

**Mara Salvatrucha (MS 13)
In Montgomery County Maryland**

by

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When Douglas F. Gansler was elected State's Attorney of Montgomery County, Maryland in 1998, he shifted the focus on crime prosecution by fully implementing the concept of community prosecution. He was the first prosecutor in the nation to do so (The Prosecutor, Vol. 34, No. 4, July/August 2000). He also became the only elected State's Attorney in Maryland to designate an Assistant State's Attorney as a gang prosecutor. This article addresses the presence of the gang Mara Salvatrucha in Montgomery County, Maryland in fiscal year 2003 (7-1-2002 through 6-30-2003).

Montgomery County is a jurisdiction of over 900,000 people, approximately 500 square miles in land area, on the northwest border of Washington, D.C. In 1991 the Washington Times ran an article entitled "L.A. Warns D.C.: Watch Salvadoran Gangs" (Jan. 8, 1991, p. A1). The article addressed the violent nature of the L.A. gang Mara Salvatrucha, stating "...they are among the city's deadliest."

Mara Salvatrucha was originally formed by illegal El Salvadoran immigrant youths in the 1980's in Los Angeles, California. Nearly one million refugees fled the civil war-torn El Salvador between 1984 and 1992 to settle in the United States, primarily in Los Angeles. By 1995, the Washington Metroplex area was home to approximately 250,000 illegal Salvadoran immigrants. This influx made the Washington area the second

largest Salvadoran population outside of El Salvador (See “Drugs and Crime Profile: Mara Salvatrucha Gang”, National Drug Intelligence Center, November, 2002).

Mara Salvatrucha, a Hispanic street gang with thousands of members in at least six countries, is a growing threat within the Montgomery County area. Also referred to as “MS 13”, the gang is involved in a range of criminal activity including extremely smuggling, transporting and distributing drugs. Members of Mara Salvatrucha are often extremely violent, principally against members of rival gangs. The gang traditionally has been composed of loosely affiliated groups known as “cliques”; however, increased coordination of criminal activity has been seen between Mara Salvatrucha cliques in the Washington, D.C. area and cliques in other regions of the country. This indicates that the gang may be attempting to develop a national control structure.

A 1994 report from the Vice and Intelligence Section of the Department of Police listed Mara Salvatrucha as being located within two (2) of the six (6) county police districts. The number of members and types of criminal activities were unknown to police (A Handbook of Gangs in Montgomery County, January, 1994). In calendar year 2002, Montgomery County Police acknowledge Mara Salvatrucha in all six police districts (2002 Assessment of Reported Gang Activity, May, 2003).

In fiscal year 2003, the State’s Attorney’s Office prosecuted forty-two (42) known MS 13 members. That figure includes twenty-seven (27) adults and fifteen (15) juveniles. Assaults were the predominant crime at seventeen (17). A knife was used in sixteen (16) cases. Other crimes include: one (1) rape; one (1) murder (3 co-defendants); seven (7) auto theft, one (1) carjacking; two (2) possession of alcohol; two (2) possession of controlled dangerous substance; and two (2) disorderly conduct. In addition to knives, other weapons used were handguns, shotguns, brass knuckles, a razor, and a rock.

The following are cliques that have been identified in Montgomery County:

CLCS	Coranado Locos Cyco Salvatrucha
VL	Virginia Locos or Vatos Locos
TLS	Trece Locos Salvatrucha
SM	San Miguel Salvatrucha
CPL	100% Latino
LM	Latin Mafia
LPS	Langley Park Salvatrucha
BLS	Barrios Locos Salvatrucha
HLS	Hollywood Locos Salvatrucha
SLSW	Sailors Locos Salvatrucha
NS	Northside Locos Salvatrucha
WSL	Westside Locos Salvatrucha
NLS	Norte Loco Salvatrucha

One of the duties of the gang prosecutor is to photograph and collect gang graffiti and other indicators of gang activity. The following photographs depict Mara Salvatrucha graffiti in five of the six police districts

in Montgomery County.

Photos 1 and 2 were taken in Gaithersburg on May 7, 2003. The graffiti was located on the wall of an apartment complex less than a mile from the Gaithersburg City police station. Specifically in photo 2 two cliques, Sailors and Norte are depicted. Similar photos were taken on January 15, 2003 underneath the Capital Beltway in Silver Spring. Depicted here is a roll call of SLSW members, including a "Mister Short", and "Maloso". Also depicted was the clique name "San Miguel".

Photos 3 and 4 were also taken in the Silver Spring area of Montgomery County. Photo 5 was on a retaining wall in front of a single family residence. Photo 5 shows SLSW. Photo 6 was taken on New Hampshire Avenue close to where Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and the District of Columbia meet. The LPS clique is shown in this photo.

Photos 5 and 6 were taken in the Rockville district on March 15, 2003. The location is a bus kiosk in front of a shopping center on Randolph Road, a major east-west highway. Photo 6 clearly shows four cliques represented in this graffiti.

On October 1, 2002, there was a stabbing in Wheaton. The victim identified one of his assailants as "Elmer". The Bethesda district gang coordinator was contacted and was able to provide a full name for "Elmer". A single photo of "Elmer" was shown the victim, who positively identified "Elmer" as the person who held him as he was stabbed by the second assailant. "Elmer" was arrested and charged with assault. As part of the plea bargain, he identified the second assailant as "Maloso". This is the same "Maloso" who is depicted in a roll call of SLSW members in photos of the MS-13 graffiti in Montgomery County. "Maloso" was convicted at a jury trial of first degree assault, conspiracy to commit first degree assault and carrying a concealed weapon, the knife.

This article shows a significant presence of Mara Salvatrucha in Montgomery County Maryland. Mara Salvatrucha is a growing criminal threat to Montgomery County. The gang's rapid spread in Montgomery County suggests that Mara Salvatrucha will remain among the most threatening street gangs in the country. Indications that previously independent cliques are forming alliances to facilitate criminal activity heighten the threat. The appointment of a gang prosecutor by Mr. Gansler has allowed the State's Attorney's Office to be proactive in the identification and prosecution of Mara Salvatrucha members.