



# 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

# Crips

*The Crips, one of the largest and most violent associations of street gangs in the United States, is an association of structured and unstructured gangs that have adopted a common gang culture. Crips membership is estimated between 30,000 and 35,000; most members are African American men from the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Crips gangs are most active in the Southwest, Pacific, West Central, Southeast, and Great Lakes regions of the United States. Their main source of income is street-level distribution of powdered cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, and PCP. The gangs also are involved in many other types of criminal activity including assault, auto theft, burglary, carjacking, drive-by shooting, extortion, homicide, identification fraud, and robbery.*

## Background

Originally called the Avenue Crips, the Crips street gang was formed in Los Angeles, California, in the mid-1960s. Raymond Washington, a student at Fremont High School in Los Angeles, founded the gang as a political organization and later used it to provide protection from other gangs and to profit from criminal activity. Washington organized the Crips in imitation of the Black Panther Party and the Avenues, an older Los Angeles street gang. Washington, along with the other original members Michael Concepcion, Raymond Cook, Melvin

Hardy, Bennie Simpson, Mack Thomas, and Angelo White, recruited more young men and increased the gang's involvement in violent criminal activity. The original gang adopted the name Crips when a newspaper article published in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* in February 1972 referred to some Crips members who carried canes as "Crips" (for cripples).

During the 1970s in an effort to wrest control of neighborhoods from rival gangs and to increase its profit-making potential, the gang recruited additional members and increased its involvement in criminal

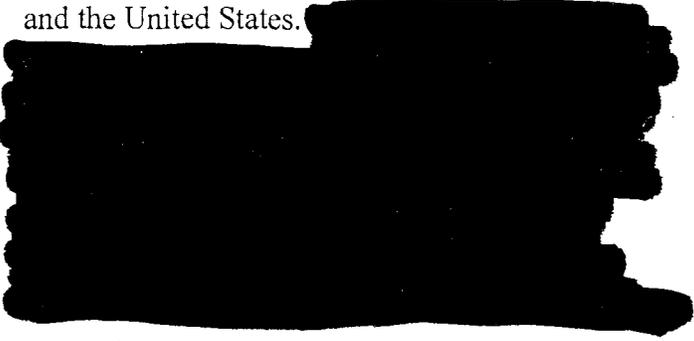
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activity. Initially Crips leaders did not occupy formal leadership positions but were recognized as leaders because of their personal charisma and influence. These leaders gave priority to expanding the gang's membership to increase its power. By 1978 there were 45 Crips gangs, called sets, operating in Los Angeles. Some of these Crips sets began to produce and distribute PCP (phencyclidine) within the city. They also began to distribute marijuana and amphetamine in Los Angeles.

In the early 1980s Crips sets began distributing crack cocaine in Los Angeles. The huge profits resulting from crack cocaine distribution induced many Crips members to establish new markets in other cities and states. In addition, many young men in other states adopted the Crips name and lifestyle. As a result of these two factors, Crips membership increased throughout the 1980s, making it one of the largest street gang associations in the country.

In the 1990s Crips membership and involvement in drug-related activity continued to increase. Crips sets tried to intimidate rival gangs and law enforcement in order to control and further expand their drug distribution enterprises. In addition, some Crips sets reportedly attempted to deal directly with Mexican and Colombian drug trafficking organizations to smuggle cocaine into the United States. (It is unknown whether this activity is continuing.) In 1999 at least 600 Crips sets with more than 30,000 members and associate members were identified as transporting or distributing drugs in the United States.

The Crips remains one of the largest and most violent associations of street gangs in Los Angeles and the United States.



