

Organization Attributes Sheet: Hell's Angels

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A. When the organization was formed + brief history

- According to the official website, Hells Angels was founded in San Bernardino, California on March 17, 1948 as a group of motorcycle enthusiasts for Harley Davidson bikes. The San Bernardino charter (called "Berdo" by members) is still considered the mother charter of the entire gang, which is now called Hells Angels Motorcycle Club World, due to its international expansion. This expansion came as a result of more chapters being founded on their own in the following two decades, and unifying under one name and admission requirements, including the first international charter in Auckland, New Zealand.¹
- Since then, according to the National Gang Intelligence Center's 2009 National Gang Threat Assessment, "Hells Angels Motorcycle Club (HAMC) is an Outlawed Motorcycle Gang (OMG) with 2,000 to 2,500 members belonging to more than 250 chapters in the United States and 26 foreign countries."²

B. Types of illegal activities engaged in,

a. In general

- According to the 2009 Gang Threat Assessment, in addition to drug production and trafficking, "HAMC is involved in other criminal activity, including assault, extortion, homicide, money laundering, and motorcycle theft."³
- Additionally, HAMC has been associated with bombings, arson, weapons trafficking, prostitution, kidnappings, counterfeiting, and insurance fraud (this and a complete list of criminal activities linked to the HAMC can be found in "Table 5" contained in the original source of this endnote).⁴

b. Specific detail: types of illicit trafficking activities engaged in

- The 2009 Assessment also elaborates on the drug-related activities: "HAMC produces, transports, and distributes marijuana and methamphetamine and transports and distributes cocaine, hashish, heroin, LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), MDMA, PCP, and diverted pharmaceuticals."⁵
- On August 29, 2006 a Dutch corporal was accused of arms trafficking through a Hells Angels member in Europe.⁶
- In Canada, in 2009, "the RCMP shut down Hells Angels who were buying cigarettes in the Quebec reserve of Kahnawake. The bikers then sold the cigarettes in Quebec City and used the profits to open drug labs to produce ecstasy to be exported to the U.S."⁷
- Interpol has posted a wanted file for top Hells Angels Quebec Chapter member, David Carrol. Carrol has been convicted of assault, drug trafficking, and firearm offences, and is wanted for the murder and conspiracy to murder of 13 members of a rival gang which refused to buy drugs from Carrol's chapter. Carrol is known to frequent many countries, including Brazil, Mexico, and the United States.⁸
- In 2009, in the **Dominican Republic**, two Canadians living in the town of Cabarete were arrested for conspiracy to commit murder and trafficking controlled substances. They were found with four firearms and were believed to have conspired to murder 22 people, along with trafficking cocaine and heroin. These arrests led to the planned arrest of 156 people in Canada, the Dominican Republic, and France, which included all 111 suspected full members of the Hells Angels in Quebec.⁹

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

C. Scope and Size	
a.	Estimated size of network and membership
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">As stated above, numbers put Hells Angels' membership over 2,000, operating in the US and 26 foreign countries. The Hells Angels are active on all six major continents. US law enforcement estimates there are more than 69 chapters of the gang in 22 US states, with 900-950 members involved in the US.¹⁰ Taken from their website, Hells Angels boasts being the largest "Motorcycle Club" in the world.¹¹
b.	Countries / regions group is known to have operated in. (i.e. the group's operating area)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Beginning in California, Hells Angels has spread throughout the United States and worldwide. The gang can be found in: U.S.A, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Spain, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, England/Wales, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Greece, Russia, Bohemia, Portugal, Chile, Croatia, Luxembourg, N. Ireland, Hungary, Dominican Republic, Turkey, Poland, Iceland and Ireland; with current gatherings in Lithuania, Japan, Latvia, Slovakia, and Romania.¹²The gang is also considered to be one of the most significant gangs operating in the New England and Pacific regions of the United States.¹³ In addition to those regions, the gang is most active in the United States in the Southwest, West Central, Great Lakes, Mid-Atlantic, and New York and New Jersey areas.¹⁴(There is an official listing of the charters, each individual city, their prospective new charters, "hangarounds", and their individual websites belonging to the Hells Angels gang on their official website.)¹⁵
D. Leader Characteristics	
a.	Who is/are the leader(s)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Although the San Bernardino chapter is still considered the "mother chapter" of the group, each charter has its own president and vice president positions.One famous leader from the 1950s was Ralph Hubert "Sonny" Barger, president of the Oakland, CA chapter.¹⁶Another was the recent San Francisco chapter president, Mark Guardado, and Ventura, CA chapter president George Christie.One Canadian chapter leader was Walter Stadnick of Montreal.¹⁷
b.	Leadership timeline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">George Christie was involved in March 2001 in a case of selling drugs to young students. "28 HAMC members and associates were indicted for selling drugs to high school students in Ventura, California... members had recruited students to sell Valium and Vicodin to fellow students. George Christi, HAMC Ventura Chapter president, was indicted in this case and pleaded guilty to conspiring to sell drugs."¹⁸San Francisco HAMC chapter president, Mark Guardado, was killed in a shooting with a supposed rival gang member on September 3, 2008.¹⁹
c.	Leadership style (autocratic, diffuse, etc.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Leadership style appears democratic with each members having voting power over group issues, accompanied by an executive branch within each chapter. Every chapter has a president, vice president, secretary and treasurer, sergeant-at-arms, security officer, and a road captain. The president has full authority and veto power over group-voted decisions. The vice president takes over for the president if absent, the secretary/treasurer handles finances and the recording of minutes, the sergeant-at-

