

## **Federal authorities continue war on Latin Counts gang - 14 more are indicted in effort to cut crime in southwest Detroit**

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DETROIT -- Federal authorities Wednesday indicted another 14 people connected to the **Latin Counts** street gang in the long-running battle to stop gang violence in southwest Detroit.

U.S. Attorney Jeffrey G. Collins said the indictments bring the total of **Latin Counts** members indicted this year to 29 -- dealing a blow to the gang's operations.

"The **Latin Counts** distributed cocaine and marijuana throughout our area. They invaded homes, while armed, in order to obtain drugs, money and firearms," Collins said. "This removes a significant chunk of the **Latin Counts** ."

In at least six cases, teams of gang members robbed the homes of Detroit residents after receiving tips that the people had money or valuables inside, Collins said. "Citizens can sleep safer tonight knowing that these people have been arrested," he said.

The **Latin Counts** supply drugs in southwest Detroit as well as parts of Wayne County and Washtenaw County, the FBI said.

Members of the gang have been linked to many violent crimes, including the 1995 murder of 28-year-old Detroit Police Officer Jerry Philpot.

Wednesday's indictment was described as one step in an ongoing effort by the FBI, Detroit police, Romulus police and Immigration and Naturalization Service to crack down on the gang.

Two alleged leaders of the gang, Melvin Martin and Mario Mendez, face up to life in prison if convicted of taking part in a continuing criminal enterprise. Others face various drug dealing and firearm charges.

"This is one part of a lengthy investigation," said Detroit Deputy Police Chief Harold N. Cureton. "There will be more indictments."

Gerald Buten, acting special agent in charge of the Detroit FBI office, said the case demonstrates that despite the FBI's increased interest in terrorism cases, the bureau "isn't giving up on fighting violent crime."

The FBI is looking for two of the suspects indicted Wednesday, Sergio Molina and Jonathon Begley. The others have either been arraigned or will be soon.

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