## Alliances

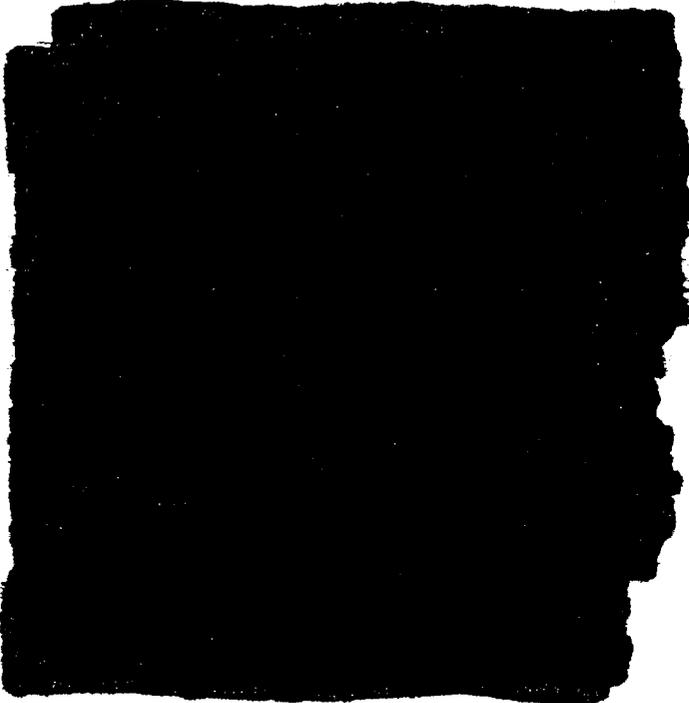
Crips belongs to the Folk Nation gang alliance. The alliance was established in the 1980s as a means of protecting gang members incarcerated in state and federal prison systems. The alliance is strong within the prison system but less effective after members are released. The Folk Nation also includes Gangster Disciples, Black Disciples, Black Gangsters, Imperial Gangsters, International Posse, La Raza, Latin Disciples, Spanish Gangster Disciples, Party People, and Satan Disciples.

## Adversaries

The primary Crips rivals are the Bloods street gangs. The Crips-Bloods rivalry began in the late 1960s when Raymond Washington and several other Crips members confronted Silvester Scott and Benson Owens, students at Centennial High School in Los Angeles. Scott and Owens fought off Washington and his associates. In response to the attack, Scott, who lived on Piru Street in nearby Compton, established the Piru Street Gang, the first Bloods gang, and Owens established the Westside Pirus.

Other Crips adversaries include gangs belonging to the People Nation alliance, particularly the Latin Kings. The People Nation is the rival alliance to the Folk Nation alliance and was created to protect alliance members in the state and federal prison systems. As with the Folk Nation, the alliance is strong within the prison system but less effective once a member is released. The People Nation alliance includes the Black P Stones, Bloods, Cobra Stones, El Rukn, Insane Popes, Gaylords, Future Stones, Insane Unknown, King Cobras, Latin Counts, Latin Dragons, Latin Kings, Latin Pachucos, Latin Saints, Spanish Lords, and the Vice Lord Nation.