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arms presides over rules and maintains discipline, while the road captain organizes the group's events and motorcycle runs.²⁰

E. Organizational Structure

a. Topology (cellular, hierarchical, etc.)

- As demonstrated by their numerous local charters and chapters across the globe, Hells Angels is a cellular organization; "there is no national or international hierarchy governing all of the chapters."²¹
- According to Canadian police Sergeant and outlaw motorcycle gang expert, Jacques Lemieux, "Each chapter is self-sufficient in the sense that all of its members have a say in the chapter's decisions, internal disciplinary measures against members and criminal activities of the chapter with regard to its territory (e.g. extortion, drug trafficking etc.)."²²
- Lemieux says Hells Angels members work in cells -- small groups of trusted people, including criminal associates. Often, the lower-level people do not know who the head man is, reducing his chances of being arrested.²³

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?

- Hells Angels has a formal membership process, in addition to informal supporters and allied street-level gangs.
- In order to first become a Hells Angel, one must be Caucasian, Hispanic, or Asian; over 21 years of age; and own a Harley-Davidson or Goldwing motorcycle. The prospective member must associate with the gang for a period of time, and then be identified as a "hangaround", meaning he must do menial tasks and other duties to gain respect, for a year. Then an existing member will sponsor the hangaround, boosting his status to a prospect. After another year, the prospect must be unanimously voted in to become a full member.²⁴ Additionally, this formal membership process screens for the possibility of members being a threat to the gang, as anyone who has attempted to become a police officer or prison guard cannot be admitted.²⁵
- HAMC also promotes and supports local gangs, known as "puppet gangs" and "support clubs", in their local areas. These gangs are considered informal members, and some will be recruited as full members.
- There are also informal members known as "associates", trusted friends of HAMC members who do not participate in group decisions, but attend events and motorcycle runs. These "associates" help facilitate, promote, and protect HAMC criminal activities.²⁶

c. Command and Control (decentralized or centralized)

- As stated above under "Leadership", while the San Bernardino chapter is still considered the "mother" chapter of the HA, research has not shown any conclusive evidence that the Hells Angels display any hierarchical, centralized command stemming from the San Bernardino chapter beyond the initial creation of bylaws and charter establishment procedures currently being followed.
- Thus, Hells Angels command is generally decentralized, focusing on each charter as a separate entity, but still adhering to the "brotherhood" of the organization.
- Additionally, the chapters are grouped into regions headed by an executive body elected from the individual chapters of each region. In the United States there is a West Coast region and an East Coast region. Each region does hold regular meetings

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

with representatives from each chapters and a liaison from another region.²⁷

- Organizational-wide meetings do occur during what the group calls the US Run and the World Run events, held in different locations every year, which are used to discuss international business and worldwide issues for the group.²⁸

F. Resources

a. Financial

- A “dial-a-cocaine” type business was busted in Quebec City on January 31, 2007. This delivery system of drug distribution was operated for certain members of the Hells Angels. Estimates put the annual profits of this distribution method over \$1.3 million annually. This estimate does not include other financial activities and fund raising schemes of the organization, and this number is only for one major chapter of the gang.²⁹ This demonstrates the amount of financial reserves one chapter of HAMC can maintain through one type of illicit activity.

b. Human

- As noted in the first section, HAMC is a worldwide gang spread across many nations with numbers ranging from 2,000-2,500.
- In 2009, it was estimated that the Quebec chapter in Canada consisted of as many as 111 full-time members.³⁰
- George Wethern, former vice president of the HAMC Oakland chapter once stated, “We didn’t believe in granting charters for the sake of growth. The additions were designed to contribute to our image and business concerns by providing a drug route link, manufacturing a drug, supplying chemicals or distributing drugs in an untapped area.”³¹

c. Logistical

i. Forgery, safe-houses, etc.

