

Prison Interventions: Evolving Strategies To Control Security Threat Groups

Peter M. Carlson

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One of the most difficult challenges that corrections officials face today is controlling inmate gangs. Several jurisdictions have developed excellent strategies to help neutralize the influence of major players and leaders of their gangs. These policies have developed over time and represent more of an evolution and adaptation of workable solutions rather than overnight wholesale changes that have solved this pressing source of institutional turmoil and ferment. This article will review the strategies of seven correctional systems and will highlight what each agency believes to be the key to its positive results.

Key words: corrections management, gang interventions, prison gangs, prison policy, prison violence, security threat groups

Introduction

Ask any veteran corrections official what the most difficult challenge associated with inmate management is today and you consistently will hear of their problems in controlling inmate gangs. Nearly all of the negative issues involved with inmate management revolve around race, drugs, power, and protection; the common factor that makes these always worrisome issues into major concerns is often gang affiliation.

Although all senior administrators are quick to say that these security threat groups (STGs) represent daily challenges within their walls and fences, several jurisdictions have developed excellent strategies to help neutralize the influence of major players and leaders of their gangs. These policies have developed over time and represent more of an evolution and adaptation of workable solutions rather than overnight wholesale changes that have solved this pressing source of institutional turmoil and ferment. This article will review the strategies of seven correctional systems and will highlight what each agency believes to be the key to its positive results.

The significant finding for all seven agencies has been the importance of the agency's commitment to take a firm stand in dealing with inmate gangs. In each case, the agency-specific strategy has evolved and changed over time. With each change, the policy development and implementation process was reviewed fully and completely, approved, and monitored closely by correctional administrators at the

Peter M. Carlson, DPA, is Associate Professor, Department of Government and Public Affairs, Christopher Newport University, Newport News, Virginia.

Opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the various correctional agencies referenced unless specifically cited.

most senior level of the agency; all correctional leaders who were interviewed stated they believe this to be very important. As clearly emphasized by Dale Welling, Executive Director of the National Major Gang Task Force, without the support and active involvement of executive level staff of the agency, an "STG/gang program will be doomed to failure" (Welling, 2000, p. 1).

Why do group affiliations create so much problem within a penal environment? Even if they were not engaged in activities of nefarious intent, groupings in a prison or jail can quickly represent a valid threat to individual staff members who are exercising their assigned supervisory responsibilities. Dealing with groups "inside" is a daunting task; it is difficult for an experienced correctional officer and intimidating for a new or less secure staffer. Giving orders or correcting behavior is difficult enough when one has to deal with a verbally or physically aggressive inmate, but when a member of the staff has to deal with the dynamics associated with this same person in a group setting, the interaction can become downright tense.

Having spent 32 years in adult corrections within state and federal agencies, it is fair to say that I spent an inordinate amount of time planning, implementing, and assessing institutional policy in terms of how it impacted staff/inmate lives and whether it was effective. As a junior staff member, department head, Warden, and Assistant/Regional Director for the Federal Bureau of Prisons, I clearly understood that nearly all policy issues impacted staff and inmates. The latter group and their acceptance of policy change were always greatly influenced by inmate population sub-groupings, especially the organized prison gangs. In short, institutional management is affected in critical ways by how the facility staff control the influence of these inmate groups.

Method of Gathering Data

Six of the seven agencies—California Department of Corrections (CDC), Texas Department of Corrections (TDC), Federal Bureau of Prisons, New York Department of Correctional Services (NYDCS), Florida Department of Corrections, and Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction—were selected for review in this article as the largest correctional systems in the United States (Camp & Camp, 1998) and as they each have successful gang control

models. The seventh, Connecticut, was added as a functioning exemplar of a gang management program. The individuals interviewed from each agency were the senior leaders of their organizations—Directors or Commissioners—and other significant staff members responsible for management of inmate gang tracking and program responsibilities.

These agencies have larger numbers of inmate STGs. In sheer numbers, they may not be representative of the majority of correctional systems. Nevertheless, the principles they follow, while diverse, are important factors in the management of any institutional gang problem. The various strategies they espouse certainly will apply to all prison systems, large and small.

Defining Prison Security Threat Groups

What do prison and jail authorities mean by the term gang? Webster's dictionary defines a gang as a "group of people associated together in some way; specifically, a group of workers directed by a foreman, or an organized group of criminals" (Webster's New World Dictionary of American English, 1988).

While even the most casual observer on the street may not confuse a group of workers with a criminal gang, within a correctional environment these two groups may be one and the same. While acceptable social and working groups as well as criminally oriented groups all are found in the same neighborhoods and correctional facilities, in reality there is a substantial difference between these two categories.

Criminal gangs are a significant subset of social or work groupings and differ in that their *raison d'être* is centered around illegal behavior. The group may have originally formed for social, safety, economical, or recreational purposes, but deteriorated at some point to illegal behavior as their focus—this is what defined their transition from social collective to gang. Their criminal involvement has become the center of the group's purpose and the core of activity.