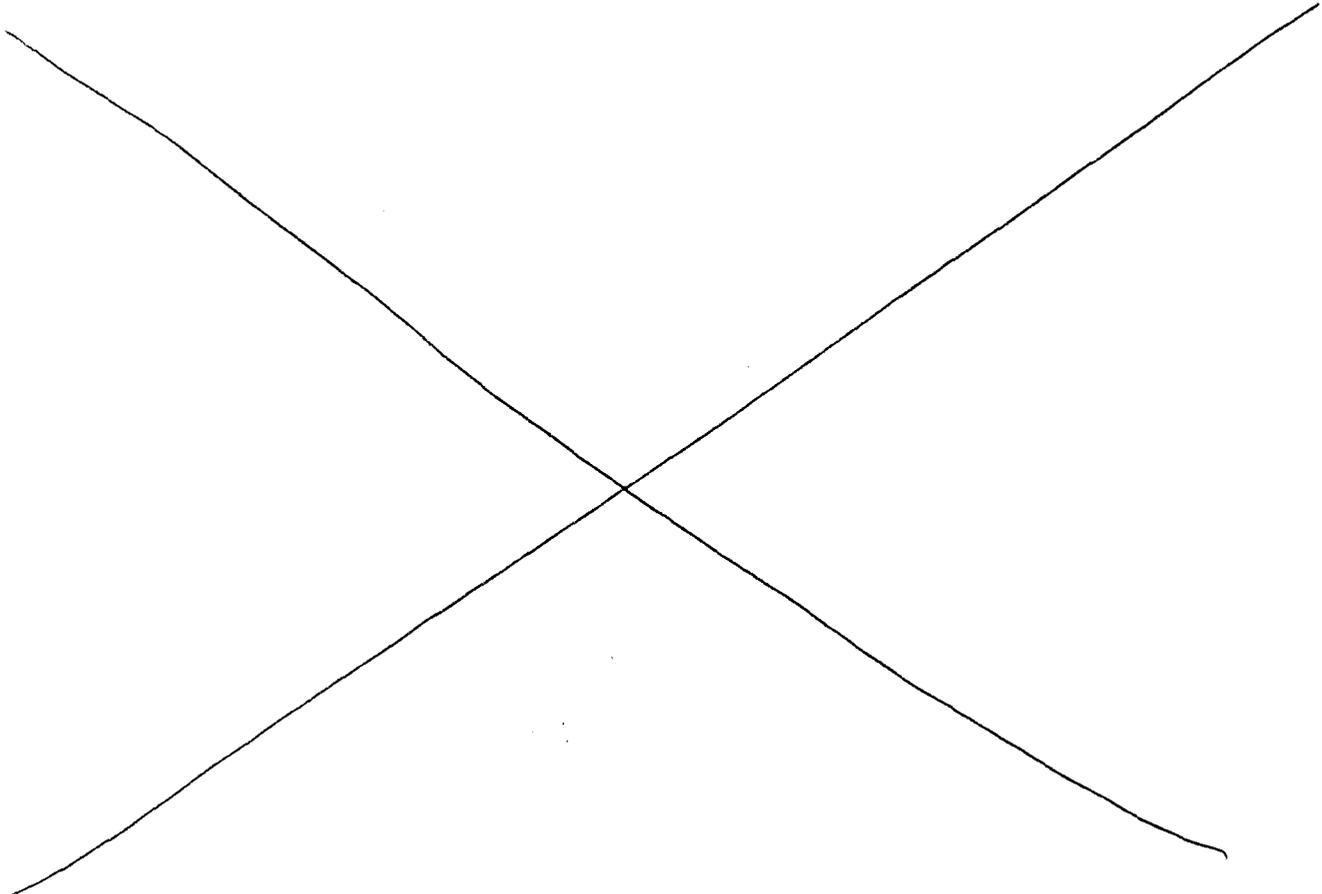
## Organizational Structure



## Membership

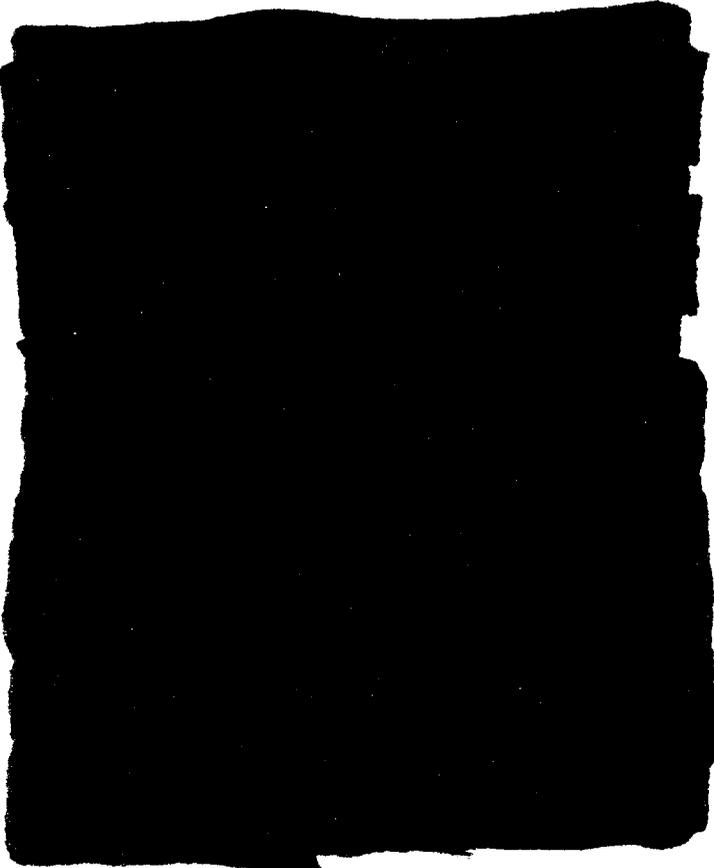
The Crips is one of the largest and most violent street gang associations in the United States. It has over 800 sets with 30,000 to 35,000 members and associate members, including more than 13,000 members in Los Angeles. Over 230 law enforcement agencies representing every state except West Virginia and Vermont have reported the presence of Crips in their jurisdiction. The states with the highest estimated number of Crips sets are California, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas. (See map.)

