



Drugs and Crime

Gang Profile

Product No. 2003-M0465-007

OCTOBER 2003

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

Nuestra Familia

Nuestra Familia is a highly structured, extremely violent, prison-based gang [REDACTED] members operating primarily in prisons and communities in California. Most members are Mexican or Mexican American males living in Central or Northern California or housed in the state's prison system.

[REDACTED]—both within the prison system and in the community at large—and extorting drug distributors on the streets. Nuestra Familia also is involved in various other criminal activities including homicide and robbery. The gang is supported [REDACTED], primarily active in prisons and communities in Central and Northern California, [REDACTED]

Background

Nuestra Familia (NF) (Spanish for our family), also called La Nuestra Familia (LNF), was formed in the Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, California, in 1966 by a group of Mexican national inmates, primarily from rural areas in Northern California. The founding members of NF banded together to protect themselves from Mexican Mafia (La Eme), which was composed primarily of Mexican American street gang members from inner city neighborhoods (barrios) in Southern California. An intense conflict soon developed between La Eme and NF over control of drug distribution [REDACTED] within

California Department of Corrections (CDC) facilities. By 1967 NF had added members in the Soledad and Folsom prisons. Open hostilities erupted on September 16, 1968, after a La Eme member stabbed a Hispanic inmate from Northern California. Since then, both gangs have been engaged in a "kill on sight" conflict.

NF created a written constitution that established a detailed organizational structure along paramilitary lines. NF positions included a general, as well as captains, lieutenants, and soldiers. Each member was required to uphold standards regarding dress, hygiene, and behavior, with harsh discipline imposed for any infraction.

~~This document must be protected and not released to unauthorized individuals. It is to be used by persons in your agency who have a "need to know" the sensitive information contained in this document in order to perform an identifiable and authorized government function. It may not be released beyond your agency without the permission of NDIC. It must be stored in a limited access area or in a locked container during nonduty hours. It must be destroyed by shredding or burning.~~

During the late 1960s, NF established a presence on the streets of California. The first NF street regiment, known as Car, was established in Fresno, California, and became known as the Fresno Car. The Fresno Car's main sources of income were distributing illegal drugs, [REDACTED] and extorting drug distributors operating in the Car's barrio. The Fresno Car sent illegal drugs and 25 percent of the money earned from illegal drug sales and extortion as a tribute, or tax, to incarcerated NF members. Recently released NF members and associates purchased drugs, and wives and girlfriends of NF members smuggled these drugs and other contraband such as messages, money, and weapons to NF members and associates in prison.

As NF and La Eme continued to fight one another, inmates belonging to Hispanic street gangs were strongly encouraged to choose sides upon entering the California prison system. Those from Central and Northern California tended to side with NF and those from Southern California with La Eme. By the late 1970s, Hispanic street gang members entering the prison system became known either as Norteños (Northerners) or Sureños (Southerners), depending upon where they lived when they were arrested. Norteños were generally from north of Bakersfield, California, and Sureños were from Bakersfield and points south. (See text box on page 3.) [REDACTED]

During the 1980s NF members [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] As NF drug distribution increased on the streets of Northern California, there was a corresponding increase in NF members prosecuted. In January 1982 with the indictment of 25 of the gang's leaders and members, NF became the first prison gang charged under the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act. Following the successful federal prosecution of NF leadership, the gang split into two factions. One faction assumed a leadership role and retained the NF designation. The other faction, composed of

workers or *soldados* (soldiers) was formed as a subordinate prison gang, known to law enforcement and corrections officials as Northern Structure (NS) and to inmates as Nuestra Raza (NR) (Spanish for our race).

[REDACTED] In establishing NR, NF drafted a document known as the XIV Bonds, outlining what was expected of NR members. (See text box.) Both organizations were structured in a three-tiered "category" system (see Table 1 on page 4) that separated new members from those who were more experienced and more extensively involved in criminal activity. NF also established a board of directors, known as La Mesa (Spanish for the table), to prevent any one member from having total control of the gang. In 1989 CDC transferred many NF members to the newly constructed high security prison facility at Pelican Bay in Crescent City, California. NF members were placed in security housing units (SHUs) within Pelican Bay and, later, Corcoran State Prison and confined to their cells approximately 22 hours a day. Although this made it more difficult for NF to operate, the gang's illegal activities continued through their control of NR.

XIV Bonds

NF wrote the XIV (14) Bonds of the Nuestra Raza Movement as bylaws for the newly created Nuestra Raza organization in 1983. Even though NR now appears to be defunct, gang members who wish to become NF members must learn and adhere to these bylaws, now known as the 14 Bonds of the Norteños Movement.

