

**Organization Attributes Sheet: ASOCIACIÓN ÑETA (AKA ÑETAS AKA ASOCIACIÓN PRO-DERECHOS de CONFINADOS)**

**Author: Jewel Jennings-Wright**

**Review: Phil Williams**

<b>A. When the organization was formed + brief history</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• La Asociación Ñeta, or simply Ñetas, was formed in the 1970s, in the Puerto Rican prison Rio Pedras. The group was formed initially to stop the violence occurring between the inmates at the prison.<sup>1</sup></li><li>• The gang is considered to be one of the largest and most violent gangs in Puerto Rico and the United States.<sup>2</sup></li><li>• Ideology is hugely important for this gang. Its codes and initiations are close to ritualistic and symbols are very important to the group.</li></ul>
<b>B. Types of illegal activities engaged in,</b>
a. In general
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Narcotics Distribution<sup>3</sup></li><li>• Murder<sup>4</sup></li><li>• Assault<sup>5</sup></li><li>• Auto Theft<sup>6</sup></li><li>• Burglary<sup>7</sup></li><li>• Extortion<sup>8</sup></li><li>• Home-Invasion<sup>9</sup></li><li>• Trafficking<sup>10</sup></li><li>• Witness Intimidation<sup>11</sup></li></ul>
b. <i>Specific detail: types of illicit trafficking activities engaged in</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Narcotics distribution includes the distribution of powdered and crack cocaine, heroin, marijuana, LSD, MDMA, methamphetamine, and PCP<sup>12</sup></li><li>• Weapons and Explosives Trafficking<sup>13</sup></li></ul>
<b>C. Scope and Size</b>
a. Estimated size of network and membership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As of 2005, there were about 7,000 members in Puerto Rico and 5,000 members in the United States.<sup>14</sup></li><li>• These numbers have grown. In 2009, NDIC reported that in Puerto Rican prisons alone there were more than 10,000 members.<sup>15</sup></li></ul>
b. Countries / regions group is known to have operated in. (i.e. the group's operating area)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Puerto Rico<sup>16</sup></li><li>• United States – According to NDIC, as of 2005, the gang existed in 36 cities in 9 states.<sup>17</sup></li><li>• Spain<sup>18</sup></li></ul>
<b>D. Leader Characteristics</b>
a. Who is/are the leader(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carlos Torres Iriarte “La Sombra”<sup>19</sup></li><li>• Joanna Pimentel “La Madrina”, “Godmother” of the New York Ñetas<sup>20</sup></li></ul>

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.  
All research conducted according to the project manual.

- Each chapter has its own form of hierarchical leadership. There is a President, Vice-President, Leader of Discipline, treasurer and a coordinator (whose job it was to organize chapter meetings).<sup>21</sup>

**b. Leadership timeline**

- Carlos “La Sombra” founded the gang in or around 1970.<sup>22</sup>
- In United States, during the 1990s, the head of all of the New York chapters of the gang was a woman named “La Madrina”.<sup>23</sup> This might be indicative of the style of leadership seen in all of the states/areas where the Ñetas are located. There might be heads of chapters who report to one head for that particular area.

**c. Leadership style (autocratic, diffuse, etc.)**

- The leadership style of the group appears to be almost in a committee form. Those in leadership positions were responsible for various tasks within the group and the members would have to report to those people. For example, the leader of discipline would be responsible for disciplining a member who violated the rules. And in the Freeport, New York chapter, the treasurer was responsible for collecting dues.<sup>24</sup>

**E. Organizational Structure**

**a. Topology (cellular, hierarchical, etc.)**

- The gang operates in chapters. Each chapter is hierarchical in nature with a President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Coordinator and Disciplinarian. There also appears to be one person who is the head of the entire gang in a particular place, for example, La Madrina in the 1990s.<sup>25</sup>
- The gang participates in elections to determine who will hold the leadership positions.<sup>26</sup>

**b. Membership – is there formal or informal membership in the organization or network? What role do informal or nonmembers play in trafficking and other criminal activities?**

- There is a formal process of a becoming a member of the gang. Each potential member was given a probationary period. Then that potential member would be “blessed” into the gang on March 30<sup>th</sup>. Each gang member follows a code called “The Norms”.<sup>27</sup>
- March 30<sup>th</sup> appears to be an important day for the Ñetas as an organization. There are “universal” meetings of the chapters on this day each year.<sup>28</sup>
- The group also has associates who are not designated as members.<sup>29</sup> This means that it is possible to associate with the group without being inducted into the gang.
- Membership also depends on location. In Puerto Rico, membership in the organization ends after an individual is released from prison. In the United States, the members who have been released from prison are still members and have formed street gangs in association with those members still in prison.<sup>30</sup>
- The group is uniquely tolerant of female members. Female members have equal power in the group and can and do hold leadership positions in the gang.<sup>31</sup>

