



“Operation Snake Eyes” began in November 2011, with the purchase of methamphetamine by a confidential informant from an unknown male who was later identified. Based on prior contacts with the informant, Monterey County Joint Gang Task Force Investigators knew him to be a member of the Norteño criminal street gang with ties to Nuestra Familia prison gang and a major narcotics trafficker.

Throughout 2012, GTF Investigators conducted surveillances, debriefed a number of confidential informants, and exhausted a number of investigative techniques working towards obtaining an electronic surveillance wiretap warrant. During this time, it was discovered that not only was the informant responsible for overseeing the sales of narcotics in the Chinatown area of Salinas, he was also rumored to have been involved with several robberies.

With the leadership provided by GTF Cmdr. Stan Cooper combined with the supervision of Sgt. Matt Maldonado the GTF concluded that a wiretap was the only option to successfully impact the narcotics trade being imposed upon Salinas by the Norteños. With significant roles assigned to Officer Albert Duran and Officer Todd Kessler, a warrant was obtained authorizing the electronic surveillance of the informant and within days, his associates, who were believed to be involved in the distribution of narcotics for the benefit of the gang. It was during this time GTF Investigators discovered the method of taxation imposed on local narcotic dealers for the purpose of feeding the coffers of the NF prison gang.

During two months of telephonic interception, investigators commonly worked 12-16 hour days six or seven days a week. The average day included a team of eight investigators working the “wire room” while another eight were in surveillance mode along with uniformed takedown teams. The GTF was aided in this operation by: Monterey County Sheriff’s Office, California Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration, Northern California HIDTA, Alcohol Tobacco Firearms and Explosives, California Department of Corrections/Rehabilitation, California Highway Patrol, Federal Bureau of Investigations, Gilroy/Morgan Hill Regional SWAT, Homeland Security Investigation, Monterey County District Attorney’s Investigations, Monterey Peninsula Regional SWAT, Peninsula Regional Violence and Narcotics Task Force, Santa Clara Police Department, Santa Cruz County Anti-Crime Team, United States Marshals Service, and Unified Narcotics Enforcement Team.

In addition to identifying subjects involved in the drug trade, GTF Investigators were kept on constant alert due to intelligence gathered related to potential acts of violence and

serious crimes occurring within the county. A “potential blood bath” described by informants, occurred when GTF Investigators overheard the informant organizing other Norteños to arm themselves and go to the Chinatown area as a crew of African American males from the Sacramento area were assembled. This was seen as a threat by the informant to the NF’s control of the region. GTF Investigators organized units to descend into the Chinatown area and this dissuaded the attack from occurring.

A planned bank robbery in the City of Marina was also averted. Surveillance units had followed a crew to a parking lot adjacent to a bank after interception of phone conversation related to the planning of the crime. The Monterey Peninsula Regional Violence and Narcotics Task Force Team contacted and arrested the group, finding evidence to support the conspiracy to commit robbery.

The planned mayhem of an individual which was overheard was also avoided by bringing marked units into the immediate area and making contact with some of the suspects dissuaded them from the planned attack.

On April 23, 2013, in the City of Salinas, Officer Anthony Parker attempted to stop a vehicle driving in a reckless manner. The vehicle failed to yield and a pursuit ensued. During the pursuit, one of the passengers fired at Officer Parker with an AK-47 style military assault rifle. The vehicle eventually crashed in a park with two of the three taken into custody within hours. A third unidentified suspect remained at large. Through monitoring existing wires and newly acquired wires, GTF Investigators identified the third outstanding subject. With the dedicated work of all involved, that subject was taken into custody on April 25, 2013.

Throughout the investigation, the goal was to dismantle the NF’s organization and leadership in Monterey County. Towards the end, subsequent wiretaps were conducted on several key players in leadership positions, to include the Regiment Commander. His position has been well known for some time, but the first direct evidence of that leadership came through overhearing his calls: he now faces charges of conspiracy to promote the furtherance of a criminal street gang, amongst others.

On May 23, 2013, 18 of 20 search warrants written in connection to Operation Snake Eyes were served. While some suspects were not located, nearly all of the investigation’s primary targets were arrested. Over 350 local, state, and federal law enforcement professionals participated in this takedown. The overall statistics of Operation Snake Eyes were: 49 arrests with 11 subjects outstanding, 18.63 ounces of Methamphetamine, 4 ounces of Heroin, almost 3 pounds of Marijuana, 6.16 ounces of Cocaine, 7 firearms, 8 cars and \$77,325 cash.

As this case continues to proceed through the judicial system, it is evident the goal of Operation Snake Eyes was met by the dismantling of the NF leadership within Monterey County. The void in NF leadership created problems within the NF as they struggle to

regain money making ventures that were reduced and/or eliminated as a result of Operation Snake Eyes. This extensive and complicated investigation was managed and directed by Task Force Cmdr. Cooper and supervised by Sgt. Maldonado. During the investigation, many important and life altering decisions were made with minimal information and not enough time to analyze. Officer Duran, the co-case agent, played a pivotal role in the overall success of identifying, documenting, and arresting these violent gang members. Officer Kessler's role as the wire room manager was pivotal in managing and monitoring approximately 12 wires, a difficult and complicated task. Together, Cmdr. Cooper, Sgt. Maldonado, and Officers Duran and Kessler formed the nucleus of this extremely successful operation.

With any successful long-term law enforcement operation, there are officers that play a reduced role of responsibility. This comes with the understanding that without their assistance and dedication, the operation would not have come to a successful conclusion. Many officers spent countless hours of overtime for many days in a row in the wire room, on surveillance, or assigned to enforcement teams. For their dedicated work leading to the success of Operation Snake Eyes this officer is being awarded a Salinas Police Department Letter of Achievement.