Gang membership is often derived from past friendships and associations, and also requires acceptance of the gang's values and beliefs. "Very little is known firsthand about how inmates become members of gangs, except when gang membership is directly related to street gang membership" (Camp & Camp, 1985, p. ix).

Gangs have traditionally been categorized as

ethnically and racially pure (Suttles, 1968). White, black, Hispanic, and Asian groups have often banded together for safety and to further their racist philosophies. While researchers and law enforcement personnel now report a newer trend in many communities that is known as "rainbow gangs" (Landre, Miller, & Porter, 1997), in the correctional setting the STGs of major significance are separately composed of one race and some groups are "homies" from the same geographical neighborhood.

Researchers have added several other important characteristics to the criteria before a group can be considered a gang. Martin Jankowski adds the degree of organization of the group as a significant factor in his classification definition. He believes defined roles and control of the rank and file members are significant issues that define a gang. Jankowski also adds that a gang is "an organization composed of individuals who possess defiant individualist characteristics—that is to say, a gang is organized defiant individualism" (Jankowski, 1991, p. 29).

Today's street gangs are becoming tomorrow's prison gangs. Institutional managers report that the "drive-by shooting mentality" has moved into the prisons and jails as the young offenders have been convicted of various gang-related offenses. Law enforcement and correctional agencies are dealing with individuals who are more violent, organized, and sophisticated. Gangs have a well-established communication system between incarcerated prisoners, institutions, and illicit activity in the community.

Researchers are generally clear on the differentiation between a street gang and a prison gang. Curry and Decker distinguish them by highlighting those gangs within the institutional setting as being more organized and more disciplined than their counterparts in the community. They note that there are relationships between the two groupings, but "it is not a seamless move from one to the other, and the differences can be quite profound" (Curry & Decker, 1998, p. 134).

Knox has developed a typology that also focuses on the organization and structure of the group (Knox, 1998). While gangs will vary a great deal with this element, he stresses that the organizational development is the key factor in this classification scheme. Within the overall consideration of organizational sophistication, gangs that we find in the prison envi-

ronment seem to be significantly more problematic if they have a strong, connected, central leadership structure that controls the membership. This is certainly the case as one considers the extreme differences between, for example, the various Crips factions found in prisons across the country and the Aryan Brotherhood (AB).

Some prison gangs, such as the Crips, are really just transplanted individual street gangs that happen to be confined at the moment. Others, like the Aryan Brotherhood, were conceived within prison walls and fences and have a centralized authority in their three-member commission. Whereas the Crips and similarly situated gangs have virtually no leadership commonality or operational continuity between separate factions within neighborhoods, cities, or separate correctional facilities, the Aryan Brotherhood has a tightly controlled national structure that is extremely responsive to the leadership figures. This is true even when they are dispersed across the prisons of the country.

Also differentiating institutional gangs from their street counterparts, the most sophisticated prison gangs are further defined by their "blood-in, blood-out" criterion for membership. This code requires a "wannabe" candidate to kill a target specified by the gang leadership in order to qualify for initiation. Further, many prison gang members believe that once the individual is "made", he is made for life; the only way out is death. Fong, Vogel, and Buentello's (1995) research within the Texas Department of Corrections found a widespread gang belief that walking away from group membership carried deadly ramifications (Fong et al., 1995). The imprisoned community, often a large group within a contained area, is extremely aware of tensions, disputes, and ill will. It is simply hard to break away from those with whom one has been deeply connected. Even within multi-institution penal systems, it is difficult for a defector to hide from his former associates.

All this said, correctional administrators do not spend a great deal of time worrying about the difference between street gangs and prison gangs, or how they originated. What is significant today is the staff's ability to control prison gangs' potential ability to disrupt prison and jail operations (Fleisher & Rison, 1999). The presence of gangs has a colossal impact on other inmates and, if not checked, has major implica-

tions for institution security and order.

Correctional Strategies

Prison gang violence and related criminal behavior have been management concerns since the earliest gangs developed in the California Youth Authority in the 1950s. Gang management in correctional settings has evolved and shifted over the years, but all jurisdictions today continue to utilize variants of two philosophies: suppression and intervention.

Suppression is always the first tactic as correctional personnel struggle to maintain discipline and control over what can best be viewed as a population of dangerous, violence-prone, often sophisticated criminal personalities. The control of street and prison gangs while they are confined requires the identification of individual members, a system to track their individual and collective behavior, and interruption of their negative influence by placing them in a Special Housing Unit (SHU) if their conduct becomes a problem. This is the predominant means of dealing with disruptive inmates in the prison and jail setting and is the model in place in nearly every correctional jurisdiction.

Gang programs, or strategies to offer "a way out" of the criminal organization, have a checkered history of success in the community. All began with good intentions, but those programs that empowered former gang members and did not exercise appropriate organizational control have deteriorated as the gang members demonstrated their ability to steer the program and its funding into illegal or immoral activities (Madden, 1993).

Intervention programs, sometimes referred to as "deganging," have been in existence for many years, predominantly in youth offender facilities, but only recently have been developed by a few adult correctional agencies as a major strategy for attacking the structure of the STGs.

