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Gendarmerie royale du Canada

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**BRIEFING NOTE
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**NOTE D'INFORMATION
SÉCURITÉ PUBLIQUE ET
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**CACP Organized Crime Committee - Communications Document
A/Comm MacIntyre, "E" Division CROPS**

Issue: ORGANIZED CRIME & GANGS AND VIOLENCE

OVERVIEW:

The overwhelming majority of the organized crime groups based in British Columbia are involved in some aspect of the drug trade, principally trafficking and distribution and activities related to drug trafficking, including acts of violence, extortion and intimidation. In some cases, the profits generated have enabled some criminal organizations to engage in other criminal activities, and has allowed several of them to expand into other criminal enterprises that may have previously been well beyond their reach.

In light of the continuing upward trend in illicit synthetic drug production and trafficking, and well-known situation regarding marihuana cultivation, distribution and cross-border exportation, and cocaine importation, distribution and trafficking, it is not surprising numerous organized crime groups and their associates who operate in British Columbia / Yukon Territory are predominantly involved in all aspects of these drug economies.

Interconnected and cross-linked, British Columbia-based organized crime groups continue to be prominent in organized and sophisticated marihuana cultivation, production and brokering operations. They are also heavily involved in the various aspects of the illicit synthetic drug industry, from importation and / or diversion of precursor chemicals, to chemical brokers and manufacturers. Both commodities are moved through interprovincial and international transport and distribution networks. While cross-border marihuana exportation is well documented as being inextricably linked to cocaine importation, the movement of illicit synthetic drugs and their precursors is becoming increasingly correlated. The importation of weapons is peripherally linked to the cross-border movement of marihuana and illicit synthetic chemical drugs.

Among the more compelling highlights of the changing nature of organized crime in British Columbia has been the continuing level of influence, inter-connectivity and / or linkages between all the organized crime groups identified in the province. These relationships have provided opportunities for some organized crime groups to expand in to other areas outside the lower mainland and some groups have been able to form criminal cells in other provinces. A portion of British Columbia-based groups are also connected in a significant manner to organized crime groups in other provinces, the USA and other countries.

In particular, many members and associates of organized crime groups from across the Pacific Northwest Region (E, M, K, G, F, D Divisions) are inter-connected have been observed socializing and / or conducting criminal activities in the Lower Mainland, Calgary, Edmonton, Regina and Winnipeg. Greater Vancouver's restaurants, entertainment areas and clubs are popular venues for gang members and associates from across the Region to gather.

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2010-06-17

VIOLENCE

Outlook:

There are signs of continued levels of influence, inter-connectivity and / or linkages between all the organized crime groups identified in British Columbia and with criminal groups in other provinces and countries.

Migration of organized crime groups / gangs from one community to another also involves exporting existing conflicts between groups in the lower mainland and importing them to other smaller communities, which will have implications for law enforcement there.

The expansion of organized crime groups / gangs to more rural areas of the province is expected to continue, because drug turf takeovers have been, on the whole, remarkably successful and there appear to have been only several rather short-lived clashes with the resident group(s).

An overall decreased availability and increased price of cocaine, as well as internal and external disputes, retaliation for drug rips and debts, and competition for drug supply and turf, have been contributing factors to the spate of gang-related violence witnessed in metro Vancouver in recent years. On the whole, these incidents have been committed by, within and / or against the lower level associate ranks and there has been little affect on the criminal operations of upper echelon and higher ranking organized crime groups.

Gang members and associates all have ready access to firearms and many have access to / are involved in the trafficking of weapons. There were 276 incidents of drive-by shootings in 2009, many without regard for public safety. Organized crime related homicides appear to be slightly lower in number compared to previous years.

- Violence - including homicide, contract killings, kidnaping, vicious ordered assaults, extortion and arson - continues to be the hallmark of all levels of the drug economy, specifically as it relates to marijuana, cocaine and illicit synthetic chemical drugs
- many of these violent incidents appear to be challenges for control of turf, market share, gang leadership and criminal hierarchy. There exists compelling examples of how gang members and associates within the drug trade also use acts of violence to instill fear and intimidation
- these offences are largely committed by, within and / or against the lower level associate ranks, who are embroiled in internal and external disputes, retaliation for drug rips and debts, and competition for drug supply and turf. These acts are often sanctioned or ordered by higher ranking organized crime and gang members
- most organized crime groups victimize their own members and associates. However, occasionally this violence spills over in to the community at large. It is common to find firearms in the hands of criminals
- an overall decreased availability and increased price of cocaine has also been thought to have been a contributing factor to the spate of gang-related violence. As competition for cocaine to supply dial-a-dope lines increased, traffickers were unable to pay drug debts, and made them vulnerable to vicious assaults, homicides, drug rips and retaliation. It also presented several criminal groups with opportunities for drug territory expansion
- Of particular concern is the number of incidents of gun play occurring overtly, often during daytime hours, with little regard for public safety, and witnessed most markedly in metro Vancouver over the last several years
 - reckless drive-by shootings, for example, is one of the more prevailing occurrences. There were 276 incidents of gun shots fired in the lower mainland area of British Columbia in 2009
- the overwhelming majority of organized crime related homicides occur in the lower mainland area of British Columbia. The number of organized crime related homicides for 2009 / 2010 is slightly below the previous two (2) years
- ironically, the criminal operations of the upper echelon players has not been significantly affected by the number of incidents of gang violence. On the whole, rivalry between upper echelon criminal organizations has not materialized and they continue to co-exist, overall, rather peaceably

