North Carolina Department of Public Safety

MEMORANDUM

TO:

Chairs, Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety
Chairs, House of Appropriations Committee on Justice and Public Safety
Chairs, Senate Appropriations Committee on Justice and Public Safety

FROM:

Eddie M. Buffaloe, Jr., Secretary

RE:

North Carolina GangNet Annual Report

DATE:

March 7, 2023

Pursuant to NC Gen. Stat § 20-196.5, please find attached the *GangNet Annual Report*. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

This report, which is being submitted by the North Carolina Department of Public Safety was completed by the Special Operations and Intelligence Unit (SOIU), which is a part of the newly created Department of Adult Correction (DAC). Prior to DAC becoming a seperate State Agency, GangNet was housed within SOIU, which was tasked with completing this report as a division of DPS. Because GangNet continues to be housed within DAC, SOIU completed the report for 2023.

NORTH CAROLINA GANGNET
Annual Report

2022 - 2023

Jeff Sipes, Chief of Field Operations

Jennifer Harmon, GangNet Administrator - East

Jennifer Holste, GangNet Administrator - West

Megan Hayes, Administrative Specialist

Marissa Kincaid, Investigative Analyst

February 2023

Preface:

The North Carolina Department of Adult Correction, Special Operations and Intelligence Unit (SOIU) is responsible for operational procedures and the processing of intelligence for the Department that impacts the general public, staff and offenders under the authority of the Department.

In addition, the section's responsibilities include identifying appropriate goals, objectives, standards, strategies and technologies used, coordinating and directing activities of both Prison and Community Corrections staff, and overseeing the collection, analysis and sharing of intelligence information.

SOIU is also responsible for monitoring and managing offenders who have been identified as having affiliations with Security Risk Groups (SRG). The unit provides training to Department staff, law enforcement agencies and maintains databases used to track and identify gang members who are incarcerated and/or under supervision within our communities. The unit is responsible for establishing procedures to gather, monitor, coordinate and track intelligence information necessary to counter planned criminal activities by offenders and to manage SRG efforts. As of July 2020, SOIU became the primary administrative authority for the North Carolina GangNet database which allows the section to manage and track gang-related intelligence both inside and outside of corrections. This merger also allows for a more centralized location for all the state's gang intelligence.

Gang research in North Carolina began in 1997 by the North Carolina Criminal Justice Analysis Center (NCCJAC) of the Governor's Crime Commission (GCC) which conducted surveys and produced reports. In the early 2000s, additional funding provided several large metropolitan agencies in North Carolina the opportunity to use GangNet. Since 2009, GangNet has been the overall source of gang intelligence and reports for the General Assembly. Session Law 2008-187 Section 7 states that the Governor's Crime Commission was to submit an annual update to the General Assembly on statewide levels of gangs, gang membership, and gang associates in North Carolina. Before 2020, GangNet was managed by the North Carolina State Highway Patrol, which initiated a Field Liaison (FLO) program throughout the state. The program allowed for the expansion and training of GangNet to law enforcement users across the state. In 2021, the Special Operations and Intelligence Unit established several new projects, created new positions, and developed additional policies and procedures.

Scope and Methodology:

The United States Department of Justice defines a gang as:

> *"(1) an association of three or more individuals; (2) whose members collectively identify themselves by adopting a group identity which they use to create an atmosphere of fear or intimidation frequently by employing one or more of the following: a common name, slogan, identifying sign, symbol, tattoo or other physical marking, style or color of clothing, hairstyle, hand sign or graffiti; (3) the association's purpose, in part, is to engage in criminal activity and the association uses violence or intimidation to further its criminal objectives; (4) its members engage in criminal activity, or acts of juvenile delinquency that if committed by an adult would be crimes; (5) with the intent to enhance or preserve the association's power, reputation, or economic resources; (6) the association may also possess some of the following characteristics: (a) the members employ rules for joining and operating within the association; (b) the members meet on a recurring basis; (c) the association provides physical protection of its members from other criminals and gangs; (d) the association seeks to exercise control over a particular location or region, or it may simply defend its perceived interests against rivals; or (e) the association has an identifiable structure. (7) this definition is not intended to include traditional organized crime groups such as La Cosa Nostra, groups that fall within the Department's definition of "international organized crime," drug trafficking organizations or terrorist organizations."*

GangNet is a web-based platform and database which is managed by the NC DAC Special Operations and Intelligence Unit. In accordance with federal intelligence guidelines, all information is housed on a secure server. Users must be employed in a law enforcement capacity and further be certified to enter or view the information contained within the database. Certification includes a thorough knowledge of the laws and protocols required for gang member entry. Once entered, GangNet allows certified officers and agencies the ability to share non-discoverable and non-evidentiary information on validated gang members and affiliates.