Those correctional jurisdictions that have managed to involve affiliated inmates in programs designed to educate the offender and to eventually lead the participants to renounce their gang membership have found some success. Prisoners given no choices other than to participate in the program and then "opt out" have occasionally been willing to make this bold change. Critics argue that this purported change

is situational and only a means of manipulating their way out of lock-down status; proponents counter with, "So what? Their behavior within the prison setting has been modified." While these programs are still relatively new, the jurisdictions attempting to use them are confident the programs are serving their intended purpose.

Institutional-based gang programs tend to utilize general education efforts mixed with specific cognitive-behavioral interventions. Gangs are generally perceived as an extended family, and interventions follow a multi-modal approach. Education programs usually involve the typical remedial and adult basic education offerings, as well as information geared to raise the individual's level of awareness of illegal substance abuse issues and victimization. Other important programmatic elements require gang members to participate in social cognition enhancement; this is achieved with role playing, self-control improvement, moral reasoning development, drug treatment, and other forms of social problem solving (Hollin, 1993). Programs emphasize the development of trust between inmates and staff as well as among the inmates in the intervention cohort. The typical adult prison gang treatment model relies less on educational and confrontational approaches, and more on individual and small group counseling.

Although many still debate the merits and effectiveness of correctional intervention and treatment designed to change any behavior of convicted offenders, there have been a number of studies generated in the last decade that have documented positive results. Scholars have clearly identified that programs focused on cognitive behavioral change have had good outcomes (Andrews, Zinger, Hoge, Bonta, Gendreau, & Cullen, 1990). This meta-analysis assessment spanned numerous jurisdictions and various correctional programs; the positive results seem to be a result of effort spent targeting an individual's criminogenic factors (criminal beliefs and values, inmate attitudes, and criminal associations). This information can be very helpful in the design of gang intervention programs in the prison and jail setting. The National Institute of Corrections has published a terrific anthology of many such studies and is commended as an important reference point for those developing an institutional-based program designed to change gang beliefs and asso-

ciations (National Institute of Corrections, 1999). However, as some wags have offered, you have to be able to identify them before you can deal with them.

Recognition of Group Members

Hardcore bad guys are fairly recognizable by their actions and activities. Within the correctional setting, staff as well as inmates can recognize a deviant group in a reasonable time period. Observed behavior is the key to this identification. "Our staff are rather skilled at identifying those inmates who 'run with' the negative element of our populations in the various institutions," said Michael B. Cooksey, Assistant Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). "We work hard to train all personnel to observe inmate behavior and to report changes in individual or group conduct" (Personal communication, May 3, 2000). The agency relies upon admitted friendship and affiliation, tattoos, personal possessions, media reports, documentation from other correctional agencies, and—most importantly—observations of trained staff in terms of who the individual inmate associates with, who he writes and telephones, and the flow of financial transactions to and from his institutional account.

Commissioner John Armstrong, Connecticut Department of Correction (DOC), also credits the success of their gang control program to law enforcement personnel observations and alertness. Initial information about gang membership is often received prior to the commitment of the prisoner from a statewide police network and through presentence investigations by probation and parole staff. "Our success to date has been a product of interagency cooperation. The Department of Correction receives valid street information about an individual's group affiliation and, in turn, our staff notifies local police and parole officials of the impending release of those offenders who have any gang history" (Personal communication, April 17, 2000).

In fact, five states in the Northeast United States—Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont—recently have joined together to create the Northeast Gang Intelligence System. They have developed a multiuse database and made it available to any criminal justice agency. This outstanding system is available on a 24-hour basis and permits any member jurisdiction to search the data-

base for individual information (photographs, nicknames, affiliation), research information contained in the reference library, and a bulletin board for queries and other postings. This relatively new program is unique in that it is inexpensive yet available when users need data on short notice and during off hours (Gaseau, 2000).

The BOP hosts a joint operation known as the Sacramento Intelligence Unit (SIU) that is staffed by the BOP, the U.S. Marshals Service, and Federal Probation. The unit supports all federal agencies and provides a direct liaison with hundreds of state and local law enforcement and correctional agencies. The SIU was created in 1990 to provide a central intelligence repository for STGs and others that present the potential for significant threat to institutional and public safety. The operational intelligence and direct investigation support offered by this office have been credited by many as an exceptionally important resource to correctional officials as staff struggle to identify and track organized inmate criminal activity both in and out of the penal environment.

In the last 2 years, the BOP also has assigned intelligence staff members to external liaison positions that have been developed to enhance communication between and among their agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and various federal, state, and local strike force teams. They have worked closely with the FBI's Safe Streets Initiatives and believe the information gathered during the early stages of criminal investigations as well as during the prosecution process has been extremely helpful. This sharing of resources has greatly improved the intelligence available to BOP prior to the gang member arriving at the front door of the designated institution of confinement.

