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2300 M STREET, N.W., SUITE 910  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20037  
(202) 466-7820



DARREL W. STEPHENS  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

POLICE EXECUTIVE  
RESEARCH FORUM



**An Examination of the Morphology  
of Baltimore's Violence Prone  
Drug Gangs and**

**Presentation of a Strategy Designed to Make  
the Use of Violence a Losing Proposition**

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**ACQUISITIONS**

By

Det. Edward Burns  
Homicide Division  
Baltimore Police Department

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This report examines the gang phenomenon and introduces an investigative approach to combat Baltimore's violence prone gangs that systematically employ terror to promulgate the will of a sociopathic leader. The gangs have a devastating effect stirring fear among citizens and creating an atmosphere of violence so pervasive that our youth now view atrocious assault as a normal response to perceived slights.

Unlike many cities where gangs are easily identified by flaunted colors and a continuity of organization, Baltimore gangs have escaped easy detection. Traditionally, local law enforcement viewed the gang in the context of a drug organization, applying standard investigative techniques consistent with that particular crime. This report will demonstrate that the evolution of the gang -- coupled with a dramatic increase in the drug problem -- has rendered standard investigative approaches ineffective.

A gang differs from a drug organization in structure, objective, and methodology, specifically in its application of violence. The drug organization is a small, loose confederation of individuals normally in their late 20s or older. The group unites to cash in on the lucrative drug market and its foremost goal is the accumulation of wealth. The drug of preference is cocaine and the network of distribution is above the street level. The use of violence is approached as a defense mechanism, a reaction in the fact of a perceived crisis. It is a by-product of the trade. The number of this type of organization has risen dramatically in the 1980s with the widespread acceptance of cocaine and its derivatives by the indulgent public.

Contrasted, the gang is an organization of tightly bonded youths joined together and controlled by a single criminal personality. It is conceived and nurtured by an individual as a vehicle whose primary purpose is to raise the individual to a position of power among his peer group. In Baltimore, the energy of the gang is directed to narcotic distribution or a support element of the drug world such as murder-for-hire gangs, examples being Nathan "Bodie" Barksdale and Dennis Wise. (Other cities have experienced gangs that specialize in other fields of crimes, such as hijacking or extortion.)

The gang controls the line of distribution from bulk wholesale to street-level consumption in specific inner-city territories. It dominates the heroin market and distributes cocaine as a side venture. The gang maintains and expands control by a systematic use of violence -- a reign of terror that stifles opposition and increases the gang's influence.

The gang's genesis lies within the mind of a unique criminal type: A young, manipulative sociopath, i.e., an aggressively antisocial individual, with a talent for leadership and organization, motivated by an egotistical will to power. Surfacing in his late teens or earlier 20s, the subject recruits select individuals -- the nucleus -- known for muscle, not brains (Peanut King's Joe Dancer, Timmirror Stanfield's Marlow Bates, Warren Boardley's Reggie Gross and Ed Woodford) and then bends their brawn to his ambition. Once formed, the embryonic gang invariably exploits the promise of the drug world.

Unlike the stereotypic street drug dealer who plies his trade in his neighborhood as if it were a birthright, and is inclined to treat his occupation as a live-and-let-live proposition, the gang leader seeks to dominate the territory. The violence prone gang easily intimidates the neighborhood dealer, incorporating him or tolerating his presence on an unequal and tenuous footing.

Once the base of operation is secured, the gang's energy is directed to optimizing the territory for the sale of street-grade heroin and cocaine. Under the direction of the leader, the hardcore gang members -- soldiers whose loyalty to the leader is absolute -- secure stash houses and recruit the expendable dealers, runners, touts, lookouts and other paraphernalia of the operation. As profits are generated, more cannon fodder is recruited and the gang size and influence expands. (The term soldier is commonly used to identify journeymen members of Baltimore's gangs.)