- As a motorcycle gang, every chapter of the HAMC has a location called a “clubhouse” where chapter meetings are held. Most of these double as either a member’s home or, more commonly, a biker bar loyal to the Hells Angels. The Quebec chapters of the HAMC reportedly had five clubhouses that were seized during arrests in 2009.³²

ii. Key routes

- As far back as 1995, Hells Angels were using a sea route to transport cocaine from Colombia to Montreal and London, as a top-level HAMC associate, Norman Rosenblum, was caught in an undercover operation offshore near Colombia.³³
- A two year investigation ending in November, 2008 revealed an international cocaine smuggling ring by the Hells Angels trafficking thousands of pounds of cocaine from Mexico, through the Western United States, into British Columbia, and then east to Montreal for sale.³⁴

d. Transportation

i. Land

- Research suggests land travel is the most utilized form of transportation, as members and street-level puppet gang members are known to smuggle and distribute via their motorcycle runs.
- Large land trafficking route was discovered from Mexico, through the Western United States, and into Canada (see “Key routes” section above).

ii. Sea

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All research conducted according to the project manual.

- Hells Angels uses boats to transport many of their drug shipments, as was the case with the large shipment of cocaine mistakenly transferred from a Hells Angel's vessel to an undercover vessel as far back as 1995.³⁵

iii. Air

- Based on the discovery of Hells Angels members being in key positions at Canadian airports, smuggling by air has been used as one method.³⁶

iv. Intermodal container

- Specific information not found, but large shipping containers seem likely.

G. Trafficking Methods and Modalities

a. Corruption

- Due to the Hells Angels penchant for military members, history, and service, the use of military personnel has been used to take advantage of smuggling opportunities.
- A 22 year old Dutch corporal has been accused of smuggling arms from the former Yugoslavia through a Hells Angels member in August, 2006.³⁷

b. Concealment

- (See the "dial-a-cocaine" case under the "Resources" section above.)

c. Deception

- Hells Angels has been reported by the Canadian police to have been able to successfully plant members into employment and positions of security at airports to enhance smuggling opportunities.³⁸
- One of the 15 most wanted fugitives by the US department of Justice was caught in Buenos Aires and arrested by Interpol on February 4, 2011. Paul Merie Eischedi was a Hells Angels member accused of murder and kidnapping—he had used a false identity to live in Buenos Aires since 2004.³⁹

d. Circumvention (avoiding border entry points)

- (See above section)

H. Prior / Existing Relationships

a. Other criminal organizations (cooperative and conflictual)

- Hells Angels has long feuded with the Mongols motorcycle gang, often violently, including fatal clashes between the two groups in a Laughlin, Nevada casino in 2002.⁴⁰
- Hells Angels has also been rivals and in conflict with the other major OMGs in the US and worldwide, such as the Bandidos, Outlaws, and the Pagans.⁴¹
- Cooperatively, Hells Angels interacts and promotes what are called "puppet clubs" (see "Membership" above). Puppet clubs act as street-level gangs, biker or otherwise, that help carry out the actions of the HAMC, and attempt to gain its respect. Some listed are the Ancient Iron, Henchmen, O.G. Riderz, Original Kings, Top Hatters, Wreck 'N Crew, and the California Posse. Some female clubs also relate to HAMC, as they are usually made up of wives and girlfriends of Angels, and some include the Devil Dolls and She Devils.⁴²
- Additionally, the principal puppet club of the Hells Angels is the Red Devils, which acts as a recruiting pool and as foot soldiers for conducting the street-level crimes.⁴³
- The Hells Angels were part of a network of five biker gangs producing and transporting \$23 million worth of cannabis and amphetamines in Australia, which included the Rebels, Nomads, Gypsy Jokers, and Finks.⁴⁴
- The Big Circle Boys and other Asian gangs, including Vietnamese gangs, in Canada operate with the Hells Angels on drug smuggling and sale.⁴⁵

