



Drugs and Crime

Gang Profile

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U. S. D E P A R T M E N T O F J U S T I C E

Vice Lord Nation

Vice Lord Nation (VLN) is one of the largest and most violent associations of street gangs in the United States. VLN is a collection of structured gangs located in 28 states, primarily in the Great Lakes, Southeast, and West Central regions of the country, with an estimated 30,000 to 35,000 members and associate members. Most members are African American males from the Chicago metropolitan area. The gangs' main source of income is the street-level distribution of powdered cocaine, crack cocaine, heroin, and marijuana. The gangs also are involved in many other types of criminal activity including assault, burglary, drive-by shooting, extortion, homicide, identification fraud, and robbery.

Background

Vice Lord Nation, originally called the Conservative Vice Lords (CVL), was formed in a suburb of Chicago in 1958. A group of juveniles who had met at the Illinois State Training School for Boys in St.

Charles, Illinois, founded the gang on Chicago's South Side to provide protection from other gangs and for profit. The gang initially consisted of 10 to 20 African American members but quickly grew through the recruitment of new members and by absorbing smaller gangs in the neighborhood.

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Vice Lords logo.

During the 1960s CVL developed a loose structure and added new members in an effort to control the neighborhood and protect itself from rival gangs. Initially there were no formal leadership positions, but there were recognized leaders who acquired influence through their personal charisma. The gang's leadership focused on increasing membership by recruiting young men not affiliated with other gangs, by absorbing smaller gangs, and by entering into alliances with gangs that were at war with CVL rivals. The growth in membership increased CVL's strength and prestige, allowing it to further expand its criminal operations.

In the early 1970s the gang continued to increase in size in Chicago and became heavily

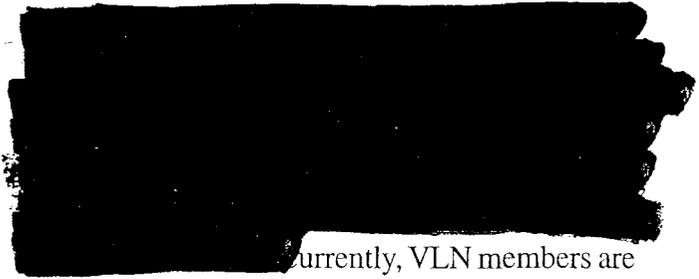
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involved in the distribution of drugs, particularly amphetamine and marijuana. In 1971 CVL expanded from a single gang into an association of numerous VLN gangs. Although CVL remains the largest gang in the VLN, other significant gangs that emerged include Mafia Insane Vice Lords (MIVL), Four Corner Hustlers (4CH), Traveling Vice Lords (TVL), and Unknown Vice Lords (UVL), all of which are still active. By the mid-1970s VLN gangs were distributing significant amounts of cocaine throughout most of Chicago's West Side. By the late 1970s VLN's prominence in drug distribution and violent crime resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of many of its leaders and the subsequent weakening of the gangs that compose VLN.

In the early 1980s VLN was still weakened by the imprisonment of many of its leaders. By the middle of the decade, however, VLN gangs had established control of the distribution of cocaine and heroin on Chicago's West Side and were moving into the North Side and South Side. VLN members then began to migrate to neighboring states, expanding the VLN's drug distribution operations. By 1989 VLN gangs were transporting and distributing powdered cocaine, crack cocaine, heroin, and marijuana in eight states.

During the 1990s VLN membership, territory, and drug distribution activities continued to increase, making it one of the largest associations of street gangs in the United States. VLN membership grew to over 30,000 individuals residing in cities throughout the United States. VLN gangs used intimidation tactics against their own members as well as rival gangs and law enforcement in order to control and further expand drug distribution. In addition, the gangs began to interact directly with Nigerian and Mexican drug trafficking organizations in order to smuggle heroin and powdered cocaine into the country.

VLN remains one of the largest and most violent street gang associations in Chicago and throughout much of the United States. In February 2000 VLN leaders decided to reorganize to improve the coordination of drug distribution operations. In 2001 several high-ranking members were released from prison, resulting in a reorganization and an attempt to formally coordinate the various VLN gangs. [REDACTED]



Currently, VLN members are suspected of smuggling multikilogram amounts of powdered cocaine and heroin into the country for distribution to 28 states, primarily in the Great Lakes, Southeast, and West Central regions.