**c. Command and Control (decentralized or centralized)**

- The most important decision made by each chapter is taken to the leaders of that particular chapter. Members are required to get a green light before performing violent acts. Members are also expected to report government informants to the leaders of the organization.<sup>32</sup>

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

<b>F. Resources</b>	
a.	Financial
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The gang's primary source of income is the selling and distributing of drugs, mainly powdered and crack cocaine, heroin and marijuana. The gang also makes smaller profits from the sale and distribution on LSD, MDMA, methamphetamine and PCP.<sup>33</sup></li> <li>Though there is no direct report on the profit from their other illegal activities, including burglary, auto-theft and weapons and explosives trafficking, it would not be far-fetched to assume the gang receives some sort of financial benefit from performing these activities.</li> </ul>
b.	Human
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extensive membership and prison bonding</li> </ul>
c.	Logistical
	i. Forgery, safe-houses, etc.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
	ii. Key routes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
d.	Transportation
	i. Land
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
	ii. Sea
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
	iii. Air
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
	iv. Intermodal container
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
<b>G. Trafficking Methods and Modalities</b>	
a.	Corruption
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
b.	Concealment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
c.	Deception
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
d.	Circumvention (avoiding border entry points)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
<b>H. Prior / Existing Relationships</b>	
a.	Other criminal organizations (cooperative and conflictual)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rivalries and conflictual relationships depend on the location of a particular chapter of the Ñetas. For example, the New York chapters, especially the Freeport, New York chapter, are involved in wars with MS-13.<sup>34</sup> The New York chapters are also rivals of the Latin Kings.<sup>35</sup> In Puerto Rico, the main rival is Grupo 27. There are also other rivals for the gang in Puerto Rico, especially G-25, also known as Los Huevos and Bacalao, and G-31, also known as Los Tiburones.<sup>36</sup></li> </ul>
b.	Corrupt politicians, law enforcement, political parties and other state entities, etc.

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
<p>c. <i>Specific detail: Any alliances / past dealings with terrorist groups.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None found</li> </ul>
<p><b>I. Ideological / Ethnic / Familial Orientation (if any)</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The gang is made up of mostly Hispanic males.<sup>37</sup></li> <li>The tree plays an important part of the Ñetas ideology, taken from the beliefs of the Taino Indians who were ancient natives inhabiting Puerto Rico. The Taino Indians believed the tree was Mother Earth's servants. The Ñetas haven incorporated these notions into their beliefs.<sup>38</sup></li> <li>The gang tends to be very ritualistic with colors. Their main colors are red, white and black (blue may be substituted for black). Black is the mourning for the death of the founding father, white is for peace, tranquility and harmony which each Ñeta must strive to attain, and red symbolizes the bloodshed of fallen and future fallen Ñetas.<sup>39</sup></li> <li>The members carry around beaded necklaces, sometimes with crucifixes that create the look of rosaries. The color of the beading is important for the group. The necklaces include: 78 white beads which represent the 78 towns in Puerto Rico; 7 black beads which represent the 7 prisons in Puerto Rico; the one black bead in the center represents Carlos Torres Iriarte; the red bead again represents the bloodshed and future bloodshed of the group; the white bead in the center represents peace and tranquility; and the single green bead at the back end of the necklace represents hope.<sup>40</sup></li> <li>The gang also appears to be very religious, probably Catholic. Aside from the beaded necklace that resembles a rosary, the members</li> <li>Have an oath and a prayer that they recite when they are initiating an individual. They have a code that resembles commandments, which requires them to be respectful of the gang, members of other members' families and all races, sexes and religions. They also recite the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm with their own prayer at the meetings.<sup>41</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>J. Technical Sophistication</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found but probably low</li> </ul>
<p><b>K. Penchant for Innovation</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found but probably low</li> </ul>
<p><b>L. Activities in United States</b></p>
<p>a. Includes both criminal and non-criminal activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usual gang activity</li> </ul>
<p>b. <i>Specific detail: trafficking activities ; logistical activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They are responsible for narcotics distribution includes the distribution of powdered and crack cocaine, heroin, marijuana, LSD, MDMA, methamphetamine, and PCP<sup>42</sup></li> <li>Weapons and Explosives Trafficking<sup>43</sup></li> </ul>
<p>c. Linkages with US groups</p>
<p>i. Market/transaction links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
<p>ii. Stable supplier</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
<p>iii. Franchise arrangement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
<p>iv. HQ and Branch office</p>

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

- Information not found

## M. Evaluations

### a. Strengths

- The group is large and broken into different chapters. The gang is not as flamboyant as other groups.<sup>44</sup> This makes it easier to operate without getting caught. Even if a chapter gets dismantled, the other chapters will not be affected.