It is clear that open communication and sharing of information between state and federal prison jurisdictions as well as between correctional systems and community police organizations are very important aspects of effective gang member identification and management. Gangs are multijurisdictional, often very organized, and have efficient communication systems. Government agencies must develop these same attributes. Programs designed to manage and control STGs and gangs must be able to cross traditional lines of political jurisdiction (Committee on Youth Report to the Florida House of Representatives, 1987). Prisons and jails benefit immensely from

police street intelligence and pre-sentence report information; credible data about an individual's association that is available upon his or her admission promotes a much more effective gang management strategy. Conversely, community law enforcement activity is enhanced greatly if the federal, state, and local gendarmes are given an appropriate and timely notification prior to the inmate's release and have access to summary information compiled during his or her confinement.

Intelligence: A Two-Way Street

Correctional staff have been gathering and compiling information regarding their clients for hundreds of years. The bulk of these data are about specific prisoners and the information usually is utilized for very specific classification and case management purposes related to institutional admission, classification, program planning, and release functions. Historically, this inmate-specific knowledge has been a paper product and not easily organized into a useable compilation of information that can be used for intelligence purposes regarding groups of inmates. In the past 20 years, this situation has changed in many jurisdictions and the modern "age of information" has been adopted slowly by prison and jail administrators. With current databases and powerful software, computers have made a huge difference in the ability of personnel to collect, organize, and search for specific groups and individuals that pose a threat.

This is key to an agency's ability to successfully control group threats to the good order of a prison or jail. Information must be accurately collected, organized, and securely stored and then be made available on demand by those responsible for inmate management. Intelligence must flow to all users within the correctional system within a timely manner. This "intelligence cycle" will ensure that raw information is verified and made available to policy

makers to use in decision making and action (Godwin, 1999).

While the sources of information are endless and the data points often unverified, it falls to the central intelligence processing unit to sort the intelligence stream into a systematic and orderly database with honest attribution as to what is verified and credible: finished intelligence. This information management process requires a knowledgeable staffer to evaluate and analyze the raw input, sort it into its proper venue and context in appropriate files, and add it to the database. The analyst is obviously an important cog in this machine as this individual is charged with integrating unrelated bits and pieces of information from many sources. These data points form the all-important "big picture" and subsequently permit the analyst to assess new events and draw logical conclusions. Senior management officials must ascertain that bright and organized individuals are placed in these important analyst positions.

The crux of a successful gang management program is intelligence flowing from field sources to the central intelligence unit followed by good analysis redirected back to institutional leaders and security staff. Strategic intelligence that is valuable to management staff is timely, relevant, reliable, and valid. Institutional executives need information that they can count on. This is the payback that follows the phenomenal amount of staff time and energy that went into training personnel and channeling the raw institutional intelligence observations to the central intelligence unit. The NYDCS has an excellent model in place in which local institution security staff submit daily Unusual Incident Reports to the department's central office. These reports, as well as other key intelligence data (number of assaults, amount of commissary sales data, numbers and types of inmate grievances, etc), are analyzed routinely. Summary information is provided daily to the commissioner and senior staff members. Additionally, weekly Early Warning Alert reports are transmitted electronically from the central office to New York wardens to provide them and their staff with current information regarding significant trends that have been noted (James Flateau, Director of Public Information, New York Department of Correctional Services, personal communication, April 20, 2000).

The CDC, the largest correctional agency in the United States, has another good example of an

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institution intelligence process. The CDC devotes 75 intelligence staff to gathering and verifying inmate-related information. These staffers are assigned to each institution, parole field offices, additional law enforcement field units, and the Sacramento CDC Headquarters. The California system is unique in that its own investigative staff work both CDC institutions and the streets. As the CDC has parole supervision responsibilities, the crossover of intelligence from the free communities to the state prisons is very open. Brian Parry, California's Assistant Director of the Law Enforcement and Investigations Unit, has spent 18 years in this CDC unit. He comments that "you need a structured intelligence system in place in order to keep up with these organized groups. The gangs constantly change their inter- and intra-group alliances and sporadically change their modes of operation. With such fluid gang operations, it is important that staff are tracking the latest intelligence" (personal communication, April 24, 2000).

The various correctional jurisdictions throughout the United States each offer different perspectives and strategies for dealing with STGs. It may be helpful to review what some of the larger correctional systems in the United States have changed in recent years in their operational strategies for dealing with STGs.

California Department of Corrections

When it comes to raw numbers, the California Department of Corrections has the dubious distinction of holding the largest group of gang-affiliated offenders. Its most recent survey indicates it tracks approximately 100,000 gang members, or nearly one of every three prisoners (B. Parry, personal communication, April 24, 2000). California institutions are the birthplace of several STGs. As the prison gangs became a dominant force in the 1970s, California initially developed a policy of separation for the different groups; they collectively placed separate, warring groups in different yards. For example, the Aryan Brotherhood was housed at San Quentin, the Black Guerrilla Family and Mexican Mafia at Folsom, and La Nuestra Familia (Northern Structure) was housed at Deuel Vocational Institute and Soledad.

California recognized a trend of increasing violence and modified its gang management procedures in the early 1980s by shifting strategy to integrated

yards. It found this resulted in less violence and provided less recognition of the gang membership and their leaders. However, despite the improvement, the inmates affiliated with these STGs continued their negative pressure and activities and the leadership for the CDC came to the belief that validated gang members had to be segregated from the open institutions.

