

Feds arrest head of anti-gang group

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Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES After a life of crime and three stints in jail, Alex Sanchez decided in 1995 it was time to quit gang life.

After returning illegally from El Salvador to Los Angeles, he said he turned his back on the violent Mara Salvatrucha gang he had joined when he was 14.

He also helped set up a U.S. office of Homies Unidos, a nonprofit organization that works to keep kids out of gangs.

Trouble is, prosecutors say, Sanchez never actually left the gang, also known as MS-13.

A federal indictment unsealed Wednesday says Sanchez was a shot-caller with an MS-13 contingent operating east of downtown Los Angeles. He is also accused of conspiring in 2006 to kill a rival, even as he served as executive director of the local Homies Unidos office.

Sanchez, 37, was arrested at his Bellflower home on federal racketeering charges.

The indictment names 24 leaders, members and associates of MS-13. It alleges crimes that include seven murders, eight conspiracies to commit murder and gun and narcotics offenses since 1995. Sixteen of those named were already in custody. Four others, including Sanchez, were arrested Wednesday.

The alleged crimes by Sanchez occurred after he returned from El Salvador in 1996 and publicly decried gang life.

The indictment said he went by the nickname Rebelde, or rebel, and was a shot-caller for the Normandie contingent of MS-13. He and three others are accused of conspiring to murder a man identified by authorities as Walter Lacos "for the purpose of maintaining and increasing their position in MS-13."

The four men are suspected of having a series of phone conversations plotting an attack. In May 2006, Lacos was killed in El Salvador.

No other details were provided in the indictment. Chief Assistant U.S. Attorney George Cardona declined to provide any specifics beyond the court filing.

Shot-callers manage the narcotics operations in certain gang territories, collect extortion payments and resolve disputes, the indictment states.

Mara Salvatrucha was formed in Los Angeles in the mid-1980s by immigrants fleeing the El Salvador civil war. The gang

SEE ARREST PAGE 10



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CHARGED UP: Kelly Meyer on Wednesday talks with reporters about the Green Roadway Project, an effort to install solar panels, geothermal devices and other renewable-energy generators along roadways to generate electricity for homes and vehicles.

Get your electric car charged on Route 66

BY EMMA TROTTER
Special to the Daily Press

DOWNTOWN The Green Roadway Project takes an iconic American image — a car driving along winding roads, covering territory ranging from snowy mountains to crashing ocean waves — and adds more to the picture.

A demonstration Wednesday at the Mobile station at Lincoln and Santa Monica boulevards evoked a vision of a world in which Americans drive electric vehicles, and solar, wind and geothermal devices accompany tumbleweed and fast food restaurants along roads. These devices har-

ness power to be used at roadside charging stations and transmitted through the existing power grid to nearby homes and businesses.

"It's not incremental," said Gene Fein, co-creator of the project. "It's a massive distribution footprint across 8.5 million miles of roads in our country. This system takes the onus off of the individual."

Spokesperson Kelly Meyer pointed out that 40 percent of California's CO2 emissions are generated by highway usage.

"That system can become a part of the solution," she said, emphasizing potential benefits for the American economy — relieving dependence on foreign oil and

creating a new labor force to install and maintain the devices.

"As we reinvent our economy, we have to agree that American ingenuity is an important part of that process," she said. "We owe it to our children to clean up the mess we've made."

The demonstration's backdrop — a gas station at the corner of a busy intersection — silently confirmed Meyer's point.

The Route 66 Alliance, which promotes and preserves the historic roadway that terminates in Santa Monica, announced its endorsement of the project.

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Green Roadway Project auctions rights to clean energy to raise funds

FROM ELECTRIC PAGE 3

"This project will blend a historic route with new technology," said alliance Chairman Jim Conkle. "We can start with Route 66 but end with every road and highway in the world."

"Route 66 has many names — Mother Road, Main Street America, Will Rogers Highway," Conkle continued. "We'd like to add one more — the Electric Highway. Everyone along the road is excited about it."

During the talks, solar panels from PermaCity — one of Santa Monica's preferred solar power providers — soaked up the sun's energy. PermaCity's director of sales, Herb Mendelsohn, said the panels are the most efficient commercially available. Mendelsohn, a Santa Monica resident, added that he hopes to continue working with the project.

The panels were hooked up to the Green Truck, a Culver City-based mobile catering vehicle that usually runs off biodiesel and used vegetable oil. A small crowd of attendees lunched on eco-friendly fare — such as the "Mother Trucker" vegan burger — after the demonstration.

"Lots of people think being green is too expensive," said an apron-clad Conrad Beilharz. "We're trying to show it's possible to be sustainable and profitable even in the taco truck industry, which generates so much waste."

That mission fit in well with the message delivered Wednesday. Genedics, co-founded by Fein and Ed Merritt and owner of the Green Roadway patents, has filed over 125 inventions and licensed over 70 percent of them, many to Fortune 100 companies, Fein said.

"Everything we do should be an economic opportunity for the company but also a benefit to society," he said.

Soon, the Green Roadway Project may become another of Genedics' success stories.

"I think it's going to be part of the future," said Koko Dekermenjian, whose family manages the Mobil station. "Within five years every gas station will have an electric pump, too."

Paul Scott, vice president of Santa Monica-based Plug In America, was a little more critical.

"I think they're reaching a little beyond what's feasible right now," he said, citing the unpredictable nature of wind power. "The project will succeed in some fashion, just not as they've currently drawn it out — I can guarantee that."

Scott estimated that hundreds of thousands of electric cars will be on the roads by 2012, making something along the lines of the Green Roadway Project necessary within about 10 years.

"And it will happen in California first," he added.


The next stage of the project will be to find local developers interested in working with the Department of Transportation to start installing clean energy devices. On July 24, Genedics will hold an online private auction for developers to bid on exclusive licenses to Green Roadway technology within each state.

Wednesday's demonstration is the project's only event in the Los Angeles area.

"Santa Monica has the freeway and larger roadways — such as Olympic — with room alongside where you can deploy solar panels or geothermal or wind devices," said Fein, who currently lives in Malibu but lived in Santa Monica for 20 years. "Some of the roadsides don't look so good, so this technology may actually streamline the road and be a benefit in that way as well."

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