Membership typically consists of African American men in their early 30s, although members range from 10 to 40 years old. There also are an increasing number of sets with Asian, Native American, and Caucasian members, particularly in the West Central, Southeast, New England, New York/New Jersey, and Mid-Atlantic regions. All

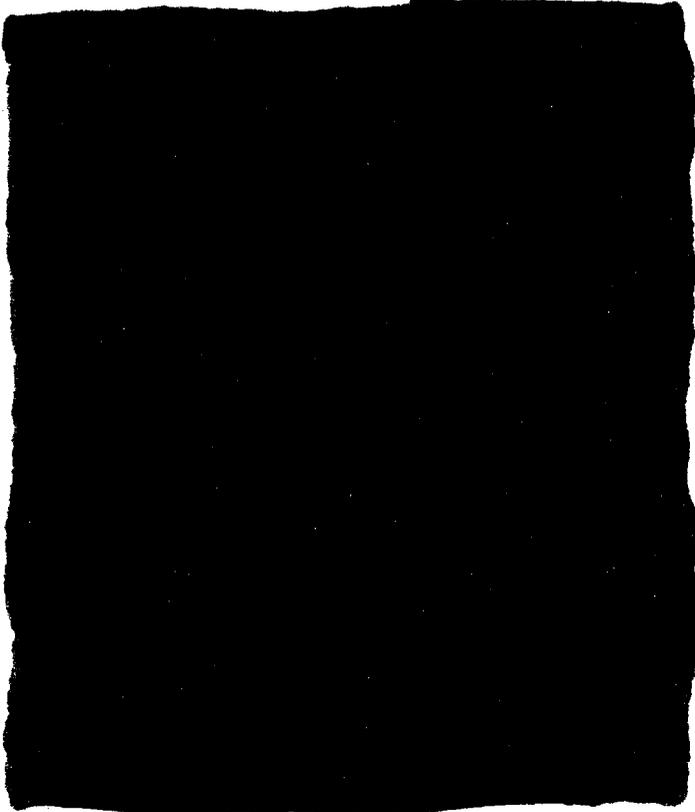


members are required to take an oath and go through an initiation process. Initiation is achieved in one of three ways—by committing an armed robbery, performing a drive-by shooting, or being beaten by members in a ceremony called a beat-in, kangaroo walk, or bull pen. The initiation is intended to test the prospective member's courage and loyalty.

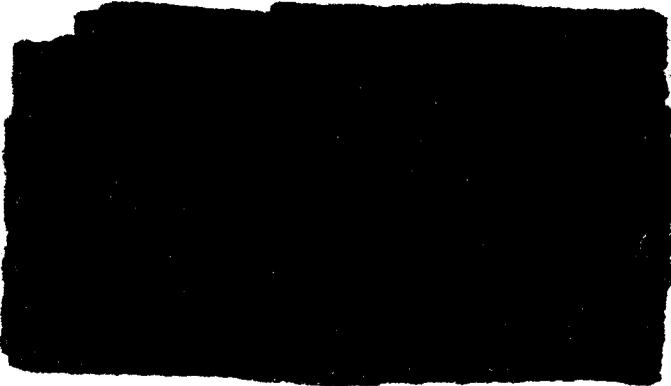
Members are easily identified by the symbols and clothing they wear. They often display a six-pointed star as a symbol of the gang's association with the Folk Nation. Other symbols used by the gang include inverted, crossed pitchforks; words and letters such as RSC (Rolling 60s Crips), which identify the origin of the Crips set; and numbers such as 118 for the 118th Street gang in Los Angeles. Crips members also distinguish themselves by wearing clothing that is blue—the gang's color. However, some wear colors that reflect the name of their set. For example, the Grape Street Crips wear purple. Crips members often wear the apparel of professional sports teams such as the Colorado Rockies baseball team and the Los Angeles Lakers basketball team. They also wear clothing to the right side of the body as a means of showing their relationship with Folk Nation. For example, members wear colored shoelaces (in blue or another color associated with their set) only on the right shoe, tilt their hats to the right, and roll up their right pant legs.