In the late 1980s, California authorities again shifted course and directed that all confirmed gang members be placed in the newly developed SHUs opened at Pelican Bay, Corcoran, and, more recently, at Tehachapie. Validated members are designated to these special units for the duration of their confinement. They are offered the opportunity to participate in a debriefing program that is designed to separate these prisoners from their chosen destructive lifestyle, and they eventually are given the choice of gang renunciation. California's SHUs have received a great deal of federal court oversight and a recent court case, *Castillo v. CDC*, permits an inactive gang member to disassociate from the gangs. This legal opinion specified if an inmate has been inactive for a specified period of time, he or she is not required to renounce that affiliation. These offenders are reviewed carefully and then given the opportunity for placement in an open maximum-security prison for a period of observation.

Cal Terhune, the retired veteran director of the sprawling CDC, is a leader who believes in allowing his experienced staff the room to do their work. But he stays abreast of key issues through the use of management indicators. One of the programs from which he receives regular daily briefings is the Special Service Unit, the office that is responsible for gang intelligence throughout the system. This Law Enforcement and Investigations Unit meets with the director and deputy director early every morning to update the executive staff on serious incidents and any gang-related activity. This information is gathered and analyzed carefully by this staff. As previously noted, the department's intelligence network strives to cover all bases of gang involvement, both inside its institutions as well as monitoring those on parole in their home communities. Terhune notes:

Our history speaks very clearly about the tremendous impact that street and prison gangs have had on those of us in the corrections business. Organized groups are a major factor for professionals in the penal institution manage-

ment business; gangs drive the level of violence—both toward one another and toward our staff. Senior managers and leaders simply must have a good process in place to monitor their behavior or we will find ourselves behind the power curve. This business is very unforgiving and mistakes can cost us in a big way (personal communication, April 23, 2000).

Texas Department of Corrections

As the second largest correctional system in the United States, the vast Texas Department of Corrections (TDC) has been through some difficult times with violent and difficult prisoners. As the TDC went through a transition from its old inmate "tender" system to today's staff-run correctional environment, it experienced a very high level of assaults and homicides. The inmate tenders—inmates that were used by the old TDC to keep order and assist with the supervision of other prisoners—were dismantled by new leadership but the change came slowly and with great trauma. Between January 1984 and September 1985, 52 prisoners were killed at the hands of other inmates (*Newsweek*, 1986). The Texas correctional system had earned a tough reputation as a severely overcrowded and violent department.

In essence, the TDC entered the fray and took a strong role in reestablishing staff control over the 27 prisons that made up the system at that time. The prison gangs that had seized the power during the transition period were locked up and separated from the rest of the system. Up until this time, the TDC had not acknowledged that it had a "gang problem." In point of fact, as the leadership and line staff of the department took a strong stand in 1985, the TDC turned the corner and began to proactively manage its STGs. Over time, the department has become much more sophisticated in its procedures and eventually developed a confirmation process in its STG procedures that has been court challenged and approved. The gang identification and validation effort in Texas relies upon designated full-time intelligence staff at each prison, each regional office, and the central office.

The individuals that make up the STGs are, once confirmed, placed in a long-term SHU. Inmates remain in this status unless they choose to renounce their gang status. To promote the prisoners' decision to walk away from their affiliation, they are offered

protection and placement at a "safe harbor" institution. This designated facility is generally one of the lighter facilities within the TDC network of institutions. To date, the inmates that have renounced STG membership predominantly have been of groups that are not considered to be "blood in, blood out."

Director Wayne Scott and his executive staff meet with TDC intelligence staff once each week to review new information and to discuss developing security threat group issues. They also are in constant touch with the TDC Emergency Action Center, a 24-hour/day, 7-day/week operation that is the central reporting system for any incident that occurs throughout the state prison realm. This central control center also serves as the data bank for tracking key indicator data that relate to Texas STGs and other disruptive inmate-related incidents. Director Scott stated "we take gangs very seriously in Texas; we monitor them closely and take swift action when it is appropriate to do so" (personal communication, April 23, 2000).

Federal Bureau of Prisons

The BOP carefully has identified and monitored its STGs since the 1970s—no small task as the agency is the third largest in the country and currently is responsible for more than 140,000 offenders. All staff in all institutions are trained to observe inmate behavior and pass observations of unusual behavior on to the Special Investigation Supervisor at their local facility. When a prisoner is confirmed locally as a member of one of the STGs, he is monitored carefully throughout the duration of his confinement.

If an STG becomes a significant problem to institution staff, the group's status collectively can be upgraded from STG to a higher level known as a disruptive group (DG). This process is accomplished when the intelligence staff analysts find that the group's rate of involvement in serious disciplinary matters reaches a critical level. This "threat index" is a valid method of identifying which inmate gangs demonstrate more violent and threatening behavior. These threat indexes offer a reasonable means of comparing a specific group with a random sample of inmates from the general population. The analysts report any significant group's index increase to the assistant director for correctional programs and, if warranted, the group is elevated from STG to DG status. Among other results of this classification change, BOP policy

mandates that all members of these federal DGs are classified appropriately and confined only at high-security U.S. penitentiaries.