The distribution of illegal drugs, [REDACTED] by NF and NR increased in the 1990s. During this time, due to a lack of demand, the [REDACTED] In an effort to avoid federal prosecution through RICO statutes, NF formally disbanded NR in 1998 by amending the NF written constitution. Former members of NR now became known as Norteños. They were considered *soldados* for NF and were

held to the same standards that members of NR had been, including adherence to the bylaws now known as the 14 Bonds of the Norteños Movement. Inmates from Central and Northern California who did not join NR and have not joined Norteños are now referred to as Northsiders by gang members. Northsiders often are forced to become members of Norteños. Originally seen only in Central and Northern California, Norteños gang members are moving to other states to establish alternate bases for gang activity.

[REDACTED]

This is increasing the membership of Norteños faster than NF.

NF a Concern to Bureau of Prisons

In 1994 NF was decertified as a "disruptive group" by the federal BOP.

[REDACTED]

Because of its conflict with La Eme and its leadership role over Norteños members, NF remains a concern to BOP despite its minimal presence. As the RICO trial against NF comes to a close, members are likely to be relocated from CDC to BOP facilities. Once in BOP facilities, members will probably regroup, possibly making NF a greater threat within the BOP.

In April 2001, 13 NF members and associates were indicted under the federal RICO Act on 34 counts of murder, attempted murder, drug trafficking, and other racketeering charges. Six of the 13 indicted were already incarcerated at Pelican Bay State Prison. The five highest-ranking NF leaders were among those indicted. The NF members and associates currently are being held in federal custody pending the conclusion of the trial.

In 2003 CDC authorities report that NF remains strong in prisons but is not very effective in retaining members who have been released from prison. Bureau of Prisons (BOP) authorities report that NF activity is minimal, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] As the RICO trial

ends, NF members may be moved from CDC to BOP—increasing the role NF plays within BOP.

Alliances

In addition to Norteños, NF is allied with the Black Guerrilla Family (BGF) (an African American prison gang), incarcerated Bloods street gang members, various other African American street gangs and prison gangs, and some unaffiliated African Americans.

Norteños and Sureños

Throughout Southern California most Hispanic street gangs identify themselves as Sureños and pay a percentage of their income from drug distribution to La Eme. Traditionally, Hispanic street gangs in Central and Northern California were considered Norteños and paid taxes to Nuestra Familia. However, as Sureños-affiliated street gang members have moved from Southern California into Central and Northern California, they have established new gangs that claim affiliation with Sureños. These newly formed Sureños-affiliated gangs increase their membership by recruiting Mexican nationals who are recent immigrants. Hence, Sureños gangs in Central and Northern California consist predominantly of Mexican nationals, while Norteños gangs consist predominantly of Mexican Americans.

Adversaries

La Eme and affiliated Sureños gangs, along with the Fresno Bulldogs (F-14) street gang, are NF's primary enemies. (Fresno Bulldogs originally were aligned with NF but defected and aligned themselves with Sureños because they disagreed with NF's policy of taxing gang members outside prison. Increasing in size and influence, Fresno Bulldogs ultimately choose not to align with either prison gang.) Because they are allied with La Eme, Aryan Brotherhood (AB) and associated white supremacist organizations such as Nazi Low Riders (NLR) and Peckerwoods also are regarded as NF enemies.

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Organizational Structure

NF is a highly organized prison gang with a written constitution that establishes a formal, centralized leadership structure.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]—all of whom are considered *soldados* regardless of their rank. The gang is supported by Central and Northern California Norteños street gang members. Northerners include incarcerated Hispanic street gang members not affiliated with NF/ Norteños or Mexican Mafia/Sureños.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

b2, b7d, b7e

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

In April 2001 the permanent members of the NF inner council were indicted under federal RICO statutes and transferred to Santa Rita County Jail for the duration of the trial.

[REDACTED]

Membership

NF is an extremely violent Hispanic prison gang predominantly active within the CDC. Consisting of approximately [REDACTED] NF is

members, mostly located in Central and Northern California and the CDC but also within federal BOP facilities. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Traditionally, NF membership has been limited to Mexican or Mexican American inmates with ties to Central or Northern California. There is no minimum age requirement, but most members are recruited between the ages of 20 and 40.

