

Name: Alert ID: TMML202403176230 Moises Humberto Rivera-Luna, alias "El Viejo Santos," is one of six Mara Salvatrucha leaders the US Treasury Department blacklisted in June 2013. Three years and three months earlier, on March 9, 2010, an FBI patrol raided a house in a Latino neighborhood in Maryland. There, they found the first evidence of a new relationship between MS13 cliques along the US East Coast and its imprisoned leadership in El Salvador. This evidence consisted of two receipts for money transfers made via Western Union by Edgar Granados, a member of the Normandie Locos Salvatruchos clique. The money was received in El Salvador by a woman named Julia Perez Abarca, who, at that time, was regularly visiting Viejo Santos in the Chalatenango prison. Following the raid, an investigation revealed that ties between El Salvador's imprisoned "big bosses" and the "shot-callers" (palabrerros) along the US East Coast had been revitalized. This story is reprinted with permission from Revista Factum. See the original Spanish version [here](#). Involved in this restoration of ties were certain gang members who played a role in the gang truce with the government of ex-President Mauricio Funes. Revista Factum has reconstructed this chapter of the MS13's history in Maryland via an exhaustive review of judicial documents and hours of interviews with police, defense lawyers, and ex-gang members in San Salvador. The MS13 in the Washington DC Area March 19, 2010 was a Friday. Jose Martinez Amaya, alias "Crimen," and Manuel Saravia received a call from El Salvador. Speaking on the other end was Viejo Santos, the boss of the Normandie Locos Salvatruchos (NLS) clique. He was calling from the Chalatenango prison to inform the two they had been named palabrerros ("shot-callers") of the NLS in Maryland. It had been just three years since Jose, at 19 years of age, had left San Miguel for the United States. Jose's life story is similar to thousands of other Salvadoran youths who — after their parents emigrated north — were raised by their grandparents; growing up in towns and neighborhoods that just 15 years ago were not very dangerous. Back then, MS13 and Barrio 18 graffiti on neighborhood walls was still non-threatening. Jose was born in 1988 in San Miguel, and is the third of four children who never knew their father. When he was six, Jose's mother left for the United States with his two oldest siblings. Jose and his brother were left in the care of their maternal grandparents. Jose later told a Maryland social worker his grandmother mistreated him, frequently forcing him to kneel on gravel and hitting him with a wooden cane. Jose became one of at least five members of the Normandie clique in Maryland, who sent small weekly sums of money to Viejo Santos — the clique's supreme leader in El Salvador. According to a document issued by the US District Court for the District of Columbia — which on June 26 sentenced Jose to life in prison for homicide — Jose entered the United States in 2007 as an undocumented migrant. He traveled to Maryland's Latino suburbs where his mother lived. After attending the local high school for three months, Jose dropped out, and began working construction with Genco Constructions in Bethesda, one of Washington DC's richest suburbs. It was not long, however, before Jose left home — after 12 years apart, his mother had become a stranger to him. He was now making enough money from his construction job to be able to move in with his girlfriend. He also began sending money to a son he left behind in El Salvador. Jose's mother says her son was already tattooed when he arrived from El Salvador. She insists, however, that MS13 members in San Miguel forced Jose to "stain himself," and that he did it for his own safety. Yet gang rules imply that having a tattoo of the letters MS without authorization — that is, without being an active member — can be grounds for death. Documents from the Washington DC court regarding the personal history of Jose Martinez Amaya indicate that when he crossed the Rio Grande, he was already a fully initiated member of the Normandie clique. SEE ALSO: MS13 News and Profiles What is known for sure — and is included in the FBI documents annexed to Martinez Amaya's sentencing memorandum (case number 10-256-09) — is that Martinez Amaya started participating in Normandie clique meetings near the end of 2008 — a little over a year after he arrived in the United States. According to police records, between November 2008 and New Year's Eve 2009, Martinez Amaya and Manuel Saravia, alias "Cholo," sold cocaine in Silver Spring, beat up a member of another clique, and stabbed at least one person in Langley Park, a well-known MS13 stronghold in Maryland. At the end of 2009, Martinez became one of at least five members of the Normandie clique in Maryland, identified by the FBI, who sent small weekly sums of money to Viejo Santos, the clique's supreme leader in El Salvador. (According to a 2001 Salvadoran police intelligence report, Viejos Santos is also one of the founding members of the MS13 in El Salvador). This remittance came from extortion and drug dealing. Orders from Chalatenango The beginning of 2010, when Jose Martinez Amaya and Manuel Saravia

