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**San José Officials Advise Government and Community
Leaders in Honduras On Reducing Gang Violence
*Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force Seen as an International Model***

San José --- Representatives of the City of San José and its police department traveled to Honduras this month to advise community and government leaders about reducing gang violence based on the success of San José's experience.

The United States Department of State invited San José to go to Honduras to provide its expertise to representatives of the Honduran federal police, judges, community activists, church officials, and leaders of a variety of social service and educational organizations.

Representing San José were Deputy Chief of Police Rob Davis; Norberto Dueñas, currently with the San José Housing Department; and Dick De La Rosa, retired coordinator of the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force.

While in the Honduran cities of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, San José officials also participated in three nationally broadcasted news talk television programs. All of the presentations were conducted in Spanish during the trip from October 6 through October 10.

"Our Gang Prevention Task Force has earned both national and international attention because of its long-term success in reducing and preventing gang violence in San José," said Mayor Ron Gonzales. "We have shown the clear positive impacts from police working closely with our community to steer young people away from gangs, and we are proud that our model can be successful in other countries."

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Honduras is experiencing a severe problem with street gangs that have been the cause of a significant increase in violent crime, including the recent execution-style murder of two Honduran police officers. Many of the Honduran street gangs have modeled their organizations after gangs in the United States.

This is the third international trip that Davis, Duenas and de la Rosa have made to provide such anti-gang training. They also went El Salvador in 2000 and 2002 to provide similar training at the behest of the State Department.

Their main focus in Honduras was the importance of police working collaboratively with government officials, politicians, schools, social service organizations, church leaders, community activists, and community members.

“Through both formal and informal partnerships, these efforts can help prevent youth from joining gangs, intervene with those who already are gang members, and suppress the criminal activity of gangs,” said Chief Davis. “This is the model of the San José Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force that has proven so successful in our city.”

The task force was started in 1991 to address the issues of community safety and violent and gang-involved youth. It includes representatives of police, community service organizations, and schools to develop coordinated programs to reduce gang activity and crime.

Since 1995 the task force has been instrumental in helping San José cut gang-related arrests in half, and it has contributed to making San José the safest big city in the nation according to FBI statistics. In the prior decade from 1984 to 1994, violent juvenile crime in Santa Clara County had increased by 321 percent, four times the national rate at the time.

Last year the San José Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force received national recognition for its long-term success when the “Frederick Milton Thrasher Award” was presented by the National Gang Crime Research Center. The national award was created in 1992 to honor outstanding contributions in leadership, research, and service in dealing with gang problems in America.

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