Identification and classification of street gangs.

Identification and classification of street gangs is an ever-growing problem. This problem is applicable to both the urban and rural environments. There are unfortunately myriad’s of criminal organizations which exist in this country. I feel that their categorization following their identification is paramount to alleviating their scourge of criminal activity.

All too often you will hear a law enforcement officer state that a crime, or pattern of criminal activity, is gang related. Any information on street gang activity is good, but the documentation must be as meticulous as possible. Detail is the key to success, as far as documentation is concerned, when the case goes to court. To simply state a crime, or pattern of criminal activity, is gang related is not enough.

Which gang(s) were involved? What is their general or major affiliation? When did the crime(s) occur? Was it in or around a known area of intense gang activity? Was it in response to a specific event? Is it a part of an ongoing gang war? What is the motivation for the ongoing conflict? How did it originally begin? Is it commingled with events which are going on in various penal institutions in your state? These and many other questions must be addressed in order for the documentation to be authoritative and complete. This type of information is also very useful when it come time to be qualified as an expert witness in court.

Some of the most imperative areas of documentation are the general affiliation of the gangs involved and their classification. As far as general affiliation is concerned, I use the following simple formula. The gang is either a P a F or an O. P is representative of the People nation, F is representative of the Folks nation, and O is indicative of other.
I feel that if you use the three-way classification system it makes things very functional from a practical application perspective.

The “other” general affiliation is the key to the success of the formula. Most gangs you will run into, especially if they emanate from the Midwest portion of the country, will at least to some degree fall under the general groupings of People and Folks. The thing to remember is that not all criminal organization will use these titles to identify themselves. There are numerous other organizations such as prison gangs, supremacist organizations, groups involved with criminal activity due to their satanic belief system, Jamaican posse groups, traditional organized crime, Asian organized crime, Crips, Bloods, and criminal motorcycle organizations just to mention a few.

Any gang you encounter can be immediately plugged into this formula. It does not matter where they come from, how long they have been around, their major ethnic breakdown, their areas of concentration, or anything else. Once the general affiliation is documented, its time to get specific and classify the organization to the best of your ability based on any and all information you can obtain.

The classification will either be broken down into one, two, three or four levels. A level four classification is the most advantageous as all of the information available will be present. One thing to remember is that level four classifications are not always possible. To my knowledge this is only possible with three gangs. The Vice lords, the Disciples, and the Stones.

Here is the first example of a level four breakdown classification. A gang member is determined to be a Vice-lord. Immediately the member is classified under P for People, due to the fact the general or major affiliation for Vice lords is to the People nation. The
second level would be Vice lords. The third level would take into consideration the faction of Vice lord the member was from. For example is he or she a Conservative, an Unknown, an Ebony, Mafia Insane, Imperial Insane, etc. The fourth and final level would be concerned with the sub-faction. What this means is where exactly is the member from, as in what street corner and or neighborhood nickname. For the sake of argument well make this person a Conservative Vice lord from Madison and Pulaski streets.

Now we will break down a Disciple member to the fourth level. The level one classification is to the Folks nation, as Disciples have their general or major affiliation there. Level two will be Disciples. Level three will be the faction. Is the member a Black D, Gangster D, Spanish Gangster D, Latin D, etc. The fourth level is the sub-faction. For the example this person will be a Maniac Latin Disciple. The fourth and final level will be the sub-faction. Will make him from Rockwell and Potomac streets, which is known as the Twilight Zone.

The third and final example will concern itself with the Stones. Level one would be to People, as all Stones have their general affiliation to this nation. Level two would be classified as Stones. Level three would contain the faction of Stone, Puerto Rican, Black P-, Cobra, Titanic-P, etc. For the example this person will be a Puerto Rican Stone. The fourth and last level would be the sub-faction. He is a Puerto Rican Stone from Damen and Armitage streets.

As I stated earlier, level fourth breakdowns are not always possible, but whenever possible any and all information concerning gang affiliation should be documented.

When the case goes to court all this information is valuable in assisting the prosecution in
convincing the judge and or jury that the person is a bonafied gang member. This will make or break numerous criminal prosecutions.

Although it is true gang membership in and of itself is not illegal; the information concerning affiliation is of great concern when it comes to proving the motivation for the criminal conduct involved. Motivation is an extremely important factor to consider when attempting to prove the mindset of individuals who have adopted the lifestyle and belief system of hard core gang membership.

Gang Prevention Incorporated, www.gangpreventioninc.com