Alliances

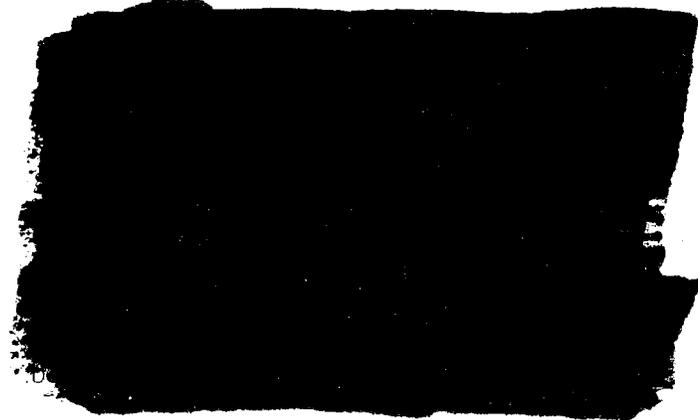
Vice Lord Nation is a leading national group in the People Nation alliance system. The alliance system was established in the 1980s as a means of protecting alliance members within the state and federal prison systems. The alliance is strong within the prison system but less effective once a member is back on the street. The People Nation alliance also includes Latin Kings, Bloods, Black Peace Stones, Cobra Stones, El Rukn, Insane Popes, Gaylords, Future Stones, Insane Unknown, King Cobras, Latin Counts, Latin Dragons, Latin Pachucos, Latin Saints, and Spanish Lords.

Adversaries

Vice Lord Nation's main rivals are all gangs belonging to the Folk Nation alliance, particularly Gangster Disciples. Folk Nation is the rival alliance to People Nation, and was created to protect alliance members within the state and federal prison systems. The Folk Nation alliance includes Gangster Disciples, Black Disciples, Black Gangsters, Crips, Imperial Gangsters, International Posse, La Raza, Latin Disciples, Spanish Gangster Disciples, Party People, and Satan Disciples.

