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## NEWS RELEASE

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### For Immediate Release

### Local Law Enforcement Agencies Uncover Latino Gang Auto Theft Ring

November 4, 2011

**Garfield County, Colorado:** A series of motor vehicle thefts in Denver and on the western slope that occurred between October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011 have been identified as gang related. After further investigations, it was determined the crime spree was a product of three gang members living in Garfield County.

All three juveniles are validated Sureño gang members. Jason Alexis Gamez-Banda, 14 years of age, is currently facing charges of aggravated motor vehicle theft (class 4 felony), theft (class 4 felony), carrying a concealed weapon (class 2 misdemeanor), possession of a handgun by a juvenile (class 2 misdemeanor) and first-degree criminal trespass (class 5 felony). Luis Jurado, 16 years of age, is currently facing the charge of aggravated motor vehicle theft (class 4 felony). The third juvenile is still under investigation and is not currently facing felony charges. No further information will be released on his identity. I.C.E. Homeland Security Investigations is assisting in the investigation of the gang members involved. I.C.E. has placed a hold on 14 year old Jason Alexis Gamez-Banda.

From what we know about the crime spree at this time, the three Sureño gang members are believed to have stolen seven cars total; five from the Pitkin/Garfield County jurisdictions, one from the Steamboat Springs area and one from the Denver area. They are also believed to have entered eight vehicles, stealing miscellaneous electronics and one handgun. The handgun was recovered from Gamez-Banda while attempting to steal another vehicle in New Castle, Colorado. He was apprehended and held at gunpoint by the vehicle's owner until officers from the New Castle Police Department and deputies from the Garfield County Sheriff's Office arrived and took him into custody.

During the initial stages of the investigation of Jason Alexis Gamez-Banda, by the Carbondale and New Castle Police Departments, the Carbondale Officer recognized what he knew to be gang related information. The officer immediately notified the Garfield County Sheriff's Office T.A.G. Deputy, who used his resources, database and informants to help identify the other suspects. This resulted in a joint investigation, which involved: T.A.G., Carbondale Police Department, Aspen Police Department, New Castle Police Department, Immigration Custom Enforcement and the Garfield County Sheriff's Office. The joint investigation has led to the recovery of the previously mentioned stolen vehicles.

According to Garfield County Sheriff Lou Vallario, the outcome of this investigation demonstrates the importance of the cooperation between local and federal law enforcement agencies such as I.C.E. Homeland Security Investigations Operation Community Shield Task Force. It also demonstrates that dangerous criminal gang activity is present in our communities and how a cooperative law enforcement approach with our citizens is crucial to eradicate this criminal element.

Law Enforcement would like to remind its citizens to remove their keys and lock their car doors. Recently documented vehicle thefts, including the above, involved unlocked vehicles, and some with the vehicles keys inside. In an effort to prevent these types of crimes, please remember to remove valuables and secure your vehicle. Whenever possible, park your vehicle in a location that is well lit and has high visibility.

*The mission of the Garfield County Sheriff's Office is to provide solutions for the people by utilizing and employing strong morals, good character, untarnished integrity, technical knowledge and fiscal responsibility through professional, ethical and equitable conduct.*

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