As the gang grows, the leader maintains dominance of the membership by a mixture of reward and violence, with the emphasis on violence. He becomes the focal point of the gang's activities, the final arbitrator of disputes, the source of money and bail, and the receiver and dispenser of information. He ruthlessly manipulates gang members, testing loyalties, determining prestige, keeping members off-guard and subservient to his will. He perfects the terrorist's art of control.

While the gang secures the lines of distribution, the leader, at the pinnacle of the flow of revenues, maps out lines of supply. His search brings him into contact with already established local leaders of other

gangs and/or ex-gang leaders who have already secured a position in the criminal world and no longer require the services of the gang (ex. Melvin Williams or Will Franklin). From these more experienced gangsters, the young criminal is coached, in such matters as which lawyers to seek out, methods of hiding money, communication networks, police procedures, etc. (Threads of information hint that the leader types are united in a loose confederation, but, because the evidence of this confederation is scant, its membership, structure, and goals are shrouded in secrecy. Such a grouping is alarming because it contains the seeds of organized crime, a curse that Baltimore has thus far been spared.)

A product of the sociopath's thirst for power, the gang is by necessity driven to generate terror. The fledgling gang announces its presence by committing violent acts designed to establish claim to a neighborhood and continually fights to maintain and expand control. Targets of opposition, such as rivals, recalcitrant dealers, and potential witnesses are indentified and dealt with in a variety of ways, often culminating in murder. These acts, often hidden and cowardly, are publicly acknowledged by the gang. Credit is taken. The crime is added to the folklore of the gang, symbolized in the leader's name.

Utilizing violence to attain his ambitions, the leader's name becomes inextricably associated with terror, his name "rings." It is the art of name recognition. When his name is invoked opposition to his will crumbles. "He don't play," is an often-used phrase by witnesses or victims to explain their reluctance to cooperate with an investigation.

At some point in the evolution of the gang, awareness of the leader's name seeps into the public consciousness. No longer an identity amongst criminals, parents learn of it from their children. The name spreads throughout the city and is invested with the latent phobias that linger in the public perception of the gangs. Fear works for the terrorist and his agents because families, fearing retribution, encourage potential witnesses not to get involved in any investigation targeted at members of the gang.

The gang's potential and threat is underscored in the classic investigation directed by the Baltimore Police Drug Enforcement Unit against the King/Ricks/Meredith gang. Surfacing in 1982, the gang initially seized the area of Hoffman and Holbrook Streets. For two years the gang grew, controlling a significant section of East Baltimore. When it was successfully prosecuted, 47 members were convicted, five murders were laid directly to the gang, and \$1.8 million dollars in assets were catalogued.

The nature of the King investigation encompassed the traditional narcotic approach. Members of the CID narcotic unit and Federal Drug Enforcement Agents employed informants, cooperating witnesses, and police officers in undercover assignments to penetrate the gang at its most vulnerable point, the lines of distribution. The investigators infiltrated the gang and purchased heroin from the key members of the gang including King, the gang leader. The success was enhanced by an aggressive post-arrest pursuit of the gang's assets.

The success of the investigation was noted by members of the criminal world. In the King case, law enforcement had reached parity in the investigation of drug gangs. In the past, narcotics investigations had toppled many gang leaders (Liddy Jones, Melvin Williams, etc.) but never had so many members of the organization been disposed of at one time, nor had so much of the gang's assets been seized.

The criminals reacted and addressed the two weaknesses exploited in the King/Ricks/Meredith investigation: access to the leader is now limited to the gang's nucleus and wealth is hidden.

The King/Ricks/Meredith probe is one of the last investigations conducted against the gangs by conventional methods. The reasons are twofold. The early 1980s saw an influx of cocaine in Baltimore that has become pandemic. It appeared as if overnight and the barrier, confining the other hard drug, heroin, to the inner-city, crashed. Suddenly drug dealers were everywhere. Many sophisticates, schooled in the selling of heroin, were now free to ply their trade among a new group of addicts, the middle class. The epidemic necessitated a response by law enforcement and the impossible burdened fell to the narcotic detective.