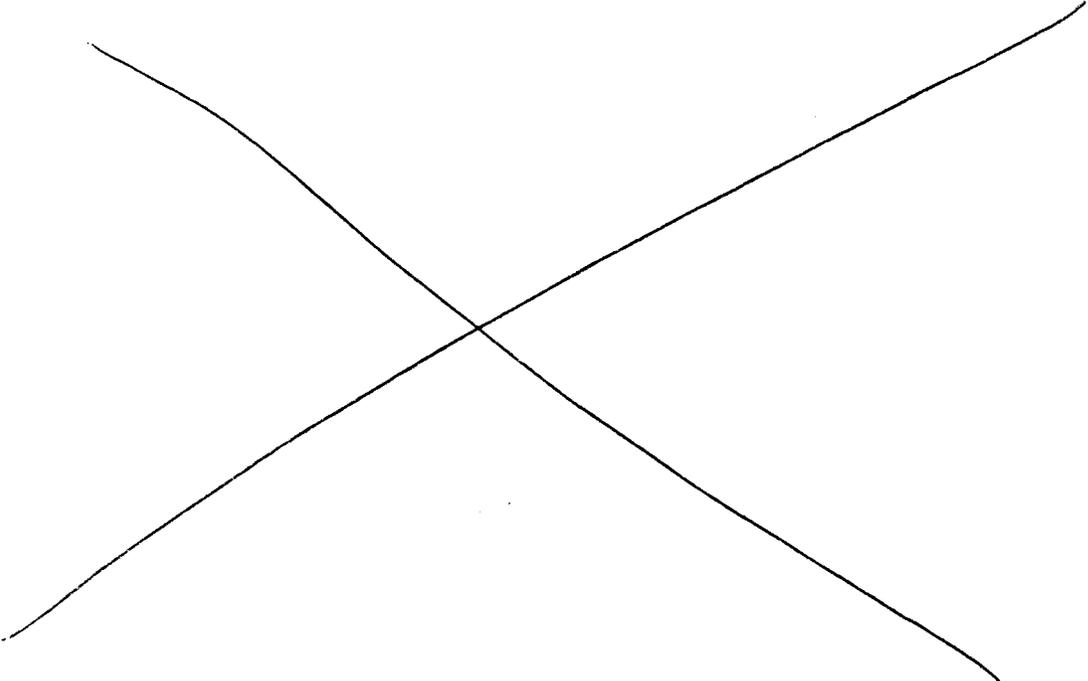
Organizational Structure

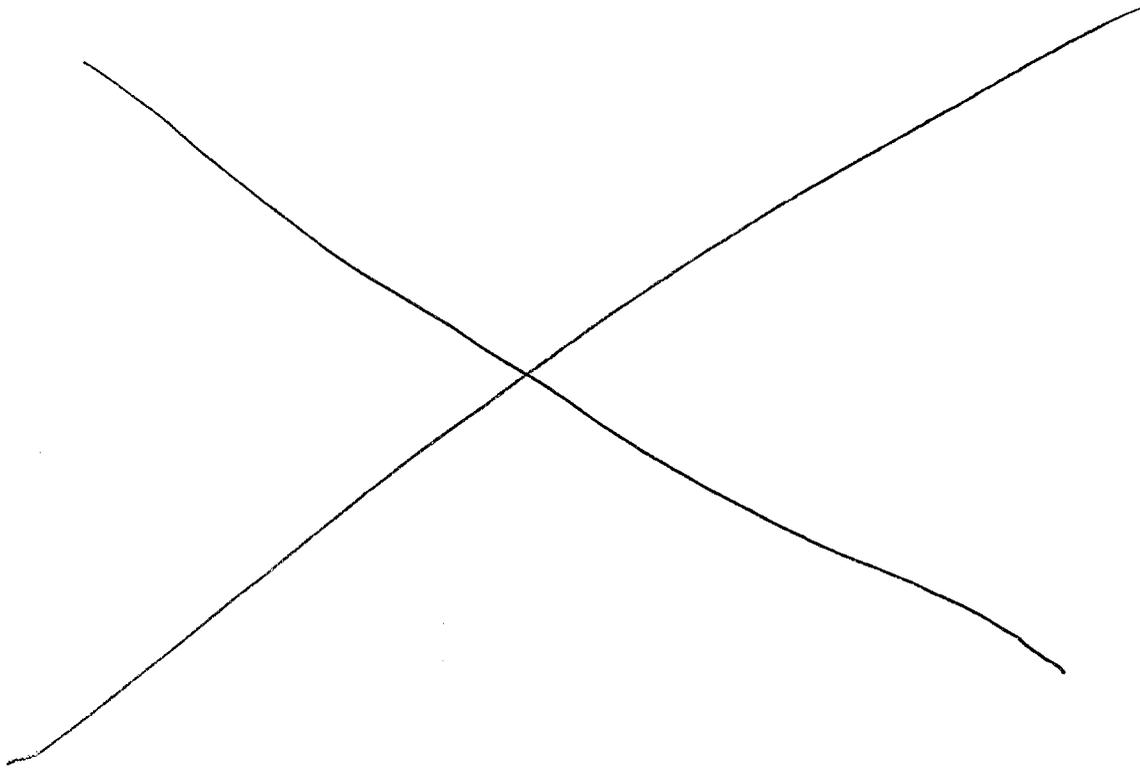




Membership

Vice Lord Nation is one of the largest associations of street gangs in the United States, with an estimated 30,000 to 35,000 members and associate members organized in 10 to 15 gangs located in 28 states. (See map on page 4.) The majority of the members are African American males ranging in age from 10 to 40 years—most in their early thirties. All members are required to take an oath and to memorize and obey all gang laws and rules. Members also are required to attend weekly meetings that are held by senior leaders. If a member violates a law or rule, or misses a meeting, he is beaten.





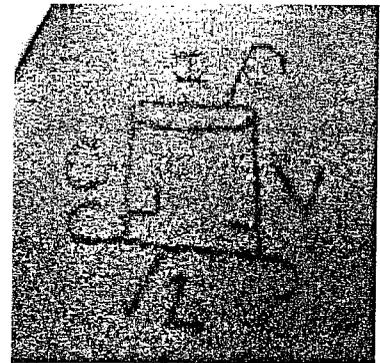
Vice Lord Oath

In the name of the Almighty, I solemnly swear that I, as a representative of the Almighty Conservative Vice Lord Nation, will not dishonor my most sacred weapon meaning Lord unity, nor under the threat of death will I deny those who stand beside me. I, as a representative of the Almighty Conservative Vice Lord Nation, will listen to the truthful teaching of the elite. I will also serve my time constructively while imprisoned so that upon my release I will become useful to my Community and to myself as a whole. So let the Black God Allah bear witness to this oath. By the birth, spirit and through the heart's core. I come as I am.