were named “palabreros,” was a hectic period. Viejo Santos had been exerting strict control over the Normandie clique from El Salvador, insisting on compliance with certain rules. It was also around this time that the Normandie clique received orders from El Salvador to expand their operations in the United States. Below is an official investigator’s account of a phone call about these plans, to which Revista Factum had access: In March 2010 Moises Humberto Rivera Luna participated in a three-person conference call. Of the two other people, one was located in the Washington metropolitan area, while the other was in another state. During the conversation, Rivera Luna commented that later that same day he would be participating in a phone meeting with people in Maryland, New York, and Los Angeles. Rivera Luna said it was important for members of the Normandie clique in Washington to go to other cities to ensure gang members in those areas were comporting themselves appropriately. Normandie clique members could also play an advising role, teaching gang members in these cities how to recruit new members and fend off rivals. Several months before this call, near the end of November 2009, Rivera Luna participated in another conference call. This call included Marvin Geovanny Monterroa Larios, alias “Enano” — another leader imprisoned in El Salvador — and representatives from the Uniones, Normandie, and Western Locos cliques in Maryland. These are three of the six MS13 that had consolidated in Washington by that time, according to the FBI. The other three cliques are the Sailors Locos, the Peajes, and the Fulton Locos. In this November teleconference, Enano and Viejo Santos gave an implicit order to refocus attention on the Maryland and Washington region. The most powerful cliques were to return to the gang’s founding precepts: control territory, and earn respect and money using the gang’s main currency: violence. Viejo Santos, head of the Normandie Locos clique, who gave orders and received remittances from MS13 members based in the US. The order was similar to one from nearly a decade earlier. In 2003, according to several gang leaders, the order for the MS13 to expand throughout El Salvador came from the United States. The call was for the gang to develop a culture of violence, as well as increased organization in Central America, as part of the gang’s expansion in the region. In 2010, a similar order — but solely focused on the Washington DC area — made its way north. Following this conference between gang members in the El Salvador prisons and gang members on the Maryland streets, a federation of cliques came into being called “The Brotherhood.” During an off-the-record conversation, a US federal agent confirmed this federation is still active. “The Brotherhood’s purpose is to investigate if members from other cliques are cooperating with law enforcement and, if so, to kill them,” the agent said. In other words, the group gives the green light to murder snitches. A few months after The Brotherhood’s creation, Viejo Santos — leader of the Normandie’s clique — and Enano had consolidated the gang in the Maryland and Washington neighborhoods. According to US Justice Department prosecutors, by January 2010, US elements of the MS13 were colluding with leaders in El Salvador. For example, on January 9, Monterrosa Larios spoke by telephone with a member of the Unions clique in Langley Park about the possibility of sending someone from San Miguel to carry out a murder in Maryland. By the end of the month, Enano was coordinating a special operation from his prison cell in El Salvador: the search for a safe house, meant to shelter members of the Fulton clique at risk of being deported. It was the first time since 2005 that police from Maryland’s Montgomery County, the District of Columbia, and the FBI handled a case in which the highest levels of the MS13’s leadership had ordered an assassination in the US. On March 7, 2010, Viejo Santos asked another member of the NLS, who used the alias “Cocky,” what he knew about the behavior of Felipe Leonardo Enriquez, alias “Zombie,” a gang member that, according to Viejo Santos, had “disrespected the Normandie” by covering up a tattoo of the clique. Cocky, however, was unwilling to carry out the orders coming from El Salvador. He stopped answering the bosses’ calls and fled. On May 5, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) arrested him for being in the United States without immigration documents. Viejo Santos took this as a betrayal. “The big boss was angry with Zombie over the tattoo, and with Cocky because he had stopped answering his phone calls,” a witness said at the trial against the NLS members that began in Washington in 2012. After Cocky’s fall from grace, Martinez Amaya and Saravia were selected to carry out Viejo Santos’ orders. Saravia and Martinez Amaya teleconferenced with Viejo Santos on March 31. It was done, they said. Zombie was dead. They, along with another gang member, Noe Machado Erazo, had executed him. It was Martinez Amaya, however, who fired the coup de grâce. It was the first time since 2005 that police from Maryland’s Montgomery County, the District of Columbia, and the FBI