To become a member of NF, an inmate must be sponsored by an NF member in good standing, and his membership must be approved by an NF leader. To be sponsored, a prospective member must prove himself worthy of the gang by becoming an active Norteños member; learning the NF philosophy, structure, and rules (14 Bonds); and carrying out missions for NF. A Norteños member seeking NF membership may be required to make a "hit" or "spill blood" for NF. NF is considered a "blood in, blood out" prison gang, meaning that a prospective member must assault an approved target (individual) to gain entry to the gang and, upon becoming a member, cannot leave the gang except through death. Although prospective NF members are not required to kill to gain membership, committing murder for the organization is a requirement for advancement [REDACTED]

An NF member cannot resign his membership. Members are expected to remain committed to the organization for life. Those who refuse to obey NF rules or directives and those who seek to withdraw from the organization are killed. Although resignation is not permitted, retirement after 20 years of active membership is allowed under the NF constitution. However, if a retired member is asked to do something for NF, he is expected to do it or die for failing to obey. In contrast, Norteños membership is only for the duration of an inmate's prison sentence. Members are not obliged to continue working for the gang upon release.

Women are not permitted to join NF. However, wives, girlfriends, and other female family members play a very important role within the organization by smuggling contraband (money, drugs, and weapons) into prison and by providing a means of communication between incarcerated and nonincarcerated members. Some Norteños gangs do permit women to join.

Norteños?

The farther a self-proclaimed Norteños gang is located from Northern California and the West Coast of the United States, the less likely it is to be affiliated with the California-based Norteños and Nuestra Familia gangs. A gang may simply use the Norteños designation as a generic Spanish term signifying that it is a Hispanic gang from the north side of town.

Members of NF and Norteños often can be identified by their tattoos and graffiti. Common Nuestra Familia tattoos (*copias*) and graffiti (*placas*) include the letters NF, Nuestra Familia, and a hat (*sombrero*) superimposed over a knife, which may be depicted with blood dripping from the tip. Norteños tattoos and graffiti include the word ENE (Spanish for the letter N, the 14th letter in the alphabet), N-14, 14, XIV, X4, four dots, Norte, Norteños, a five-pointed star representing the North Star, and a drawing of the “Huelga Bird,” a symbol commonly associated with the United Farm Workers Association (UFWA).

Members of NF attempt to disguise the letters NF or NF symbols in their writings and drawings. They refer to one another as C or *carnal* in letters or cards. They refer to Norteños members as kids, robins, or “the ones that parallel.”

Gang Colors

La Eme and Sureños gangs use the color blue as a gang identifier; however, they rarely display it in Southern California because most Hispanic gangs in that region are affiliated with Sureños, so it is not necessary for the gangs to identify themselves. Norteños gangs use the color red. Because Sureños gangs have established themselves in the same areas as Norteños gangs, Norteños have been displaying red more often to distinguish themselves from their Sureños enemies. In an attempt to deceive law enforcement, one Norteños gang in Northern California started wearing light blue clothing, including University of North Carolina sports attire.

Communication

[REDACTED] NF provides extensive training on [REDACTED]. Incarcerated NF and Norteños members communicate with each other and with those outside prison [REDACTED].

Drug Trafficking

NF generates most of its income through drug trafficking and extortion. Originally formed to protect its members and associates from La Eme, NF is now focused on controlling drug trafficking within the prison system and in neighborhoods dominated by Norteños-affiliated gangs. NF and Norteños members distribute illegal drugs including [REDACTED] for personal expenses as well as to purchase firearms, ammunition, pagers, automobiles, and other items for the gang.

Through various communications channels, NF leaders monitor the activities of members and associates inside and outside correctional facilities and issue new rules and directives. Individual members of NF often are instructed to generate and contribute money to the organization, to establish regiments in different communities, and to commit various crimes, including murder. Those who refuse to obey the rules or directives of NF leaders and those who seek to withdraw from the organization are ultimately deemed "no good" and are targeted for killing (given a green light). Green light lists often are communicated through kites.

Music Industry

Many Hispanic street gangs are now promoting themselves through rap music. For example, North Side Soldier, the fourteenth track on the 17 Reasons Black/Brown compact disc (CD), is performed by a rapper known as SFM (San Francisco Mission) who glamorizes the Norteños gang lifestyle. In addition, the G.U.N. (Generation of United Norteño) and Darkroom labels promote gang violence in their rap songs. [REDACTED]

a pro-Norteños gangster rap group produced two CDs under the G.U.N. label; the first was titled GUN, and the second Cuete (Spanish for gun). The CDs were sold to Norteños members to raise money for the gang and to promote unity among individual Norteños street gangs.

According to CDC debriefings of NF and Norteños inmates, [REDACTED] using stolen or rented vehicles. Nuestra Familia and Norteños members also distribute drugs that are produced locally. To avoid arrest for illicit drug production, NF and Norteños members typically [REDACTED] hire Mexican nationals to produce [REDACTED] which gang members then distribute.

NF members outside prison also earn money by forcing independent dealers and other street gangs to pay a "rent" for the privilege of distributing drugs in a particular location. In addition, all NF members are required to contribute 25 percent of their earnings, whether from lawful or unlawful means, to repositories known as Nuestra Familia banks. (See text box on page 8.)