Almighty Vice Lord.

Members are easily identified by the symbols and clothing they wear. The dominant symbol is a

five-pointed star, symbolic of the gang's five principles: love, truth, peace, freedom, and justice. The five-pointed star also represents the eye of Allah watching over his people. The gangs use the star in graffiti, jewelry, and tattoos. Other symbols used by the gang include inverted crossed pitchforks, a top hat, a cane, gloves, crescent moons, a rabbit head, the letters VL, 4CH, UVL, TVL, and the number 312 (the area code for Chicago). Members of VLN also distinguish themselves by wearing clothing in the gang's colors of black and red or gold. They also wear their clothing to favor the left side of the body as a means of showing their connection with People Nation. Some examples include wearing black, red,



Vice Lords tattoo.

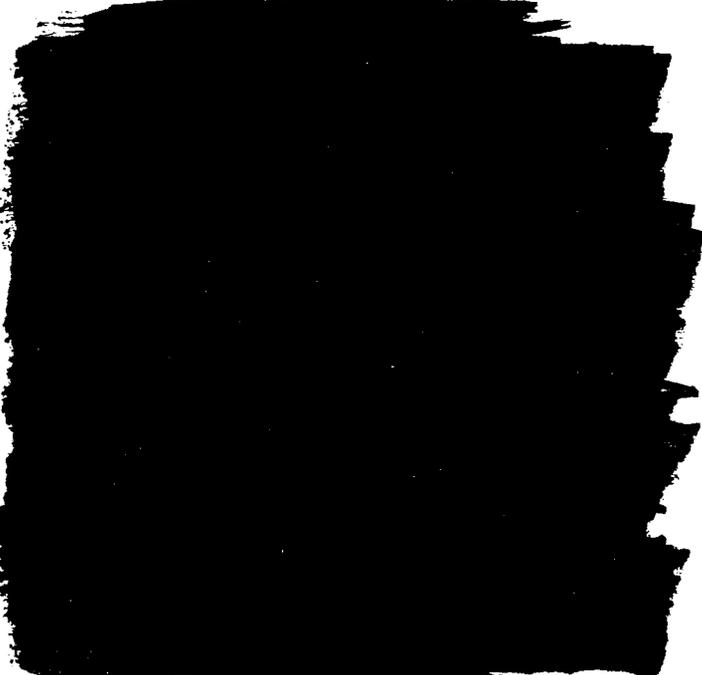
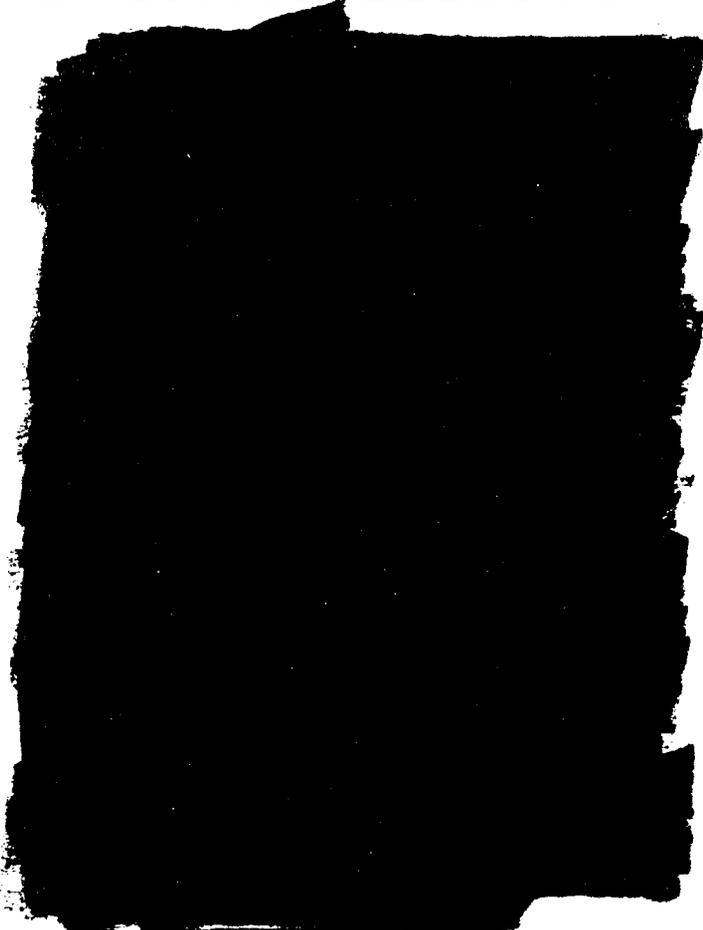
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or gold shoelaces only on the left shoe, tilting their hats to the left, and folding their left pant leg.

