

Los Angeles Weekly - April 21, 2010

Street Gang with Ties to Mexican Mafia Raided

By Dennis Romero

Federal and state authorities raided an Ontario street gang that allegedly has ties to the Mexican Mafia. Twenty-seven members of the Black Angels were arrested in the action Wednesday morning after a Los Angeles federal grand jury indicted 50 of the gang's members on suspicion of racketeering, narcotics trafficking, violent crimes and firearms violations, according to a statement from the U.S. Attorney's Office in L.A.

The defendants were charged under the Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act for alleged violent crimes to further drug trafficking that ultimately benefited the Mexican Mafia, federal official stated. The charges also allege conspiracies to distribute heroin and methamphetamine.

About 400 federal and state law enforcers targeted the gangsters; 25 were already in custody and another eight are still being sought, according the U.S. Attorney's Office.

The 450-member Latino street gang was founded in Ontario more than 50 years ago and claims the entirety of the city as its turf. The gang allegedly recruits at local high schools. Its main business is drug sales and shaking down dealers who are not members for "taxes," federal authorities allege. At least four members of the gang are believed by officials to be members of the Mexican Mafia, and that larger prison gang allegedly benefits from proceeds of the Black Angels' drugs sales and dealer extortion.

At least one member of the gang shot at police during a high-speed chase, according to allegations in the indictments.

The lead defendant was Armando "Mando" Barajas, a 46-year-old Mexican Mafia member from Pomona who is alleged to lead the gang's narcotics operations.