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'Significant' arrests announced in crackdown on Pontiac-area gangs

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Pontiac — A task force made up of local, state and federal officers fanned out across Oakland County on Thursday, rounding up 74 members of two gangs who are accused of distributing marijuana and cocaine out of Pontiac.

In a joint press conference attended by police chiefs, federal agents and others, U.S. Attorney Barbara McQuade announced "significant arrests" of members of the New World Order and Almighty Latin King Nation gangs that have operated since in the Pontiac area since 2009.

Thirty-five search warrants had been served at addresses in Pontiac, Waterford Township, Auburn Hills and Clarkston as a result of a 14-month investigation by the Oakland County Violent Crimes Task Force, McQuade said. She noted arrests were made possible by intercepted telephone conversations, police surveillance and even gang members boasting of their activity on Internet websites such MySpace.com and Facebook.com. "These people are facing various charges for their part in a drug distribution network," McQuade said. "Thirty two arrests were made today and another 20 are locked up on other charges and we are going after others who are named in federal complaints.

"I think it's important to take off the head of the snake, and I think we did that today."

Several law enforcement officers noted they hoped to send a message to all criminals who have felt they found a safe haven in Pontiac, which recently announced the disbandment of its police department and will contract deputies from the Oakland County Sheriff's Office.

Detroit FBI special agent in charge Andrew Arena said: "We all realize that gang activity doesn't start or stop at the borders of Pontiac."

During Thursday's arrests, officers also confiscated \$9,900 in cash, 15 guns, 10 pounds of marijuana, 200 pills, suspected cocaine, and dozens of cellular telephones.

The Almighty Latin King Nation, consisting of thousands of members nationwide, was created in the 1940s in Chicago to provide protection for Latinos. According to federal indictments, the Pontiac group had opened its membership up to non-Latinos, and had branched out into drug trafficking, assaults, robberies and murder.

The New World Order is a multi-racial gang in Pontiac associated with the Latin Kings.

All those arrested will be prosecuted under federal charges in U.S. District Court in Detroit.