

# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

## Press Center



## Treasury Sanctions Latin American Criminal Organization

10/11/2012

### *Designation Targets Latin American Gang Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13)*

**WASHINGTON** – The U.S. Department of the Treasury today designated the Latin American gang Mara Salvatrucha, known as MS-13, pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13581, which targets significant transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) and their supporters. MS-13 is being targeted for its involvement in serious transnational criminal activities, including drug trafficking, kidnapping, human smuggling, sex trafficking, murder, assassinations, racketeering, blackmail, extortion, and immigration offenses.

Today's action is the latest in a series of designations pursuant to E.O. 13581, which is a key part of the [National Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime](#) announced by President Obama in July 2011. This Strategy seeks to build and integrate a variety of tools to combat transnational organized crime and related threats to national security. One of the key goals of the President's National Strategy is to attack the economic power of TCOs and protect the integrity of international markets and the U.S. financial system from TCO penetration and abuse.

E.O. 13581 provides the authority to Treasury to target TCOs for economic sanctions and initially included four TCOs in its annex: the Brother's Circle, the Camorra, the Zetas and Yakuza. Today's designation of MS-13 is the first addition of a new TCO to this E.O.

"MS-13 is an extremely violent and dangerous gang responsible for a multitude of crimes that directly threaten the welfare and security of U.S. citizens, as well as countries throughout Central America," Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen stated. "This action positions us to target the associates and financial networks supporting MS-13, and gives law enforcement an additional tool in its efforts to disrupt MS-13's activities."

MS-13 consists of at least 30,000 members in a range of countries, including El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico, and is one of the most dangerous and rapidly expanding criminal gangs in the world today. MS-13 is active within the United States, with at least 8,000 members operating in more than 40 states and the District of Columbia. MS-13's criminal nature can be seen in one of its mottos, "Mata, roba, viola, controla" ("Kill, steal, rape, control"). Domestically, the group is involved in multiple crimes including murder, racketeering, drug trafficking, sex trafficking and human trafficking including prostitution. The group frequently carries out violent attacks on opposing gang members, often injuring innocent bystanders. MS-13 members have been responsible for numerous killings within the United States.

Local MS-13 cliques take direction from the group's foreign leadership for strategic decisions involving moves into new territories and efforts to recruit new members. Money generated by local MS-13 cliques in the U.S. is consolidated and funneled to the group's leadership in El Salvador.

Today's action was made possible in part due to the assistance and information provided by the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Since 2006, ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) division has arrested 4,078 MS-13 gang members and partnering with the U.S. Department of Justice, has successfully indicted numerous MS-13 racketeering investigations in Washington, D.C., Virginia, New York, San Francisco, Houston and Atlanta.

"This designation allows us to strike at the financial heart of MS-13 and is a powerful weapon in our fight to dismantle one of the most violent, transnational criminal organizations operating today," said ICE Director John Morton. "History has proven that we can successfully

take down organized crime groups when we combine sophisticated investigative techniques with tough street level enforcement, cutting off cash flows, contraband and collaborators to ensure they no longer find safe haven in our communities."

As a result of today's action, any property or property interests in the United States, or in the possession or control of U.S. persons in which MS-13 has an interest, are blocked, and U.S. persons are prohibited from engaging in transactions with MS-13.

**Identifiers**

**Entity:** Mara Salvatrucha

AKA: MS-13

Locations: El Salvador; Honduras; Guatemala; Mexico; United States [TCO]

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