In the last 2 years, the bureau has been placing the leadership of verified DGs at their penitentiaries at Marion, Illinois, and Florence, Colorado. The BOP is now in the process of developing a new program at the U.S. penitentiary, Marion, Illinois, that has been designed to work with violent and predatory prisoners as well as gang-affiliated inmates that have been transferred from other federal penitentiaries across the nation. This program, entitled The Enhanced CODE (Challenge, Opportunity, Discipline, and Ethics) Program, is intended to modify the individual's assaultive and drug-oriented identity. The goal is to replace negative group affiliation with involvement in pro-social behaviors.

The BOP is attempting to build on its successful program model that has been very effective in its drug treatment programs. Research has demonstrated that prisoners who complete a residential drug treatment program receive fewer misconduct reports after care and that, in the short term, this treatment program reduces recidivism and drug use among the program graduates. The agency believes that similar program elements will be effective in modifying the negative associations of inmates with STGs. Research has demonstrated that this cognitive restructuring model has had positive impact on inmates' lives and these results have been confirmed in several correctional agencies.

This Enhanced CODE Program, currently in an early development stage, is a unit-based residential treatment program that emphasizes strict control of participants and the acquisition of positive social values and a non-criminal lifestyle. Inmates in the program are expected to deal honestly with their criminal thinking and criminal behavior, their attraction to violence, and their victimization of others. Within this approach that is designed for a minimum duration of 3 years and 1,000 hours, gang-associated prisoners will work their way through three phases that emphasize values development, criminal lifestyle negativity, violence intervention, victim impact instruction, cognitive skills restructuring, and relapse prevention.

The veteran psychologist and program director at Marion, Dr. Michael Ahrens, noted that the mental health intervention in the treatment of prison gangs

has been very limited in the past: "While several states have been pioneers in this effort and have made remarkable progress in the control of gang violence, there seems to have been no clear theoretical basis on how best to treat gang-affiliated inmates. Generally, a harm reduction model has been seen as the intervention goal" (personal communication, April 28, 2000). The BOP hopes to expand on the program models that have been developed successfully by several states to date.

Program development of this unique approach has been crafted carefully by the executive staff of the BOP, a small group of senior managers composed of the director, assistant directors, and regional directors for the entire agency. They worked closely with a focused work group that involved a number of wardens, psychologists, and others with expertise with the most aggressive and violent inmates in the federal system. The program will be monitored closely by the agency leaders, the warden and staff at the Marion facility, and the BOP's research team.

New York Department of Correctional Services

The state of New York, with the fourth largest inmate population in the country, has dealt with organized inmate misbehavior in a traditional manner that is somewhat different from other jurisdictions. Commissioner Glenn Goord, a veteran of 26 years with the department and chief executive officer for the past 4 years, stated the NYDCS has known of organized gang issues for many years:

We recognized the gang presence many years ago; we know that we have gang problems, but in the process of recognizing and dealing with the problem, we do not want to empower the affiliated inmates. We believe *any* group of inmates under *any* umbrella can have an extremely negative effect on our institutional environments. We don't think it's important to label them ... we simply do not want to allow *any* group to control others. If they demonstrate individual or group behaviors that are against our regulations, we document the behavior and take individual disciplinary action (personal communication, April 20, 2000).

Simply stated, New York's senior leadership has developed control procedures to address individual behavior. Commissioner Goord noted that their minority population is very high—nearly 83 percent of the prison population—and each ethnic group has

many subcultures. The department sees this as a delicate issue and does not get concerned with groups of one race gathering together. It does, however, expect staff to react if any group's behavior becomes problematic.

The agency Director of Public Information, James Flateau, emphatically noted that the department works very hard at not empowering any of the prison gangs. If representatives of the media seek information on the state's STGs, the agency will not release these data. "We will not discuss numbers outside of the prison system. We acknowledge that street gangs may violate the law and are sanctioned with confinement; obviously, we take them into our system. We will monitor their behavior, but treat them as we would any other offender" (personal communication, April 28, 2000).

The executive leadership of the NYDCS stated they are careful to delegate inmate monitoring and the responsibility for intelligence gathering to the lowest possible level. They noted that they expect line staff to identify and confirm any incidence of negative, organized group activity. The commissioner stressed that the agency senior managers—from the commissioner to the wardens—stay visibly in the information loop. As with other jurisdictions, the NYDCS senior staff are very clear that management of any disruptive group must be a priority of staff at the most senior level of the agency.

Florida Department of Corrections

As the fifth largest prison system in the United States, the Florida DOC has a relatively small number of prison gang members. Florida currently has classified approximately 4,000 inmates out of a total population of 73,000 as members of STGs (Cory Godwin, Vice chair, State Classification Office, Florida DOC, personal communication, May 2, 2000). The DOC utilizes a strict validation criterion to confirm gang membership and believes this accounts for its smaller numbers.