The second reason for the decline in enforcement of the drug gangs along traditional lines lies in the resistance by the gangs to encroachment. Little or no information is available to adequately assess the size and scope of a gang's influence, therefore it is difficult to justify an investigation. (Timirror Stanfield and Warren Boardley were both

misidentified as street dealers because little was known by law enforcement about the size and scope of their gangs.)

Gang members are unremitting in their efforts to thwart an investigation, tampering with evidence, intimidating witnesses and accepting prohibitive sentences rather than provide information on other members. The gang's structure is designed so that only the leader need know every involvement of the gang, ensuring difficulties for law enforcement and discouraging pretenders to the throne. The gang's structure is designed so that only the leader need know every involvement of the gang, ensuring difficulties for law enforcement and discouraging pretenders to the throne. The gang's method of operation is fashioned to resist a knockout blow. Large quantities of money or drugs are not allowed to accumulate, denying the investigator the fruits recognized in a successful narcotics investigation. (It is only in a chance occurrence, such as the arrest of Kenneth Jackson in New Jersey with more than \$600,000 or in the grand jury testimony in the Stanfield and Boardley investigations that one can glimpse the wealth these subjects have available.)

For these reasons, drug enforcement officers direct attention for the most part to other significant areas, where more impact in the drug war can be made.

The second deterrent to the gangs lies in the prosecution of individual crimes of violence. This responsibility normally falls to the homicide unit. The standard procedures -- crime scene analysis, collection of evidence, and witness interviews -- are applied and depending on the

perpetrator's ineptitude or lack of regard, a case may or may not be constructed.

Several factors argue against successful prosecution of a specific crime of violence committed by a gang member. A review of a few of the major stumbling blocks will demonstrate the extent of the problem. First, the homicide investigator's work load is so arduous that it is difficult to devote adequate time to a drug homicide. For several years, the unit has operated under MASH-like conditions, patching cases together before the onslaught of new murders diverts attention to the latest crisis.

Secondly, gang-related cases are often investigated in a vacuum. Not knowing that he or she is up against a gang, the detective does not see the crime as a part of pattern, but as a single act. Taken in this context, the crime appears illogical. Unaware of the personalities of the gang members, the detective finds it extremely difficult to obtain information. Further, time constraints and lack of funds curtail the use of informants needed to target members of the group.

If, in fact, the detective overcomes all obstacles and builds a prosecutable case, the likelihood of conviction still remains slight. Once the defendant is arrested, the detective takes another assignment. In the interim between arrest and trial, the gang -- with discovery papers in hand -- moves to dismantle the case. Literally, behind the investigator's back, witnesses and their families are bribed, intimidated or shot. Failing that, gang members appear in court to intimidate jury

members. A not guilty verdict is a significant coup for the gang, demonstrating its superiority over the criminal justice system.

The proposed approach to counteract the gang lies in understanding that the gang is basically an instrument of one subject's will -- a will that requires violence to satisfy grandiose ambitions. The investigative goal is to develop conspiracy cases from evidence obtained by turning the gang's violence inward upon vulnerable gang members, pitting the sensible against the terrorist, drugs against violence, the many against the one.

The success of this method is predicated upon the belief that most of the gang's membership are repelled by senseless violence. The approach seeks to take advantage of the tension created by the violence and use it against the gang's terrorists.

The initial phase of the investigation involves identifying the gang's membership, its acts of violence and victims, learning its folklore, and developing an informant to keep the gang's pulse. When the initial phase is accomplished, the investigation moves to an overt phase, targeting members outside of the nucleus. The targets are placed in real or imagined jeopardy for the purpose of bringing them into a highly stylized interview situation designed to change the member's allegiance from the gang to that of the investigative team.