### b. Weaknesses and vulnerabilities

- Although the group is large, each cell is isolated and determines how it deals with other gangs. Some chapters might get along with another gang in one region, while another chapter might be enemies of that group in another region. This lack of uniformity can create a problem when dealing interstate.

### c. Additional insights

- Though originating in Puerto Rico, and with strong ties to Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rican members and the U.S. members operate differently. The U.S. members appear to be more involved in illegal activities including trafficking both in prison and out of prison.
- It should be noted, that just because the ex-inmates in Puerto Rico are not formal members they might be associates of the gang. The gang is known to have support groups outside of prisons.<sup>45</sup>

## Other Notes

- 

<sup>1</sup> Hickey, Eric. W. *The Encyclopedia of Murder and Violent Crime*. Sage Publication Inc. Thousand Oaks, California, 2003. Pg. 197. . Date Accessed 22 May 2011.

<sup>2</sup> National Drug Intelligence Center. "Gangs in the United States". *Narcotics Digest Weekly*. 4:40 Special Issue. 4 October 2005. Pg. 9. [http://www.cicad.oas.org/Crimen\\_Organizado/ESP/Actualidad/Pandillas%20en%20USA.pdf](http://www.cicad.oas.org/Crimen_Organizado/ESP/Actualidad/Pandillas%20en%20USA.pdf). Date Accessed: 22 May 2011. (For following citations, source will be cited "Gangs in the United States").

<sup>3</sup> Nardoza, Robert. "Press Release: Ñetas Gang Members Receive Life Imprisonment for Murder of Innocent Civilian". Attorney General's Office for the Eastern District of New York. 27 July 2010. <http://www.justice.gov/usao/nye/pr/2010/2010jul27.html>. Date Accessed: 22 May 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> "Gangs in the United States" at Pg. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.  
All research conducted according to the project manual.

- 
- <sup>15</sup> HIDTA, "Puerto Rico/U.S. Virgin Island, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, Drug Market Analysis, 2009. National Drug Intelligence Center, US Department of Justice, Product No.2009-R0813-028, April 2009 pg. 5.  
<http://www.justice.gov/ndic/pubs32/32788/32788p.pdf> Date Accessed: 22 May 2011. (For following citations, source will be cited HIDTA-pdf)
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid
- <sup>18</sup> Tremlett, Giles. "Row erupts in Spain over treatment of Latin Kings". *The Guardian*. 5 October 2006.  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/oct/05/spain.gilestremlett>. Date Accessed: 22 May 2011.
- <sup>19</sup> *Re: United States v. Amadeo Rodriguez, et al.* No. CR 03-1342(S-1)(SJF), (EDNY 2010). (Response to Motion for a new trial). (For following citations, source will be cited *Re: United States v. Amadeo Rodriguez, et. al.*)
- <sup>20</sup> *United States v. Pimentel*. 346 F.3d 285, 288. (2nd Cir., 2003).
- <sup>21</sup> *Re: United States v. Amadeo Rodriguez*
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid
- <sup>26</sup> New York City Police Department. *The Gang Manual*. 26 August 2004. Pg 74-85.  
<http://publicintelligence.net/nypd-street-gang-manual/>. Date Accessed: 22 May 2011. (For following citations, source will be cited *The Gang Manual*)
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid
- <sup>30</sup> "Gangs in the United States". Pg. 9.
- <sup>31</sup> Schmidt, Linda and James T. O'Reilly. *Gangs and Law Enforcement: A Guide to Dealing with Gang-Related Violence*. Thomas Books, 2007, pg. 106.
- <sup>32</sup> *Re: United States v. Amadeo Rodriguez*
- <sup>33</sup> National Drug Intelligence Center. *National Gang Threat Assessment 2009*. January 2009. Pg. 29.  
<http://www.justice.gov/ndic/pubs32/32146/32146p.pdf>. Date Accessed: 22 May 2011.
- <sup>34</sup> *Re: United States v Amadeo Rodriguez*
- <sup>35</sup> Kocieniewski, David. "In Prosecution of a Gang, A Chilling Adversary: The Code of the Streets" *The New York Times*. 19 September 2007.
- <sup>36</sup> HIDTA, "Puerto Rico/U.S. Virgin Island, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, Drug Market Analysis, 2009. National Drug Intelligence Center, US Department of Justice, Product No.2009-R0813-0 28, April 2009  
[www.justice.gov/ndic/pubs27/27510/dtos.htm](http://www.justice.gov/ndic/pubs27/27510/dtos.htm). (For following citations, source will be cite HIDTA-website).
- <sup>37</sup> *The Gang Manual*, pg. 74-85.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid
- <sup>42</sup> Gangs in the United States at Pg. 9
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid
- <sup>44</sup> *The Gang Manual* at pg. 79

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.  
All research conducted according to the project manual.

---

<sup>45</sup> HIDTA-website

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.  
All research conducted according to the project manual.