who do not pay or are late in paying are assaulted or murdered.

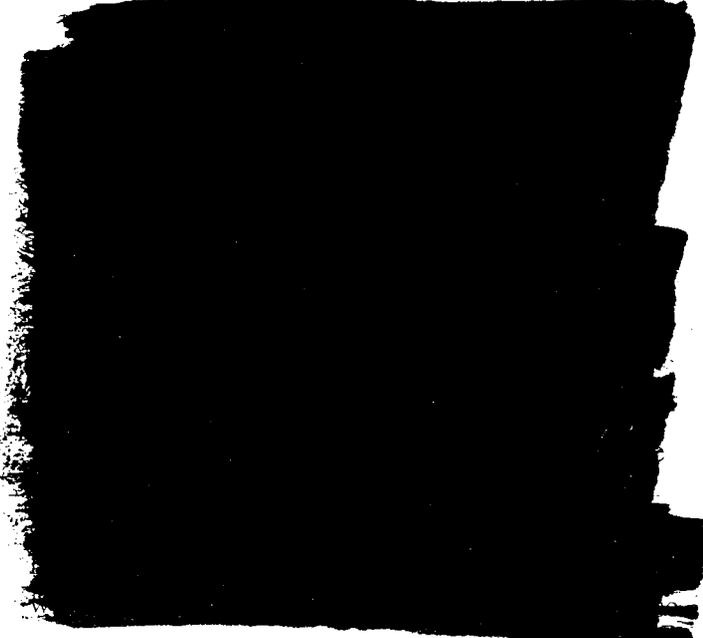
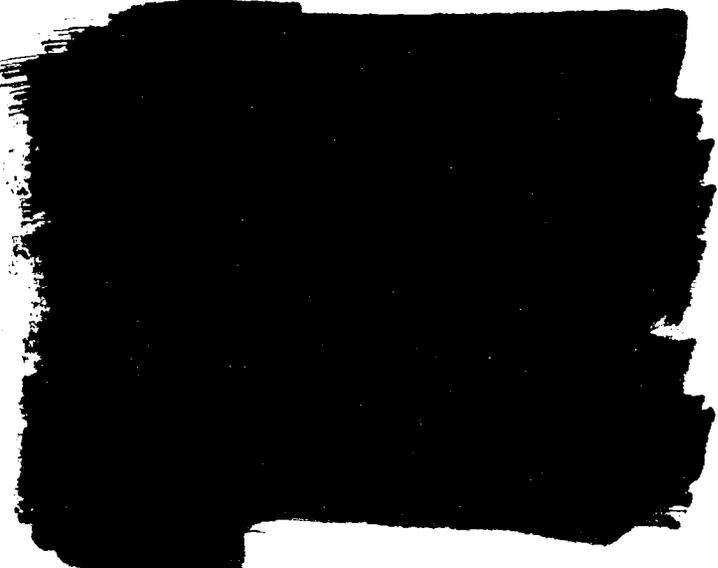
Drug Trafficking

Southeast Region



West Central Region

Great Lakes Region



Other Criminal Activity

In order to conceal their drug distribution activities, VLN members launder drug proceeds by investing in real estate and by operating various cash-based businesses including barber shops, music promotion companies, record stores, restaurants,

catering services, and construction companies. In addition, gang members commit many other types of criminal activity including assault, robbery, burglary, drive-by shooting, extortion, homicide, and identity theft.

