



E70 Keeping Safe: Understanding Violence Against Law Enforcement by Youth Street Gangs

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be able to understand the signs and symptoms of the ever-growing problem of gang violence against law enforcement and the forensic science community so they may keep themselves safe while investigating the deaths of youth street gang members.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by educating and ultimately keeping the forensic science and law enforcement community safe out on the streets while investigating the deaths of youth street gang members.

Within the past 13 months, violence toward law enforcement has increased by 85%, according to the Department of Justice. In some metropolitan areas of the United States, this figure is nearly 115%. One cannot turn on the television or radio without hearing about another officer-involved shooting in this country. In Los Angeles County, CA, alone, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) have increased helicopter patrols and 911 screenings in wake of the recent police ambushes.

Youth street gangs throughout the United States still continue to terrorize the neighborhoods they claim as their own, causing the citizens in these gang-infested neighborhoods to live in constant fear of their lives every single day; however, a new trend on the streets is making a fake 911 call, then ambushing law enforcement as they respond to these fictitious calls for help. As law enforcement responds to the location of the scene, youth gangs are now using urban style tactical warfare learned from the military, using that training against law enforcement as they respond to the scene, seriously injuring or killing officers. Whereas in the past, youth gangs would retreat when confronted by law enforcement, they are now advancing toward law enforcement while shooting, using the same tactics as the officers themselves use, such as "slicing the pie" or "button hook." There are other various forms of urban tactical warfare learned in the military and the police academy that the gang members are learning on a daily basis and using against the police.

In 2016 in Los Angeles County, there were a total of 465 shots fired at police, and between January 1, 2017, and July 1, 2017, there have been a total of 688 shots fired at police. Of those shots fired so far in 2017, 93% were "gang related," yet in the year 2016, only 88% were "gang related." This is a serious "officer safety" concern for law enforcement who respond to these gang-related violence calls on a daily basis. Why are these gang members shooting at police?

This study interviewed 150 Los Angeles gang members on the streets and in the jails between January 2016 and July 2017 as to why they would decide to shoot at law enforcement. This study identified 10 distinct manifestations of these shootings against police and 12 solutions to help keep officers safe while out on the streets investigating these gang-related shootings. A sample of the findings include: distinct cultural differences between African American, Latino, and Asian American gangs as to why they engage violently with the police; state of mind (motivation) of the various gangs; disrespect felt toward police while being questioned, detained, or arrested; covert and overt racism experienced by the gang members; a "getting even" mentality; and being male or female in the gang.

All of these findings culminate in the recent influx of violence against law enforcement by gang members. In Los Angeles County alone, there are 1,351 documented gangs with a gang membership of more than 800,000. Across the country, similar results have been seen, according to the National Gang Crime Research Center in Peotone IL. There are more than 28,800 gangs in the United States with a total gang membership of 975,000. Of those, 90% are male and 10% are female. The ethnic composition nationwide include: 47% Latino, 31% African American, 13% Caucasian, 7% Asian, and 2% "mixed race," according to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the United States Department of Justice.

Youth Street Gangs, Law Enforcement, Officer Safety