Marta Villacorta, Regional Director for the DOC's Region IV, stressed that Florida has developed a solid information base that is computerized and functional (personal communication, May 4, 2000). The process begins at the state reception centers and focuses on early identification of gang members. Gang members are not placed immediately in SHUs but

are given the chance to adjust appropriately in the open population. Florida's gang management program is behavioral based and if the affiliated offender becomes a problem, the staff move to limit the inmate's contact with others by locking the inmate down.

As part of her emphasis on important prison issues, Villacorta asks her wardens to reference consistently the key management indicators that reflect day-to-day operations of matters ranging from budget to STGs. The department receives monthly intelligence data from its central office, and these data are key for local staff to track affiliated prisoners closely. Wardens are asked to ensure their staff are carefully observing inmates who are known to be gang affiliated.

Florida recently has received federal drug-free grant money and has used this funding to develop a new link analysis program to assist them with gang tracking and to facilitate the organization of a broad range of inmate data. Although still in the development stage, this new analytical tool will enable Florida staff to couple such diverse information streams as inmate financial accounts, inmate visitor records, inmate telephone data, and offender disciplinary records and will connect this information to the Department's STG database. Godwin said he believes this linkage will be extremely helpful to its overall gang management program (personal communication, May 2, 2000).

Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction

As in Connecticut, the leadership emphasis that has created programmatic changes in how the correctional agency treats and handles inmate gangs started at the top of the organization. Beginning in the early 1990s, the leadership of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) recognized that institution and street gangs were becoming a problem within the department. The director, Dr. Reginald A. Wilkinson, and his executive staff began to focus seriously on the problem of gang disruption in 1992. This was a major task given the size of Ohio corrections; the department is the sixth largest state correctional agency in the United States.

Staff of the agency admit today that prior to the collection and analysis of key gang data, they were

"in denial" and did not believe they had a serious problem. In the words of Wilkinson, "we thought gangs were an issue on the East Coast and on the West Coast ... not here in the heartland" (personal communication, April 12, 2000). Yet the reality of the organization of negative inmate activity was recognized and the Ohio DRC began to gather information on gang members and to organize a functional database. As the department began to develop and refine its approach to gang control, the agency was rocked with a major institution disturbance at its maximum security facility at Lucasville. The 11-day hostage situation and siege ended in tragedy when rioting prisoners murdered Correctional Officer Robert Vallandingham and nine inmates. Subsequent investigation of this terrible event found that gang leadership played a major role in the planning of the riot and in the negotiations that followed during the disturbance.

This gang-organized crisis created an urgent sensitivity to the need to push forward with the identification and tracking capability of affiliated offenders within the department. The DRC collected solid data and eventually computerized the database, enabling state officials to track affiliated inmates effectively throughout the system. The department today prides itself on competent identification of gang members, positive tracking of these potential problem-makers, and proactive interdiction of negative and disruptive behavior.

The Ohio DRC currently is focusing on improving the transition of gang-affiliated prisoners from the institutions to their home communities as they are released. The department has benefited from key information from community sources and believes it is important to return the courtesy to local and state officials as they must deal with the inmate upon his or her sentence completion.

Ohio corrections staff also are contemplating various options they can implement to attempt to re-focus gang members out of the negative associations connected with group membership. They are researching the variants of the two models now in use: renunciation or zero tolerance.

Director Wilkinson stressed the need for senior staff leaders to stay involved in the management of STG members. He emphasized the need for routine briefings by staff who have day-to-day responsibility for gang management, and highlighted the impor-

tance for deputy and assistant directors to stay abreast of current developments. While quick to differentiate between micro-management and executive leadership interest, Wilkinson strongly supports the involvement of agency leaders in the gang management program and in the development and implementation of new initiatives that deal with this issue.

The Connecticut Department of Correction

John Armstrong, Commissioner of the Connecticut DOC, is very clear when he describes his agency's previous gang control policy: "what gang?" He candidly admits that the DOC was like nearly every other correctional agency in following the usual evolution in the development of a realistic policy of gang control. It usually shifts from an initial stage of denying that the agency has any type of gang issue to a second stage of reviewing institutional data and recognizing that incidents consistently involve organized, problematic inmates that are banded together by some affiliation. The third stage is a reactive stance in which the agency decision is to attempt to neutralize the known gang leadership. In Connecticut, the DOC now has moved on to a fourth stage: the department is engaged in proactively preventing involvement in gang activity. Staff no longer permit any member of a designated security risk group to participate in congregate activities in any Connecticut penal facility.

Commissioner Armstrong believes that stages two and three are where most agencies falter; staff begin to feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problem. He believes that gang leadership is organized in a similar fashion to most correctional and law enforcement agencies: when the commissioner is "out of state," it names an acting commissioner as do the STGs. If a gang leader is neutralized by transfer or

If a gang leader is neutralized by transfer or long-term lockup, the group names new leadership; like corrections officials, they are prepared for succession.

long-term lockup, the group names new leadership; like corrections officials, they are prepared for succession. This sense of not being able to permanently "cut off the head of the snake" creates great frustration on the part of institutional leadership. This becomes the challenge of correctional leadership; the agency must be willing to "do what it takes" to continue to disable the gang organization as it continues to grow new leaders. "In Connecticut, I let it be known that we would dedicate whatever number of cells that it required to lock them down. If it took two, three, or four prisons, then that's what we would commit" (J. Armstrong, personal communication, April 17, 2000).

