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**Top Law Enforcement Agencies Join Forces to
Create Anti-Gang Tactical Operations Center**

Flanked by leaders from a broad array of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices, Director Michael McDaniel of Houston's High-Intensity Drug-Trafficking Area (HIDTA) taskforce, and Harris County District Attorney Pat Lykos, the current HIDTA Chair, announced the formation today of an innovative new approach to fighting violent criminal gangs and the transnational criminal organizations with which they are increasingly allied.

The Texas Anti-Gang (TAG) tactical operations center is a concept initially conceived by HIDTA's board, and subsequently developed further by Lykos, who then successfully secured \$1.7 million in grant funding for the project from the Criminal Justice Division of Governor Rick Perry's office.

TAG will serve as a unified headquarters for an estimated 75-100 of the regions' most knowledgeable and experienced federal, state and local anti-gang investigators, analysts and prosecutors. To protect operational security, its precise location and full technological capabilities are not being revealed.

As envisioned, TAG will be staffed by experts selected from a broad array of law enforcement agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Homeland Security, Texas Department of Public Safety, Drug Enforcement Administration, Alcohol Tobacco & Firearms, United States Marshals, Harris County Sheriff's Office and other county sheriff's and constables throughout the region, the Houston Police Department, and the Harris County District Attorney's Office, among others.

Among the expected advantages of TAG's innovative approach:

- An open floor plan will allow mission-specific working groups to simultaneously devote their attention to multiple priorities on a routine basis, while permitting a flexible surge in focus during moments of crisis or operational need.
- Full-time, on-site support from the District Attorney's office will assist rapid authorization of warrants, provide legal guidance to law enforcement while investigations are ongoing, strengthen cases for eventual prosecution, and expedite the filing of criminal charges.
- Centralizing staff will avoid inter-agency redundancies and facilitate secure access to a wide-range of disparate law enforcement databases.
- Specialists in electronic forensics, data-recovery and foreign-languages (particularly concerning special-interest countries) will be readily available to all law enforcement agencies across the region.

The Houston/Harris County metropolitan area is a critical battlefield in law enforcement's fight against violent criminal gangs and allied transnational networks, which are involved in virtually every type of felonious activity—including drug production and distribution; weapons-smuggling, extortion, kidnapping and murder for hire; home-invasion, metal and heavy equipment theft; major fraud, money laundering and bulk cash smuggling; and gambling, dog-fighting, prostitution and human-trafficking, including both adults and children for sexual exploitation.