

An Evaluation of RICO Prosecutions against Gangs

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Introduction

In 2003, a large Northeastern city began a series of RICO prosecutions against criminal street gangs. Over the course of three years, three gangs were targeted: Boot Camp on June 25, 2003 (26 members indicted and convicted), Elk Block on August 2, 2005 (16 members indicted and convicted), and Brighton Brigade on August 22, 2006 (14 members indicted and convicted). All but one of the offenders pled guilty and those who pled received an average sentence of 15 years federal time with no parole. We undertook an evaluation of the effect on criminal activity as a result of these prosecutions and subsequent incarcerations.

Methods

The current analysis depicts the effect on the number of confirmed shots fired over time in both the targeted areas and citywide, represented in line charts and spatial density maps. Future analyses will incorporate other dependent variables and include an interrupted time series analysis. Three separate analyses will be conducted, the first focusing on the net effect of the Boot Camp prosecution in all gang areas (January 2001 to August 2005), the second focusing on the net effect of the Elk Block prosecution in all gang areas (after June 2003 but before August 2006), and the third focusing on the net effect of the Brighton Brigade prosecution in all gang areas (after August 2005 to end point).

Findings

Preliminary descriptive analysis indicates that the RICO prosecutions had an effect on shots fired in the targeted gang territories. The spatial density maps in particular indicate a marked reduction in shooting activity following each prosecution.