The department implemented its program in 1994 by securing in SHUs the gang leadership and their replacements as they stepped forward. The DOC created disincentives for these individuals by curtailing their access to most privileges and programs. Gang leaders were provided with constitutionally sufficient conditions, but little more.

Each prison throughout the Connecticut DOC has specific intelligence staff who focus on gang activity. These highly trained specialists work with all institutional staff to observe inmate groupings, unusual activity, and signs of other collective behavior. Staff from various departments contribute to this data bank, including those departments that typically are not associated with gathering intelligence; for example, medical providers look for tattoos and other markings, education staff observe relationships between offenders, and so forth. All information concerning suspected STG prisoners is forwarded to the DOC's central intelligence unit. Connecticut utilizes specific criteria for gang membership validation but the presence of a gang within the system does not mean the gang will be classified as an STG and placed in the DOC's special gang program. It is first necessary that the gang be large enough to be a threat, demonstrate a propensity for violence, and present management problems for institutional staff.

When an inmate is highlighted as having affiliated with a gang, either as a validated member or simply as an affiliate, the prisoner is observed carefully by staff members. The offender is notified that he will be watched closely and if he presents any sign of active engagement as a gang member, the DOC personnel implement their program.

The Connecticut program for gang members is an

outstanding example of a functional approach. There are three phases to the program. The first phase involves total separation of gang associates, and the inmates eventually are allowed to volunteer for the "deganging" program. The second phase permits cohorts of 12 inmates (divided among various groups in an equal manner) to participate in a highly structured 3-4 month education agenda. The third phase intermixes the gang members in cells and the individuals must demonstrate their ability to get along and rise above their former STG membership. If successful, they are permitted to graduate to the general population.

Key Issues of Gang Management across Jurisdictions

It is extremely difficult to define successful intervention in any prison or jail gang problem. It would be easy to define positive results as a reduction in the level of violence, but that would not offer a complete assessment. It is possible to define success as staff and inmate attitudes about their safety when working or living within the facility but this too would not provide the overall data defining the effective neutralization of inmate gangs. In fact, staff from each jurisdiction interviewed for this article stated their strategy was working according to these definitions. But each correctional agency must define success in accord with its own unique problems and challenges. What is of critical importance to the widespread California DOC may be of somewhat lesser importance to a more compact prison system such as that in Rhode Island.

Each correctional jurisdiction first must decide strategically some basic gang management issues. First, will the agency track gang membership or only focus on individual behavior? Will gang members be dispersed throughout the agency's institutions or centralized in one location? If consolidated, what control measures must be developed to maintain them in a safe and secure manner? Will gang members be mainstreamed in open population or placed in separate, segregated housing? Are gang members to be separated by placing separate STGs at different institutions?

Each decision required in the development and refining of a gang management program has a cost associated with it in terms of budget, staff, and

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facility availability. The cost of any special inmate management program can be high and the resources associated with STG management are huge. On the other hand, each agency leader interviewed for this article was clear in his or her belief that the costs of ignoring negative inmate groups were much higher than the resources required to face this challenge proactively.

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Speaking as a former warden and senior correctional administrator, I believe very firmly in this principle: whatever the boss pays attention to will get done. The management of gangs/STGs in the correctional environment is critical today and it is imperative that agency leaders develop this key component of daily operations so the process is clear and working at all levels of the organization. Senior staff of an agency simply must pay attention to the detail and nuance of this program so subordinates understand that this is a key responsibility. Mid- and senior-level administrators must explain the urgency of all staff contributing valid observations to the central database and being alert to changes that are unusual in the institutions. It's not enough to place this requirement in policy and then expect that it will happen. Those correctional leaders who have developed exceptional programs are the individuals that emphasize this program on a regular basis to their staff. These individuals receive regular intelligence briefings from their senior staff who collect, analyze, and distribute this information, and routinely remind their colleagues of the importance of proactive gang management activities.

The dynamics of inmate gangs have changed over the years and the groups inside are tied to each other across state and federal jurisdictions. Street gangs have moved inside and now play a role in many disruptive events of numerous institutions. Today's street gangs are tomorrow's prison gangs, and staff at all levels of correctional organizations must stay on top of the flow of new information that is so important to gang management efforts.

Kathleen Hawk Sawyer, Director of the Federal BOP, is clear as to the importance of the focus of all senior-level penal administrators in the management of these potentially negative groups within the correctional environment: "This must be a priority

for correctional leaders at the executive level of each agency. Gang behavior, if not managed effectively, will undermine all of the good things staff are doing at the institution level. Gang management is a crucial task that mandates the critical analysis and planning of high-level staff on a regular basis" (personal communication, April 4, 2000).

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