

***New Jersey
State Commission of Investigation***



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**ORGANIZED CRIME
SPOTLIGHT
PAGANS REVIVAL BRINGS
UNPRECEDENTED VIOLENCE, IMPERILS
PUBLIC SAFETY**

TRENTON – The State Commission of Investigation revealed in a report issued today that the proliferation of violence that accompanied a recent rapid expansion of the Pagans Outlaw Motorcycle Gang in New Jersey included numerous assaults committed against members of the public – some of whom had no connection at all to the biker club.

The SCI report, culminating investigative work that included a 2019 public hearing on the resurgence of the biker gang, found members have become increasingly

combative with not only rivals but against anyone the gang believes is a threat or has shown it disrespect. The Commission identified several incidents where the Pagans carried out acts of intimidation and physical assaults against citizens with no gang affiliation by directing hostilities at random patrons in bars and drivers on the road.

“This newfound level of aggression has led to drive-by shootings, savage beat downs of adversaries and unprovoked physical assaults on members of the public across New Jersey,” the report states.

Violent incidents have become increasing common as the Pagans dramatically grew its membership in the last three years, nearly doubling the number of chapters statewide from 10 in 2017 to a current total of 17. With a goal of becoming the dominant outlaw biker gang on the East Coast, the Pagans fueled this growth by relaxing certain longtime biker traditions related to the recruitment process and removed blockades to membership for some in the interest of quickly building up its ranks. Under these eased restrictions, particular groups once excluded from the club – such as certain ethnic minorities and former street gang members – became Pagans. In some instances, Pagans extended membership to individuals willing to pay for it – a practice referred to by some as “cash for colors.”

Along with carrying out documented assaults, shootings and other violent acts, the Commission found the Pagans remain involved in the extortion of legitimate businesses, muscle-for-hire debt collection schemes and the illegal possession of weapons. Pagans also have been known to work in partnership with other organized crime groups in furtherance of criminal enterprise. Further, the Pagans continue to

maintain their long-standing foothold in the drug trade, particularly in the distribution of methamphetamine.

Not only does the revival of the Pagans present a significant threat to public safety, it poses significant challenges for those responsible for protecting it. The Commission found the bikers are adept at utilizing technology to frustrate and undermine law enforcement. Pagan members engage in active counter-surveillance of policing tactics and recently deployed a drone at a major biker event in New Jersey to aid in this effort. The Pagans also use encryption communications technology to ensure that calls and texts between members remain private and inaccessible to anyone outside the organization.

In order to address these findings, the Commission recommended the Office of the Attorney General create and oversee a statewide working group comprised of law enforcement professionals from local, county, state and federal agencies devoted to identifying, investigating and prosecuting criminal activity perpetrated by outlaw motorcycle gangs. In addition, all law enforcement personnel in New Jersey should be required to undergo mandatory training on outlaw motorcycle gangs. Finally, the Commission recommended additional training for police officers to strengthen intelligence gathering and the documentation of suspicious and criminal activity.



The State Commission of Investigation is an independent New Jersey watchdog agency established in 1968 to investigate organized crime and corruption, waste of tax money and other abuses of the public trust. Copies of public reports are available at the Commission's offices or via its Web site at www.state.nj.us/sci/index.shtml