Gang members are targeted in one of three ways to create the desired vulnerable posture: 1) controlled arrest situations, 2) interviews of randomly arrested gang members, or 3) use of the grand jury.

The first method seeks to place the target in a highly vulnerable position and is utilized when it can be accomplished without diverting too much attention from the primary investigation. An ideal situation is a handgun arrest directed at a gang member who has three prior felony convictions. Such an arrest exposes the target federally to a minimum of fifteen years without parole. A possession of CDS arrest directed at a subject on parole is another method of isolating a gang member and creating tension.

The second method, interviewing randomly arrested gang members, is obviously dependent upon chance. However for large, well-established gangs, the likelihood that some members are incarcerated is high. (In the Boardley investigation, ten incarcerated members were interviewed.) If the subject can be convinced that he or she falls within the scope of the conspiracy, tension is generated and the subject is a good candidate to switch allegiance.

The third method, use of the grand jury, is the most productive approach. It places the gang member in a vulnerable position without expending a great deal of time or investigative energy. The approach creates tension for the subject, threatening perjury or contempt for noncompliance, juxtaposed with a promise of immunity and a chance to escape a losing proposition -- an ideal situation for the interviewer.

Once the gang member is placed in a vulnerable position, he or she is confronted in a pre-grand jury interview by an investigator and prosecutor. The interviewer introduces the two major themes. The first is that the subject's sentiments are set against the litany of the gang's

violence, the responsibility for which is placed squarely on the leader. The gang leader is labeled a terrorist and the violence is presented as both reprehensible to the subject and as drawing attention to and thereby endangering the very existence of the gang. The interviewer suggests that the leader has broken the covenant with the gang and is no longer worthy of the subject's continued loyalty.

The second theme is self-interest. Leniency for the subject's crimes can be considered in exchange for cooperation against the violent nucleus. The second theme offers the subject a way of escaping full exposure for crimes which are not realistically prosecutable due to a lack of evidence. Since a peripheral or alienated gang member is not the target of the investigation, and since there is no attempt made to gather evidence against the subject, there is nothing lost in a grant of immunity. As the investigation expands and evidence is gathered, a peripheral member could become a target of prosecution and then his cooperation may only be considered in light of some exposure. However, the focus of the investigative process is to induce cooperation.

While stressing the major themes, the interviewer introduces sub-themes: knowledge of the gang, inevitability of prosecution, scope of investigation, etc. -- all designed to convince the subject to change sides. The interviewer alludes to the subject's role in the gang, identifies nicknames and shows familiarity with the gang's folklore. Attention is drawn to the specialized nature of the investigative team and its prior successful track record (which at this stage is largely creative). Details of the investigator's methods are shared. The subject

is advised that there are cooperators and that every member of the gang not targeted will be interviewed. It is pointed that there is no neutral ground, either the subject cooperates, falls afoul of the grand jury or becomes a target of the investigation.

In the overt grand jury phase of the investigation, street-level informants, active in the gang's territory, are harnessed to pinpoint witnesses, identify nicknames, and report feedback concerning the subject's interview. Detective Harry Edgerton developed a street-level informant in the Stanfield case that would listen to gang members rehash grand jury testimony: "I told them that but they didn't ask me this," with the subject imparting valuable information. The subject would then be reinterviewed and the additional information would be forthcoming. This type of informant is invaluable to the investigative approach and, because of the type of information sought, is easily developed and maintained with a minimum expenditure of funds.

The described investigative process was developed during the 1986 Stanfield homicide investigation. Timmiror Stanfield, a classic gang leader, 25 years old at the time of indictment, headed a drug gang in excess of fifty members, that controlled South Baltimore's Westport and West Baltimore's Murphy Homes. The gang was extremely violent and had grown so bold as to deny postal workers access to Westport.

