



Department of Justice

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**IN LARGEST FEDERAL GANG CASE EVER IN SOUTHERN CALIF.,
102 LINKED TO SOUTH LOS ANGELES' FLORENCIA 13 GANG
NOW FACE RACKETEERING, NARCOTICS CHARGES**

*Third and Fourth Indictments Unsealed in Investigation that Revealed Attacks
against African-Americans in Bid to Control South Los Angeles*

Authorities with a drug task force this morning undertook the second wave of arrests of members and associates of the Florencia 13, a street gang involved in narcotics distribution and shootings of African-Americans in neighborhoods the gang claimed to control. With the unsealing today of two more indictments, 102 defendants face federal charges ranging from racketeering to narcotics trafficking to illegal weapon possession.

Out of the 41 defendants named in the two indictments unsealed this morning, authorities arrested 18 and 10 are already in custody. After phase one of the arrests two weeks ago, authorities now have 80 defendants in custody on federal charges.

The four indictments, which were returned by a federal grand jury on September 27, result from Operation Joker's Wild, which was a three-year investigation into Florencia 13 (F13) conducted by the Los Angeles High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Task Force, which is comprised of agents and officers with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department; the Drug Enforcement Administration; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); the Los Angeles Police Department; IRS-Criminal Investigation Division; the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Los Angeles County Probation Department. The Bell Gardens Police Department, the South Gate Police Department,

the Long Beach Police Department, the Torrance Police Department, the Baldwin Park Police Department, the Azusa Police Department, the United States Marshals Service-led Regional Fugitive Task Force and California parole agents provide substantial assistance.

“The series of indictments that now have been unsealed have delivered a crushing blow to this street gang,” said United States Attorney Thomas P. O’Brien. “When we announced the first phase of this case two weeks ago, we were able to say that the leadership of the gang had been taken off the streets. Now we can say that more than 100 individuals linked to Florencia 13 face federal charges and up to life in federal prison for crimes that terrorized South Los Angeles.”

Los Angeles Sheriff Lee Baca stated: "This multi-agency task force has delivered more than action. Gangs be warned – we are coming for you and you will find no rest or security from law enforcement as long as you continue to terrorize our neighborhoods, our children and our families. This joint task force operation is only the beginning of a relentless anti-gang crackdown."

DEA Special Agent in Charge Timothy J. Landrum said, "Drugs and guns are always a deadly combination and the Florencia gang used both of them to impose their will on anyone who stood in their way. Unfortunately for them, DEA isn't easily intimidated and remains committed to locking up gang members who continue to bring their violent criminal ways into our communities. Today's arrests are a testament to the strong relationship that exists between federal, state and local officials to rid the streets of LA of drug gangs."

Operation Joker's Wild targeted F13, top to bottom, as well its criminal associates. Allegedly controlled by an incarcerated member of the Mexican Mafia prison gang and Mexican Mafia members on the street, F13 controlled drug distribution in the unincorporated areas south of the city of Los Angeles and certain other areas such as Huntington Park, according to the first indictment that was unsealed two weeks ago. The leaders collected taxes or “rent” from gang members and others who engaged in criminal conduct in F13 territory, in return for Mexican Mafia protection when they went to prison or jail.

The first indictment focused on the criminal activities of the gang's leaders and enforcers, crimes that included drug trafficking, attempted murder and murder, and extortion. The second indictment, also unsealed two weeks ago, focused solely on the drug trafficking activities of additional F13 gang members and their associates. The third indictment, which was unsealed today, focuses primarily on the customers of the F13 drug traffickers who were charged in the

first indictment. The fourth indictment, also unsealed today, concerns those who sold drugs to F13 leaders.

The indictments allege that F13 operated a number of “drug distribution dens” in the South Los Angeles area. These “dens” not only served as stash locations for drugs that were further distributed, but were also used as “drive-ins” and “walk-ins” for end-users.

The defendants arrested this morning are expected to make their initial appearances this afternoon in United States District Court in Los Angeles.

"This investigation has dealt a major blow to one of the most violent and active street gangs here in the Southland," said Robert Schoch, special agent in charge for the ICE office of investigations in Los Angeles. "As we did in this case, ICE will continue to use its powerful immigration and customs authorities to attack and dismantle violent street gangs in Los Angeles and nationwide."

An indictment contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty in court.

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