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Hells Angels has been linked to the Colombian Cali cartel for the distribution and sale of cocaine, amphetamines, and ecstasy in the Netherlands.⁴⁶
b. Corrupt politicians, law enforcement , political parties and other state entities, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (See "Trafficking methods and modalities" above)
c. <i>Specific detail: Any alliances / past dealings with terrorist groups.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Based on overall research, it appears that the Hells Angels might be an inherently racist organization (with the exception of Hispanics and a few instances of Asian acceptance). Based on the content of their websites the gang also demonstrates high levels of US patriotism. This makes any alliances or dealings with terrorist groups unlikely, as extensive research of open sources has not found any specific links as well.
I. Ideological / Ethnic / Familial Orientation (if any) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hells Angels considers itself a motorcycle enthusiast club in which the members bond over ownership of a Harley Davidson or Goldwing motorcycle. They refer to themselves as a brotherhood, and often say that they are closer than family. They are a biker gang, as they travel and ride together in "packs". Hells Angels members do not officially consider themselves as a gang. Some of their non-criminal, claimed behavior is to put on events, donations, and gatherings for their communities, charities, and other motorcycle enthusiast establishments.⁴⁷• 81 is the group number (representing H and A of the alphabet), their colors are red and white, and their symbol is a skull, often flaming, with wings (called a "Deathhead").⁴⁸
J. Technical Sophistication <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Although it has historical ties to the military and World War II veterans, Hells Angels is also designated as one of the OMGs to actually have military-trained members in its ranks.⁴⁹ Military training can allow the spread of knowledge of sophisticated weapons, explosives, tactics, and technologies.• In Ontario, HAMC has used sophisticated technology to acquire, store, and publish information about police officers, on the Internet.⁵⁰
K. Penchant for Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At club meetings, if questions arise about criminal activity, "they are presented on a chalk board that is later erased or on paper that is later burned or otherwise destroyed," according to Sergeant Lemieux's report.⁵¹• The Hells Angels also collect intelligence on rival biker gangs and the police, and they use women to acquire this intelligence. "The women are placed in key positions, for example, with the military, as air-traffic controllers and with different government agencies to provide valuable information and service for the bikers."⁵²• (Also, see the "dial-a-cocaine" case under the "Resources" section above.)
L. Activities in United States <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Includes both criminal and non-criminal activities<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being a US founded gang, the Hells Angels is involved in a lot of activities in the United States.b. <i>Specific detail: trafficking activities ; logistical activities</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">• (See "Types of illegal activities engaged in" above)c. Linkages with US groups<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Market/transaction links<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hells Angels and its many puppet and support groups have access to multiple markets across the nation.ii. Stable supplier

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hells Angels partners in South America and Canada provide stable suppliers to chapters in the US.
iii. Franchise arrangement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hells Angels has a franchise arrangement itself in the US with its numerous chapters across the country.
iv. HQ and Branch office
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (In addition to local groups and clubs of Hells Angels members in small towns across the US, there are official listings of Hells Angels chapters, which can be found on the website)⁵³
M. Evaluations
a. Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One strength of the HAMC is their large membership and worldwide spread. Having hundreds of decentralized chapters allows for the group to tap into extensive international contacts and substantial resources if needed. The group displays a strong sense of brotherhood for all members, so the ability to have trustworthy counterparts all over the world is a huge bonus for financial, logistical, and criminal reasons.• Another strength is the active or former service men who are members. In addition to the weapons and technical training allotted from this, as explained in “technical sophistication” above, prior or current military service provides members with knowledge of warfare tactics and strategies that could be used during street-level conflict, in addition to utilizing military position to take advantage of and engage in trafficking weapons and drugs.⁵⁴• HAMC’s informal to formal membership process (first identifying someone as an informal hangaround, and then a formal prospect for a couple years) screens membership for police and rival infiltration.
b. Weaknesses and vulnerabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One weakness and vulnerability is the website. Although there is nothing criminal posted or maintained on their website, Hells Angels publish the locations and/or contact information for each of their chapters. If there is a need to start a criminal investigation of possible Hells Angels members of a particular area, the website has the potential to be a good resource and place to start.• Due to their “colors” that they wear, Hells Angels members are easy to spot. They wear their leather jackets with the group’s logos, colors, name, and chapter locations sewn on. Iceland has exploited this factor and since 2009 has denied entry into the country of identified Hells Angels members.
c. Additional insights
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• While being a motorcycle enthusiast club is its primary aspect and founding cause, Hells Angels is an organized criminal network involved in massive crimes on a large and small scale. They might front as a biker gang, but on a deeper level Hells Angels has the potential to, and does, conduct illicit activities. The issue is <i>determining</i> which chapter is merely a motorcycle club, and which is more involved in criminal activity, in addition to how deep the illicit behavior runs in each group.
Other Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•

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