Reporting functions allow for the analysis of both gang data and certified user data. This report primarily focuses on data for the calendar year 2022, which was analyzed by SOIU GangNet staff in February of 2023. All reported data contained herein is derived from both GangNet and SOIU internal databases.

Executive Summary:

The North Carolina Department of Adult Correction, Special Operations and Intelligence Unit intends to continue to expand the use of the statewide GangNet database through continued training and promotion. Continued changes will allow for more accurate data analysis, resulting in increased knowledge of trends and reduction techniques among current members. Throughout this report, we will discuss and review our accomplishments for 2022, trends, and goals for 2023 with appropriate recommendations.

Goals for 2022: Recap

The goals for 2022 included several simultaneous processes to clean up current data, restrict user ability to enter inconsistent information, expand user knowledge, and expand overall users within the database. To achieve these goals, GangNet Administrators began inputting recently validated gang members by DAC into GangNet on a monthly basis, utilizing analysts' help. Additionally, SOIU started sending out and going through monthly purge lists so agencies can update their gang data in a timely manner. To maintain compliance, SOIU began updating gang records in the system to reflect House Bill 138 criteria. Distribution lists are also now being updated to purge any email addresses that are no longer in use.

The 2022 goals were facilitated by:

GangNet Administrative Specialist: Megan Hayes began her career with the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction in March of 2020 as an Administrative Associate for the Office of the Deputy Secretary, Division of Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice. In February of 2021, she joined the Special Operations and Intelligence Unit as the GangNet Administrative Specialist. With a background in administration, she works alongside the Special Operations Investigation Supervisor to manage the intelligence section of SOIU in daily functions. Megan holds an Associate's Degree in Criminal Justice Technology from Wake Technical Community College and is currently working towards a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice with a concentration in Administration at Western Carolina University.

GangNet Administrator - East: Jennifer Harmon has a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from Old Dominion University, a Juris Doctorate from Appalachian School of Law, as well as a professional certificate in Dispute Resolution/Arbitration from Humboldt University in Berlin. Jennifer's capstone research on Gender Disparity in Criminal Offenses Among Persons of High IQ was published in the International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology. Jennifer is also in the process of obtaining her Ph.D. in Forensic Psychology. Before joining NCDAC, Jennifer worked in many other law enforcement positions including NYC Patrol Officer, NYC Intel Probation Officer, and was a founding officer of the Cyber Intelligence Unit in New York City. Currently, Jennifer is assigned to the Special Operations and Intelligence Unit as a Criminal Investigator for GangNet.

GangNet Administrator - West: Jenni Holste has a Bachelor of Science in Sociology and Criminology from Florida Southern College as well as a Master of Science in Criminal Justice from Armstrong Atlantic State University. She began her career with the Department of Adult Correction as a Probation Parole Officer in 2012 specializing as a Security Risk Group Intelligence Officer conducting investigations and validations as well as supervising Validated Offenders. In 2019, she was promoted to Chief Probation Parole Officer where she supervised SRG Intelligence Officers. Jenni transitioned to the Special Operations and Intelligence Unit in 2021 as a Criminal Investigator for GangNet. Additionally, Jenni has been a member of the North Carolina Gang Investigators Association since 2015 where she was the Region 1 Coordinator until being voted in as Vice President of Administration in 2021.

Criminal Specialist/Investigator III: Marissa Kincaid has a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Minor in Criminal Justice from Appalachian State University. Marissa began her career with the Department of Public Safety as a Probation and Parole Officer in 2018. In 2021, she transitioned to Special Operations and Intelligence Unit as an Extradition Officer. In 2022 she moved into her new role as a Criminal Analyst.

Accomplishments for 2022:

Policy and Procedure, Training, Communication, Partnerships.