The gang was responsible for several murders, of which four occurring at the 725 George Street high-rise, were the focus of the investigation. Then State's Attorney Kurt Schmoke, authorized ASA Howard Gersh to use a

special grand jury to investigate the gang. Approximately 40 gang members and civilian witnesses appeared before the panel to give testimony. Within five months, the four cases were prepared for trial, with 15 gang members prepared to testify. Three of the cases were presented for prosecution and convictions were secured against the nucleus of the gang. (The fourth case, considered overkill, was not prosecuted in light of the multiple life sentences meted out by the presiding judge.)

The investigative process developed in the Stanfield case was used, with certain modifications and on a larger scale, in the Boardley investigation with equally impressive results. Warren Boardley, Nadir Abdullah and Christopher Burrows controlled a vast distribution network centered in the Lexington Terrace/Poe Homes housing project and spread throughout West Baltimore and Cherry Hill. The gang employed four full-time gunmen and used eight others, paid by contract. The scope of this investigation was broader in that it sought to employ the RICO statute, using murder, narcotics and money laundering as the predicated crimes. The results were similar with several members turning against the nucleus, despite the fact that in this investigation the core group was not incarcerated while the grand jury was sitting.

The success of the investigative process lies in understanding how the individual member is bonded to the gang. In the world where the gangs flourish, joining a gang is as accepted a way of achieving status and money as the other alternatives of an education, job or sports. So youths with minimal or no criminal tendencies are drawn to the gang and fall under the tutelage of the gang's nucleus. Most members do not comprehend

the scope of the gang's lawlessness and are not prepared for the type of crime imposed on them. The degree of adaptation or corruption, depends upon the individual's proclivity for crime. The criminal act occurs before the subject is able to make an intelligent choice. Therefore, the subject is committed to the gang despite strong reservations.

From evidence gathered in the Stanfield and Boardley investigations, it appears that only the few succumb to the violent mentality of the core group. The majority appear trapped between their essentially good upbringing and fear of the gang's violence. It is in this group that the dichotomy creates tension and confusion which the investigative process exploits. The process proposes a resolution to the conflict by offering the subject a safe alternative to the gang.

The investigative strategy achieves primary goals. The process de-mythologizes the leader, disrupts the integrity of the gang and generates evidence which leads to a successful prosecution of the gang's nucleus. The investigative process appears to have a significant impact on both those that cooperate and those that are prosecuted. Based only on the data from the two years since the Stanfield investigation, the area of the Murphy Homes -- formerly known as the "Murder Homes," -- has not been plagued with the emergence of a new gang and related murders. There is still drug dealing, but not with the degree of organization or violence imposed by Timmirrow Stanfield. (The fact that no new gang has sprung up in the Murphy Homes or Westport indicates the uniqueness of the sociopathic leader.)

If the significance of the gang problem can be grasped within the framework of our bureaucracy, it would argue for the creation of a unit to deal specifically with the gangs. If such a unit is contemplated, certain components are essential to save the unit from the fate experienced by the career criminal and heat units.

The unit should be small and self-contained (office space, vehicles, informant funds, overtime, etc.) with the specific mission of attacking gangs, that utilize violence, be it murder or assault. The unit should operate in close conjunction with the homicide unit, for that is where patterns of violence can best be detected, but, not be part of that unit because the homicide unit's constantly shifting demands created by its reactive nature would certainly draw upon the limited resources of the proposed unit, making it ineffective (rob Peter to pay Paul dilemma).

A suggestion was advanced that the unit be incorporated into the Inspectional Service Division. Such a placement offers an existing command structure that can absorb a new unit without a significant change to the table of organization. Also, the Inspectional Service Division has a tradition of accessing information from the criminal investigation units without arousing jealousy, an added plus for a unit that seeks to investigate matters that cross conventional lines.

The unit must be wed to a prosecution team so that the most effective tool, the grand jury, can be fully utilized. Joining the investigative team to the prosecuting team is critical to the process because the thrust

of the investigation is to convert alienated gang members and it is only in the prosecutor's scope to guarantee specific arrangements.