**Southwest Region**

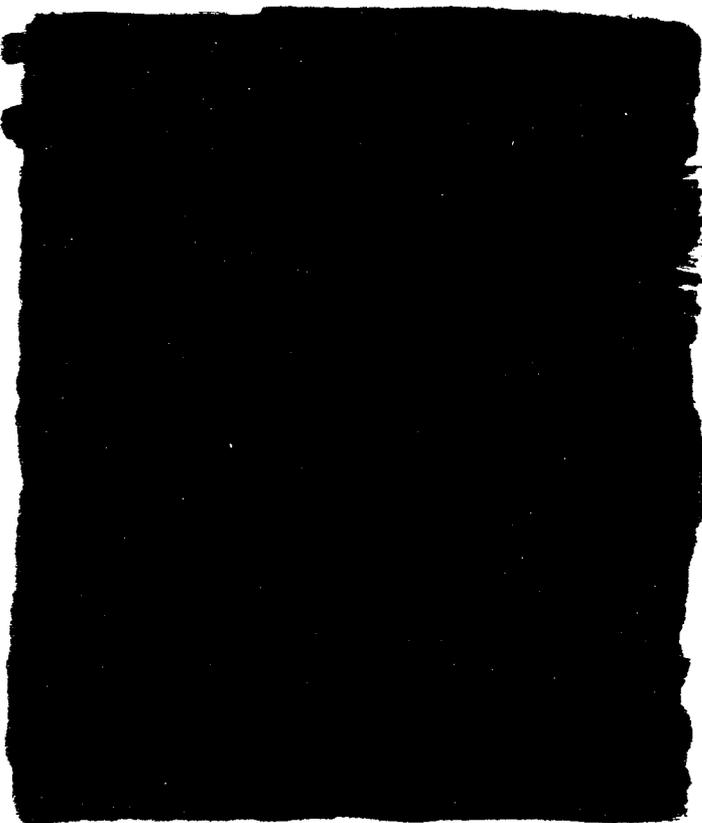
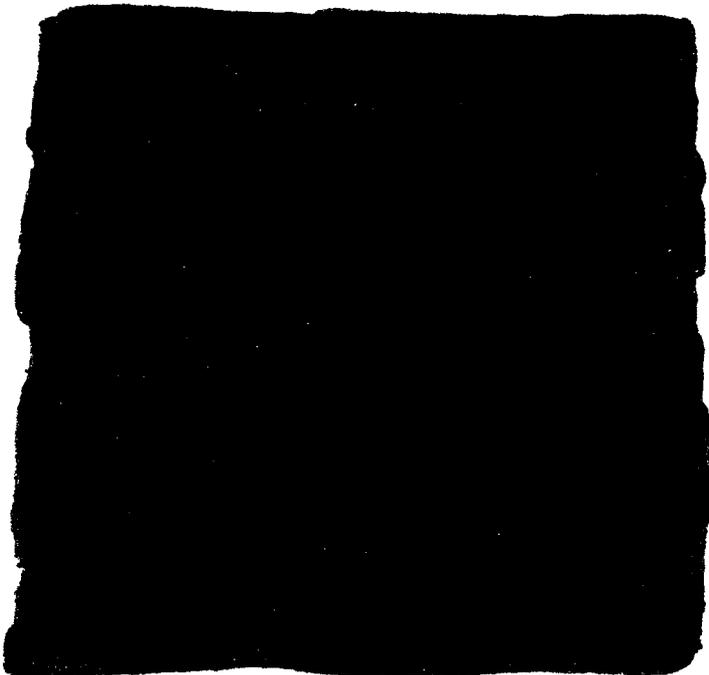


