms collaboration, cooperation, teamwork, sharing and exchange are commonplace but mean nothing without trust. He further discusses trust in that it supercedes rank, age, gender, ethnicity and most other factors. Trust takes time, effort and sacrifice to establish. When interviewed, Moreno discussed the need for probation and parole agencies to assign a liaison officer to police jurisdiction to facilitate the exchange of information critical to both agencies. Moreno and his squad are very aware that incidents in a correctional institution can lead to retaliatory acts on the streets and vice versa.

Moreno and his squad are constantly looking for information about parolees, probationers and inmates — who they associate with and communicate with when incarcerated and who they may turn to for assistance when suspected of a serious crime and running from the police or absconding supervision. Working together and sharing information are all steps to developing trust among individual officers and agencies.

Moreno writes about the pitfalls of working gangs and the constant adversity. He talks about getting better, not bitter. He writes about keeping your life balanced between work, family and outside interests. He also knows we cannot incarcerate our way out of the gang and crime problem and writes about being a role model and his efforts to keep kids out of gangs.

Lessons From a Gang Cop is important to the corrections professional, particularly to those working with gangs. ♦

need-to-know basis, conducting debriefings of gang members who disassociate from gangs, following up on all intelligence received from staff and other sources and keeping the chain of command apprised of all developing information pertinent to the safe and secure operation of the institution.

Partnerships and Collaboration

The sharing of information and the forming of partnerships is critical to the suppression and combating of gangs. Gangs are mobile, communicate well and know no jurisdictional boundaries. The prison and parole populations are fluid. The revolving door is always in motion. There are several kinds of partnerships operating today, including enhanced supervision of parolees and probationers, fugitive apprehension teams,

information sharing task forces, and inter-agency problem solving. Gang intelligence is critical to the success of all those programs. The police and law enforcement communities have discovered the vast amount of information correctional agencies possess. Correctional gang intelligence officers and parole and probation officers have found a place at the crime fighting table. They have become more than another base to touch during investigations. They have become proactive and are an integral component of gang suppression efforts at the local, state and national levels. And that is why correctional agencies' efforts to gather and share gang intelligence is so important to institutional and public safety.

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