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Sacramento Detectives Step Up Efforts Against Growing Street Gang Activity

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With nearly 50 known gangs operating in Sacramento County and possibly more still under the radar, the local sheriff's gang unit is stepping up its campaign to curb violence and crime tied to gang activity. Deputies say the fight is relentless, but critical, as gang-related offenses continue to impact public safety across neighborhoods.

Detectives Tahir Jones and Steve Hernandez, Sacramento County Sheriff's Office Gang Unit members, are at the forefront of this ongoing battle. From executing search warrants to

combing through social media feeds, they are working around the clock to dismantle gang networks and prevent violence before it erupts.

“It just seems like it’s never-ending, but it’s absolutely a problem,” said Detective Jones.

Modern technology has added new challenges to their job. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have become digital battlegrounds for what gang members themselves call “net banging.” Members use these spaces to flaunt weapons, boast about criminal activity, and taunt rivals, often escalating conflicts that spill into the streets.

“That’s the phrase they use for it,” said Hernandez. “They will basically try to flex on their rivals.”

Jones added, “I’ve seen people get on Instagram Live and describe the crime they are going to commit and go through the game plan on how they are going to commit the crime.”

Social media isn’t just a stage for threats but a source of intelligence. Detectives use the content posted online to identify suspects, monitor activities, and track connections across gangs, which have grown more decentralized and fluid. Unlike traditional gangs often bound to neighborhood turf, newer “hybrid gangs” can span regions, unified by shared symbols and criminal behaviors.

“Now with the hybrid gang, you can be from a bunch of different neighborhoods, but you just share a common sign symbol, and then you pattern or predicate crimes,” Hernandez explained.

The sheriff’s office remains committed to visible enforcement and proactive policing, despite shifts in other cities. Some departments across the country have disbanded gang units in recent years over concerns of racial profiling and lack of oversight. In contrast, Sacramento County has doubled down on its strategy, seeing measurable results.

“If we are not doing enforcement, we are letting our presence be known,” said Jones. “They know when the gang task is riding around.”

In 2023 alone, the team seized 479 illegal firearms and made close to 200 arrests. These numbers point to a tangible impact on local crime, something the detectives argue is essential to improving community safety and quality of life.

“I think that we are a unit that does target gang-related crime and gang activity, but it’s a job that has to be done, because it really affects the overall quality of life for the community,” Jones said.

While the Sacramento Police Department restructured its gang unit in 2021 to focus more broadly on violent crimes, the sheriff’s office remains firm in its focused approach. Their position is clear: confronting gang-related crime head-on, regardless of racial or social narratives, is key to securing public peace.

“There’s a belief that gangs are out there just to target certain communities and just to put people in jail,” said Jones. “But we are targeting the behavior, not the background.”