**Drug Trafficking**

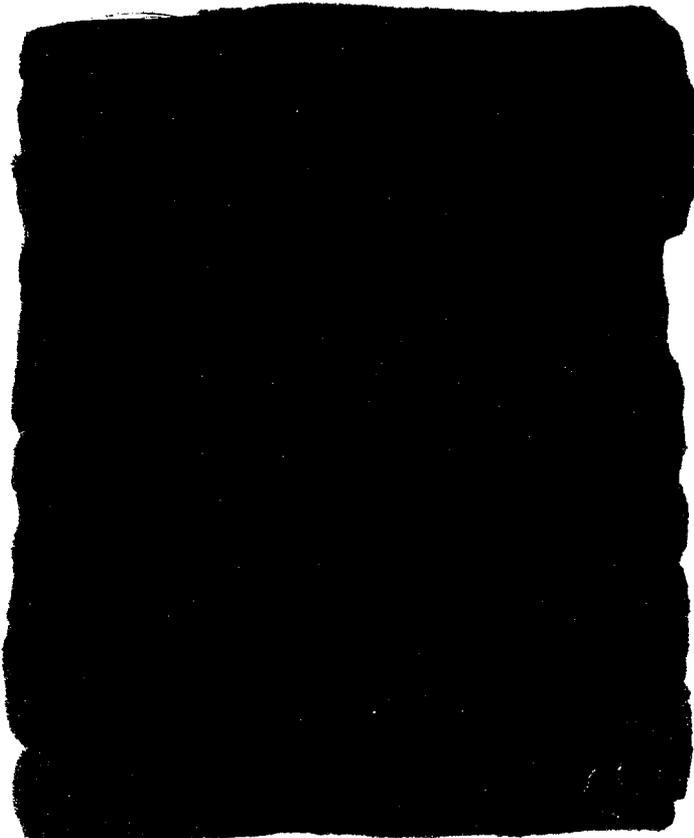


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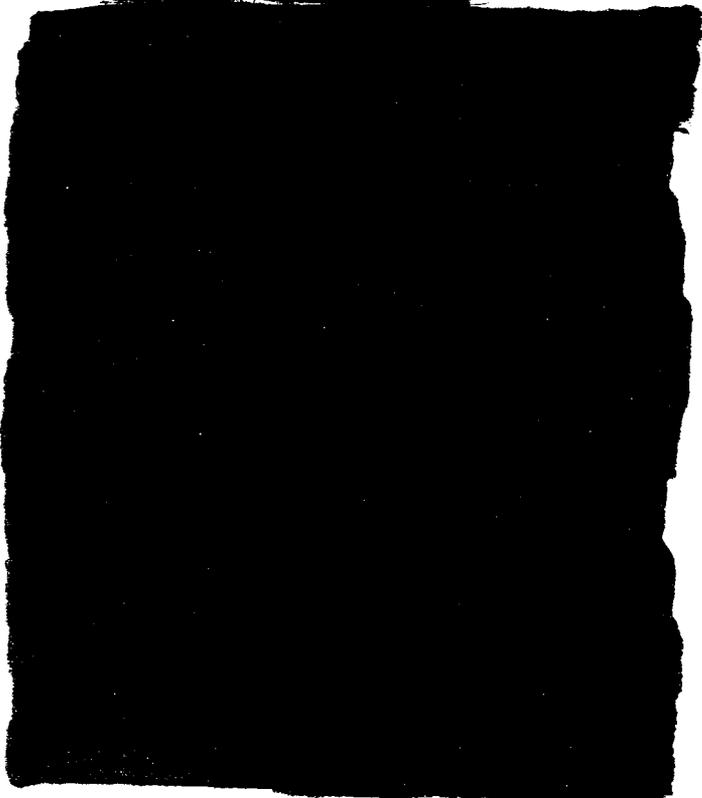
**Pacific Region**



**West Central Region**



**Great Lakes Region**



**Southeast Region**



## **New England, New York/ New Jersey, and Mid- Atlantic Regions**

expand its drug distribution activities. Most violence is targeted at rival gangs or at dealers who neglect to pay extortion fees.

Violence between Crips sets also is common. Most of this violence occurs due to personal conflicts between members of different sets. Violence also is used to ensure that members remain faithful to the gang's culture. Crips members who have recently been released from prison also are spurring violence between Crips sets and among Crips sets and rival gangs.

### **Outlook**

Crips sets pose a serious threat throughout the United States. The release of gang members from California prisons will continue to result in violence between Crips sets and among Crips sets and rival gangs. Additional Crips members will continue to migrate from Southern California to pursue drug distribution opportunities in other regions of the country, partially because of California's "three-strikes law." For these reasons, Crips sets will increase their involvement in the transportation and distribution of drugs in the New England, New York/New Jersey, and Mid-Atlantic regions. The Crips will remain one of the largest and most violent street gang associations in the United States.

### **Other Criminal Activity**

Crips sets launder their drug proceeds by investing in real estate and various cash-based businesses including barbershops, concert promotion companies, and music stores. Crips sets also use drug proceeds to fund recording companies and music groups. Members engage in many other types of criminal activity including assault, auto theft, burglary, carjacking, drive-by shooting, extortion, homicide, identification fraud, and robbery.

### **Violence**

Crips sets are among the most violent street gangs in the United States. They have been responsible for numerous homicides in most major cities, particularly Los Angeles. Crips members regularly engage in extortion, intimidation, assault, and homicide to further or protect their criminal activities. For example, in Jackson, Tennessee, the 107 Hoover Crips gang allegedly has committed numerous homicides in an attempt to maintain and

### **Intelligence Gaps**

## Sources

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### Federal

U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Prisons

Criminal Division

Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Office of Justice Programs

Bureau of Justice Assistance

Regional Information Sharing Systems Program

U.S. Department of the Treasury

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms

### State

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### Regional

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### Other

*Associated Press*

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