



## The Star-Ledger

### Sweeps net 28 reputed gangsters

**Bloods factions are targeted in 2 separate roundups across North Jersey**

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An army of federal and state law enforcement personnel swarmed across Newark, Paterson and other North Jersey communities yesterday in separate assaults on two of the state's most deadly factions of the Bloods street gang.

Federal agents joined the Essex County Prosecutor's Office in rounding up 15 alleged members of the 9 Tre Gangsters in Newark, the culmination of a yearlong investigation of gun and drug sales at two public housing complexes.

In a separate sweep, the New Jersey State Police charged 13 alleged members of a Sex Money Murder faction operating in Passaic and Bergen counties. Authorities said the gang held sway in a central Paterson neighborhood so violent that residents dubbed it Murderville.

The two operations reflect a heightened emphasis on New Jersey's gang problem on the part of state and federal law enforcement agencies, which have added their muscle to overburdened local authorities.

"The message has to be clear now: If you are involved in illegal gang activity, we have the resources to begin pushing back," Newark Mayor Cory Booker said in a news conference yesterday at the U.S. Attorney's Office. "We will win this battle."

The operation in Passaic and Bergen was the second the State Police have mounted this year against Sex Money Murder, a highly organized gang that state authorities said operates in all 21 counties and is directed by a state committee. In February, troopers arrested 17 suspected leaders of the gang that had been operating in Trenton, Asbury Park, Long Branch and other Central Jersey communities.

"This murderous set of the Bloods has terrorized neighborhoods throughout New Jersey," First Assistant Attorney General Anne Milgram said in announcing yesterday's arrests. "Today's arrests take us one step closer to ending their violent reign."

She said that among those arrested were three members of the gang's state committee: Lorenzo White, 38, of Hackensack; Anthony Carter, 40, of Paterson; and Terrence Byrd, 34, whose address was unavailable.

Earlier this month, the state Division of Criminal Justice announced a state grand jury indictment accusing 46 alleged members of the 9 Tre Gangsters -- including the gang's imprisoned leader, David Allen -- of running a statewide narcotics trafficking network.

The federal government is also committing new resources to the effort, especially in eastern Essex County, which experts say has one of the worst gang problems in the Northeast.

The investigation of the 9 Tre Gangsters in Newark was a collaboration of the prosecutor's gang and narcotics unit, the county sheriff's department, the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

While the prosecutor's office spearheaded the investigation, all but three of the defendants are to be prosecuted in federal court, where penalties for drug and weapons charges tend to be heavier than on the state level.

In a county where local and federal authorities have not always fulfilled their promises to work together in fighting crime, it was more than symbolic that County Prosecutor Paula Dow, Sheriff Armando Fontoura and Newark Police Director Garry McCarthy announced the charges in the office of U.S. Attorney Christopher Christie.

"We're all working together to make a difference for the people of the city of Newark," Christie said. "What we are doing is taking violent felons off the streets."

Dow and Christie announced the formation of a federal-state task force in February 2006, with Christie saying candidly that the gang problem had been allowed to spiral out of control because of local inaction. The arrests yesterday were the result of that partnership, officials said.

The investigation targeted the 9 Tre Gangsters' control of drug and weapons sales at two Newark public housing complexes, Stephen Crane Village and the Fairview Homes.

Gang members not only peddled cocaine and heroin from apartments in the two complexes; operatives for the ATF were able to make undercover buys of what the bureau's special agent in charge of the New York region, William McMahon, called "military-grade weapons."

"They were not only peddling their poison," McMahon said. "They had the armaments needed to create a lot of violence."

One of the defendants, Omar Curry, 30, described as a five-star general, the No. 2 position in the gang, was accused of selling a Chinese-made SKS assault rifle for \$1,200 to a cooperating witness.

Another reputed member, Eric Hayes, 34, was charged with selling a fully automatic SKS that McMahon said could squeeze off 40 rounds with a single pull of the trigger.

All told, three cooperating witnesses purchased 14 firearms, 560 grams of cocaine and smaller amounts of heroin in 20 transactions conducted with gang members and their associates, according to the charges.

More than 150 law enforcement personnel, including many from the ATF and DEA, took part in the arrests early yesterday. The people arrested were processed at the West Orange Armory in West Orange, which was used as a command post for the operation.

Dow said the arrests sent a warning to gang members that "we are going to watch you intently, we are going to arrest you unexpectedly and we are going to prosecute you extensively."

But Booker cautioned that the operation was only a start in taking the city back from the gangs.

"In this game, every inch of ground you take has to be earned," he said. "Today, we took a foot or two. We know this battle is not won. This is a temporary victory."

The others charged in the 9 Tre Gangster case, all residents of Newark, were Shakir Lovestorm, 43; Jesus Hernandez, 36; Harry Quiah, 23; Shaheed Curry, 24; David McCleave, 37; John Curry, 31; Quazine Robinson, 28; Doug Bateman, 21; William Garcia, 52; Razan Campbell, 25; and Tarik Major, 33. The names of two suspects arrested on state charges were not available.

Others charged as members of Sex Money Murder were Brian Barrett, 37, of Paterson; Franklin Mitchell, 36, of Lincoln Park; and Henry Lopez, 27; Leo Reed, 34; Jermaine Linder, 34; and Kasimu Shomari, 43, whose addresses were unavailable. The names of four other defendants were not disclosed because they are fugitives.

*Star-Ledger staff writer Russell Ben-Ali contributed to this article.*

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