Violence

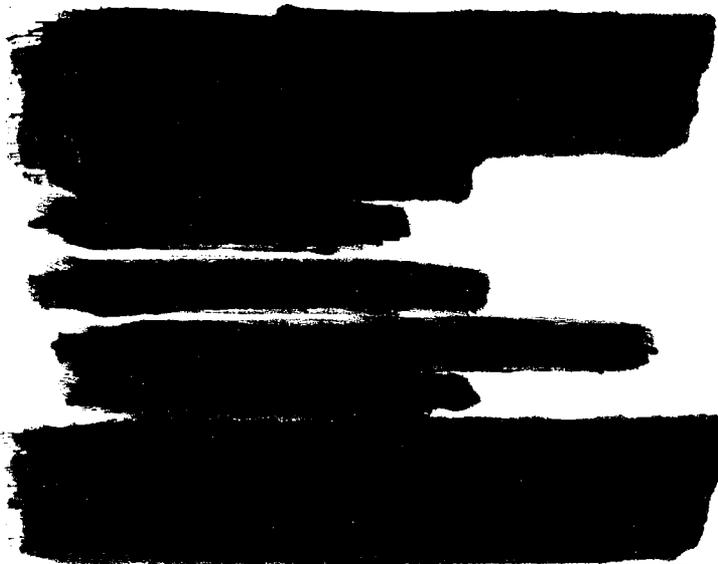
Vice Lord Nation is one of the most violent associations of street gangs in the United States. VLN gangs are responsible for numerous homicides, particularly in Chicago. In smaller cities and towns across the country, VLN members regularly commit assault, extortion, intimidation, and homicide in order to further or protect their criminal activities. Most violence is directed at rival gangs or at dealers who neglect to pay extortion fees. Violence also is used to ensure that members adhere to the VLN bylaws.

Outlook

VLN and its numerous gangs will continue to be involved in the transportation and distribution of drugs in the Great Lakes, Southeast, and West Central regions. As the leaders of the various VLN

gangs continue to formalize their agreements and coordinate their activities, VLN will evolve beyond a traditional street gang association into one of the largest and most powerful national-level street gangs in the United States. Because of its enhanced coordination of drug distribution activities, VLN will pose an increasing threat to communities across the country.

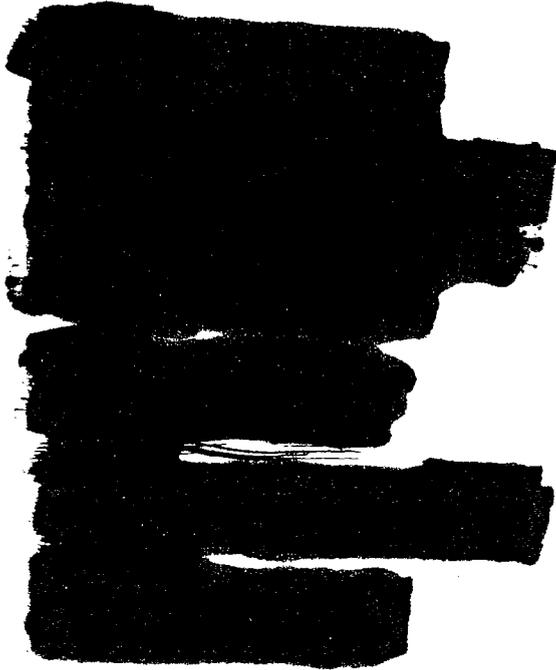
Intelligence Gaps



b2, b7d, b7e

Sources

State



Regional



Federal

- Executive Office of the President
 - Office of National Drug Control Policy
 - High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas
 - Chicago
 - Gulf Coast
 - South Florida
- U.S. Department of Justice
 - Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
 - Criminal Division
 - Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force
 - Drug Enforcement Administration
 - Chicago Division
 - Federal Bureau of Prisons
 - Intelligence Section
 - Office of Justice Programs
 - Regional Information Sharing Systems

Other

Associated Press

National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations

Valentine, Bill, *Gangs and Their Tattoos: Identifying Gangbangers on the Street and in Prison*, 2000



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