- Policy and Procedure: New policy was developed to ensure uniformity across all agencies and users within North Carolina. Additionally, standardized digital forms were implemented to better manage both current and new users. With digitization, new databases were developed to hold secure information. By adding certificates of completion, new users and administrators can document the completion of advanced training.
- Training: SOIU held 49 training classes in 2022 which added 374 new users to GangNet. These trainings were conducted at local community colleges throughout the state, local departments, and in cooperation with North Carolina Gang Investigators Association (NCGIA). In addition to the 75 counties in North Carolina that utilize GangNet, 79 counties are now represented.
- Communication: Three new email distribution lists were created to enhance gang intelligence sharing across the state. In total, 2,547 law enforcement officials were added to receive alerts, notifications, and intelligence products. Additionally, a GangNet proxy email was created to help users with administrative requests.
- Partnerships: Throughout 2022, SOIU partnered with several outside agencies to promote increased usage and knowledge of the validation process. This included a booth at the NCGIA annual Gang Investigator Conference which included over 400 law enforcement personnel. GangNet Investigators were also represented at the Jail Administrators Conference and the South Carolina Gang Investigator's Conference.

- Agency Assistance: GangNet Investigators recognized a need for assistance to smaller agencies in gang validation. In response, SOIU developed a validation assistance packet that can be used to assist agencies in developing their own policies and procedures in accordance with General Statute. Investigators met with these agencies and worked hands-on to mentor and accomplish agency needs.

Trends:

Data is analyzed along several data points for the individual jurisdictions and across the entire state. GangNet reports include those for the majority of gangs, individual member totals, totals by county or region, member age, member race/ethnicity, and law enforcement usage. Numbers only reflect the jurisdictions trained to enter information, rather than view only. Also, GangNet does not produce historical reports and only represents the totals at the time the report was run, in this case, February 2023.

Throughout 2022, administrators worked to clean up old or inconsistent data. This included ombining duplicate gangs and removing those that had zero members. Based on federal regulation, if the information is not updated every five years, that information will be automatically purged from the system. This means that gang members are deleted, but duplicate gangs remain. This data scrub was done to clean up unnecessary data so that accurate numbers are displayed going forward.
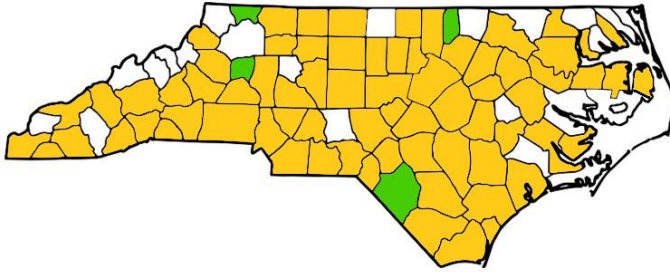
Gang Totals:

Reports obtained from GangNet data reporting in February of 2023 show a total of 374 gangs reported across the state.

Analysis: A gang is determined by those who maintain a membership of more than three (3) members. Before 2021, historical gang information maintained in the GangNet system was determined by users from various jurisdictions. Rises in the number of gangs statewide can be attributed to several factors. Users could previously add new gangs based on their location or any different attributes they determined. This means that duplicates of the same gang were often entered from one end of the state to the other, regardless of their common name and hierarchy.

Due to the changes made by SOIU, a total of 761 inactive gangs were purged from the system due to a lack of membership data and the remaining were merged correspondingly with the same gang across multiple jurisdictions. These changes in membership data can be attributed to several different factors; Including data that has aged beyond the 5 years of retention and agencies who may have stopped entering or updating records within the state system.

GangNet Usage:

2021 vs. 2022

Analysis: Counties in North Carolina that are presently using GangNet are indicated on this map in yellow. There are now 21 counties without access after four additional counties were introduced in 2022. GangNet is now being used in 79 of North Carolina's 100 counties.

Goals for 2023:

Training and Partnerships

- Training: SOIU hopes to build on the success of 2022 and add users to the 21 additional counties to ensure all 100 counties are represented. Quarterly training will be offered at community colleges around the state to afford smaller agencies a chance to participate in remote areas.

- Partnerships: SOIU intends to partner with NCGIA to have as many certified law enforcement agencies as possible attend the Basic and Advanced Gang Investigator Course. To accomplish this, trainers have begun utilizing those courses to include entry-level GangNet. Additional goals include providing standardized validation packets for agencies that are unfamiliar with or currently not validating gang members within their jurisdictions. SOIU intends to be represented at multiple law enforcement conferences including the NC Gang Investigators Conference, Jail Administrators Conference, Field Liaisons Conference, and will provide guest speakers at the North Carolina Probation/Parole Association Conference.