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BRIEFING NOTE
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**NUMBER OF ORGANIZED CRIME GROUPS / GANGS, THEIR MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES
OPERATING IN THE PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(November 2009)**

SUMMARY:

- there are 133 organized crime groups / gangs operating in the province of British Columbia;
- nearly 800 organized crime / gang members and associates are represented in these groups.
- over thirty (30) Street Gangs, which bear the hallmarks of having some longevity in criminal activity(s), have been identified and comprise an additional 200 - 300 members and associates.

DETAILS:

The 2009 Integrated Provincial Threat Assessment (a Strategic Approach to Addressing Organized and Serious Crime)¹ indicates there are 133 organized crime groups / gangs operating in the province of British Columbia. Although some groups possess long term, institutional membership, others operate with such fluidity and speed, it is difficult to define, determine and substantiate the composition of the group in terms of members and associates. In addition, past associates of one group have been known to join another group, and the transition is not immediately obvious or verifiable.

Members of criminal organizations which bear the hallmarks of longevity, such as the Hells Angels whose members number just over 100, are often held together by practices which coerce obedience to hold the group together and / or protect the members of the group from direct engagement in criminal activity. These practices may include violence, intimidation and other sanctions, and often extend to close associates and underlings. A number of organized crime groups are known to utilize such tactics, including the UN Gang, Independent Soldiers, the Red Scorpion / Bacon Brothers and a large number of Independent, Middle Eastern, and Asian criminal organizations. Such solidarity has allowed several groups to expand their operations and achieve some prominence in the landscape of organized crime in the province.

The overwhelming majority of the criminal organizations / gangs also possess an interconnectedness with other crime groups / gangs. It is not always readily apparent where one group "ends" and another "begins", creating ambiguity when defining "membership" or "associateship". Often times, various members / associates of different crime groups / gangs may come together in loose, amorphous, transitory associations with other groups or networks to facilitate a successful criminal undertaking. Many members of organized crime groups draw upon other organized crime groups as external resources or as partners for necessary expertise. Commonly, these collaborations are a one-time effort and fragile in composition. When successful, these individuals may regroup for another enterprise or simply disperse. The precise nature and extent of "associateness" or "membership" is not always clear.

That said, the report lists nearly 800 organized crime / gang members and their associates².

¹ Produced by the Criminal Intelligence Service of British Columbia / Yukon Territory, April 2009

² This figure reflects criminal organizations whose existence and membership have been *formally documented* by law enforcement agencies. It is not an estimate of the *actual* number of organized crime groups in the province, which is an indeterminate figure but one which is likely significantly greater than the range of known organized crime groups / gangs



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In addition to these 133 organized crime groups / gangs, there are a large number of Street Gangs whose membership is even less clearly defined and enumerated. Factors such as common ethnicity, blood relationships, and geographic origins may play a role in the "creation" of a Street Gang. However, despite their potential, these groups tend to have an even greater level of fluidity in their membership than the organized crime groups / gangs listed in the 2009 Integrated Provincial Threat Assessment.

The number of Street Gangs identified is continuously changing, often reflecting the lack of strong bonds which foster solidarity and cohesiveness between individuals within the group and between the individuals and the organization, as well as the links of collaboration with other gangs / crime groups. Identification of Street Gangs is further hampered by the level of strategy they employ and reflective of their youth - tending to be somewhat impulsive and desirous of exploiting immediate opportunities for criminal activity. As a result, many of these gangs dissolve nearly as quickly as they form.

That said, over thirty (30) Street Gangs have been identified to date, which appear to bear some of the hallmarks of longevity. They almost exclusively operate in the Greater Vancouver area. Although most groups have only a handful of members and associates, a few have as many as thirty (30).

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