



# Department of Justice

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## **Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales Announces Aggressive New Joint Initiatives with El Salvador To Combat Transnational Gangs**

SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR – Today, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales and Salvadoran President Elias Antonio Saca announced tough new collaborative efforts to combat transnational gangs such as MS-13 and 18th Street that operate in El Salvador, elsewhere in Central America, Mexico, and the United States. The comprehensive, four-part initiative is designed to help identify and prosecute the most dangerous Salvadoran gang members through programs to enhance gang enforcement, fugitive apprehension, international coordination, information sharing, and training and prevention.

“This initiative will enable the United States and our colleagues in Central America to share information and coordinate law enforcement efforts as we work in partnership to target and dismantle violent gangs,” said Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales. “I look forward to working with President Saca and other Central American leaders to fight crime and keep our citizens safe.”

First, through assistance from the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the U.S. Department of State, El Salvador’s civilian police force (Policia Nacional Civil or PNC) will establish a new Transnational Anti-Gang (TAG) Unit to better pursue and prosecute gang members. FBI agents will provide front-line training, information-sharing, and other support aimed at increasing the capacity of PNC detectives to identify and arrest the worst offenders, who can then be prosecuted, when possible, by a Salvadoran anti-gang prosecutor embedded as a member of the new TAG unit.

Second, to better identify, track and apprehend gang members, the FBI will accelerate the implementation of the Central American Fingerprinting Exploitation (CAFE) initiative. The State Department and the FBI will collaborate to provide equipment and training to help law enforcement agencies in El Salvador and

other Central American nations acquire digital fingerprints of violent gang members and other criminals who travel and commit crimes under different identities in El Salvador, the U.S. and other countries. The prints will then be integrated into a computerized system that allows law enforcement officials from participating countries to exchange information. Additionally, the Justice Department is working with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), El Salvador and others in the region to implement DHS's new Electronic Travel Document system (eTD), which will provide law enforcement officials in El Salvador with electronic information on Salvadoran gang members and other criminals who have been deported from the United States to El Salvador after serving their sentences in the United States.

Third, because international cooperation and coordination is critical to combat gangs that know no borders, tomorrow in Los Angeles, for the first time, the Chiefs of Police for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize are meeting in an international summit of chiefs of police focused on the single issue of transnational gangs. The outcome of that summit will be proposals that will be presented at the 3rd Annual International Gang Conference in San Salvador in April. In addition, at the request of the government of El Salvador, the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS), FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and other law enforcement agencies will conduct a series of joint assessments of anti-gang capabilities in El Salvador, and help identify the best strategic options for El Salvador for undertaking additional steps to enhance domestic and regional anti-gang efforts in such areas as gang intelligence, fugitive apprehension, witness protection, firearms violence, prisons and drug trafficking.

Fourth, the United States has increased its anti-gang training in Central America, including efforts through the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in San Salvador. Last week the Academy completed its third anti-gang program in recent months, training police and prosecutors from El Salvador and nearby countries in the best practices of targeting and fighting gang activity and other crimes. The Attorney General announced today that the State Department is funding a new regional anti-gang program aimed at gang prevention, police training, and the development of effective law enforcement and criminal justice institutions in El Salvador and neighboring countries. The U.S. Agency for International Development is also funding a new regional program to support public-private partnerships in gang prevention and to further regional cooperation on this issue.

These joint initiatives with El Salvador are part of a greater effort by the U.S. government to combat gangs and gang-related violence in North and Central America. The Department of Justice, under the leadership of Attorney General Gonzales, has made the fight against gangs one of its highest priorities. Just last year, Attorney General Gonzales created a new, national anti-gang task force, the National Gang Targeting, Enforcement and Coordination Center (GangTECC) – led by the Department's Criminal Division and made up of agents from ATF, DEA, FBI, USMS, the Bureau of Prisons, and Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). GangTECC works in close collaboration with the new National Gang Intelligence Center, the Gang Squad prosecution unit in the Criminal Division, and the FBI's MS-13 National Gang Task Force, as well as with other federal, state, local and overseas law enforcement agencies.

In order to coordinate the Department's efforts to fight gangs, Attorney General Gonzales has established

an Anti-Gang Coordination Committee which organizes the Department's wide-ranging efforts to combat gangs. Additionally, every U.S. Attorney has appointed an anti-gang coordinator to provide leadership and focus to the Department's anti-gang efforts at the district level. In coordination with local law enforcement and community partners, the anti-gang coordinators have developed comprehensive, district-wide strategies to address the gang problems in their districts.

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