



Town of Vienna, Virginia Police Department Media Information Release

Gang Investigation Yields Arrest

In January of 2006, the Vienna Police Department was advised that a 14 year old had been recruited and “blessed in” to a local set (group) of the Gangster Disciples criminal street gang. This confirmed observations and information reported by various uniformed members of the Vienna Police Patrol Section regarding a suspicious group of young adults. An investigation was initiated with the combined purpose of identifying the leadership of the gang as well as disrupting the gang’s activities and identifying the subjects responsible for the recruitment of the juvenile. Through much investigation the individuals present when the juvenile was “blessed” in to the gang were identified as an adult and another juvenile. After consultation with the Office of the Commonwealth Attorney, felony charges of recruiting a juvenile into a criminal street gang were brought against the adult.

Further investigation revealed that Kenneth Maurice Wilson, age 20, of Locust Street in Vienna, was the leader and the primary source of gang knowledge. After multiple interviews it was learned that Wilson had joined the Gangster’s Disciples in Trenton, NJ, and had formed the local set during the summer of 2005. The set eventually grew to include at least 10 identified members and associates, ranging in age from 13 to approximately 20 years old.

One individual was identified as having been recruited and “jumped in to” the gang in the summer of 2006; while that person was still a juvenile. Again, after consulting with the Office of the Commonwealth Attorney, felony charges of recruiting a juvenile in to a criminal street gang were brought against Kenneth Maurice Wilson. On December 30, 2007, in the Fairfax County Circuit Court, Wilson was convicted of feloniously recruiting a juvenile in to a criminal street gang, specifically the Gangster Disciples. Sentencing is set for February 8, 2008.

A key element in the success of this investigation was the cooperation and assistance of various members of the Northern Virginia Gang Task Force, and the assistance of the Arlington County Gang Unit and the Fairfax County Gang Unit. The NVGTF is a multi-jurisdictional unit created to target gang activity in Northern Virginia, due to the fact that gang activities often cross jurisdictional boundaries. A simultaneous investigation into a separate set of Gangster Disciples in Arlington found communication between members of both sets, and the assistance of the lead detective of that investigation was invaluable. A large amount of information was collected by uniformed street officers within the Vienna Police Department.

The Gangster Disciples criminal street gang originated in Chicago, and has spread nationwide. It is one of the largest criminal street gangs in the United States. The criminal activities of the gang nationwide include numerous murders, robberies, assaults, and drug trafficking. Active sets have been identified in multiple locations in Northern Virginia, and crimes committed by gang members in Northern Virginia include mob assault, aggravated assault, robbery, and graffiti offenses.

“Blessing in” and “Jumping in” are two methods of joining a criminal street gang. Jump ins, also known as beat ins, are more common and involve the prospective member accepting a ritual very violent beating. This may be a pre-determined but symbolic number of strikes by each full gang member present, or a beating for a symbolic number of seconds administered by several gang members. “Blessing in” is less common. Prospective members of the gang who have convinced the gang that they have the appropriate qualities are recognized as members, without undergoing the beating of a jump in. They may make an oath to the gang, or be given a purely symbolic strike in place of the beat-in.

The Northern Virginia Gang Task Force was formed in 2003 as a multi-jurisdictional response to the growing gang problem in Northern Virginia. The Town of Vienna Police Department’s member is detective Jim Sheeran. The NVGTF facilitates communication between the various jurisdictions, and provides additional resources and expertise, especially to smaller agencies that may not otherwise be able to dedicate the resources to gang investigation. Fifteen agencies currently participate in the task force.

**Please contact MPO Bill Murray for further information at
703.255.6396 or wmurray@viennava.gov**