Because a considerable amount of investigative time is directed to the gang's street activities, the proposed unit should liaison with designated district units. Once targets are ascertained and information developed, the district unit should be appraised so that full advantage can be taken of a chance occurrence involving the district officers. In addition, district officers would have the opportunity to learn the value of developing and recording information. The emphasis has been placed on statistically generated arrest for so long that information accessible from the street has all but disappeared, leaving the department without the data necessary to assess problems and initiate solutions. (In 1987, 11,873 subjects were arrested for narcotic violations. Of that number, 7,661 subjects were charged with possession of controlled dangerous substances -- addicts with personal use quantities of drugs [Appendix 1]. This group represents a significant font of criminal information, but, considering the marginal level of workable intelligence within the department, it appears to be largely untapped, suggesting that the arrests are viewed in the framework of a statistical pursuit.)

The Stanfield investigation was developed and prosecuted by the state. The Boardley investigation was a joint effort by state and federal authorities. Both investigations were successful and there are merits to both approaches. However, a joint investigation takes advantage of the strengths that each system possess. A major weakness, highlighted in the

Boardley investigation, is the need for clearly established lines of responsibility among the participants.

The need for a review of law enforcement's strategy can be gleaned from the crime statistics. In 1988, Baltimore experienced 234 homicides (Appendix 2) of which 112 homicides or 48 percent (margin of error - 1 percent) were drug related. In addition to the homicide statistics, the Baltimore Police Department, Planning and Research Division recorded 1,155 aggravated assaults perpetrated with handguns on the streets of the city. The percentage of these shootings that are drug related is not recorded, but, if the percentage approximates that of murders, 554 individuals would be victims of a drug related incident.

If Baltimore's murder rate is used as a barometer of violence, two factors should be considered that significantly impact the numbers. First, Baltimore is blessed with one of the most sophisticated medical trauma systems in the nation. From June, 1987 to July, 1988, the trauma centers handled 328 city shooting cases. The mortality rate for this period was 16.5 percent. This computes to 274 victims that were saved by the skill of the trauma teams. (Data supplied by Dr. Ameen I. Ramzy, M.D. F.A.C.S., Deputy Director of Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems.)

Second, Baltimore has so far been spared the ravages of the Crack epidemic, influx of out-of-state gangs, and the internecine struggle of rival local gangs seeking to secure lines of distribution for Crack. In 1987, the District of Columbia recorded 225 murders and 5,084 aggravated

assaults. During the comparable period, Baltimore recorded 226 murders and 6,008 aggravated assaults (Appendix 3). In 1988, the District of Columbia recorded a record 371 murders, of which 56 percent or 207 homicides were drug related (Appendix 4). The District's tragedy spilled over into Prince Georges County, which report a record 102 homicides for 1988. The storm warnings are evident and it is during the lull that preparations should be made.

The Melanesian concept of "a man standing on a whale fishing for minnows," to evoke the absurd, illuminates law enforcement's dilemma in confronting the drug problem. During the past thirty years, by default, the profession has assumed responsibility for the drug problem, but, has had little or no impact on the epidemic. Law enforcement is not designed to effect change in society, but, to cope with symptoms -- keep the lid on -- until society adjusts.

This report proposes that the violence under review is a symptom of the will to power of a unique criminal type. These gang leaders, though small in number, are largely responsible for the fear that paralyzes our citizens, but, they are vulnerable because the violence they exude still revolts and that energy can be directed to combating their ambitions. This report seeks to target these subjects and use the violence they employ against them and to publicize that those who seek to build drug empires with violence will be the subject of special attention. If violence can be seen to be a losing proposition, then pressure may be

exerted to repudiate the method -- the gang -- in favor of other, less violent methods to reap profits from the drug trade.

Respectfully,

Detective Edward Burns  
Baltimore Homicide Unit  
(301) 396-2117