handled a case in which the highest levels of the MS13's leadership had ordered an assassination in the US. From 2005 to 2007, a federal court in Greenbelt, Maryland convicted 24 members from various MS13 cliques for three murders, possession and carrying of firearms, obstruction of justice, and racketeering. According to prosecutors, at least two of the killings had also been ordered from El Salvador. Those times, though, the orders came from Saul Antonio Angel Turcios, alias "El Trece," a leader of the Tecla Locos Salvatruchos (TLS) clique who would also participate in the negotiation of the 2012 gang truce. The silence — or "relative calm," as one Maryland detective speaking on the condition of anonymity referred to it — that prevailed in the area following the trials of the mid-2000s was definitively broken. The Wheaton Seizure Randolph Road has four lanes (two going each direction) and extends through most of Montgomery County, which is home to tens of thousands of Salvadorans and Central Americans. Wheaton-Glenmont — located about 20 kilometers north of the White House — is one of the cities this road goes through. On March 9, 2010, unmarked FBI cars and county police patrols drove to a house near the intersection of Randolph and Veirs Mill Road. It was the home of a Normandie clique member: Edgar Granados, alias "Babyface." In a trash can in the house's kitchen, police found two Western Union receipts, evidence of two wire transfers of money — one of \$50 and the other of \$350. Granados was sending the money to a woman in El Salvador named Julia Perez Abarca. With these two receipts, the FBI began to connect the dots. Agent Jason Brumbelow was in charge of the investigation. The case was so large and complex that it would be another two years before the Normandie clique was brought to trial. Julia Perez Abarca was the first link. A July 17, 2013 conversation between Agent Brumbelow and assistant prosecutor Nijar Rantay Mohany during the trial of Jose Martinez Amaya and Noe Machado Erazo is quite revealing in this respect. The exchange discusses Julia Perez Abarca's connection to the receipts found in the Randolph Road home and the final destination of the remittances: Viejo Santos, who until June 2010 was incarcerated in El Salvador's Chalatenango prison. The exchange went as follows: Prosecutor Mohany: Who was Edgar Granados sending the money to in El Salvador? Agent Brumbelow: Julia Perez Abarca. Mohany (to the judge): Your honor, evidence piece 155 of the government are stamped Salvadoran documents... Mohany (to Agent Brumbelow): I'm going to direct your attention to the screen so you can see the document I am putting up with the court's permission... Do you see what is on the screen? (Prosecutor Mohany shows a certified copy of a sign-in sheet for visitors to several MS13 members incarcerated in Salvadoran prisons.) Brumbelow: Yes, I see it. Mohany: Ok. It says, in Spanish, the visits made to Moises Humberto Rivera. Do you see that? Brumbelow: Yes, I see it. Mohany: Who is that person? Brumbelow: Moises Humberto Rivera, Viejo Santos. Mohany: Ok. Do you see this name? Domitila de la Paz Portillo. Brumbelow: Yes. Mohany: Is this name important to your investigation? Brumbelow: We have information that we extracted from Western Union's files indicating various members of the Normandie clique were sending money to her. Mohany: And this name that appears further down, do you recognize it? Brumbelow: Yes. Julia Perez Abarca. At the end of this questioning — which started at 10:30 a.m. and ended at 3:16 p.m. that day — and after numerous objections from the defense, the Justice Department's representatives had established the following points: between January and March 2010, three members of the Normandie clique in Maryland, including Edgar Martinez Granados and Jose Amaya, alias "Crimen," had made at least 12 remittance payments to Michelle Rios, Domitila de la Paz Portillo, and Julia Perez Abarca; and these last two women had visited Viejo Santos in Chalatenango on several occasions. (According to records from El Salvador's prison directorate, Viejo Santos was transferred to the maximum-security prison in Zacatecoluca in June 2010.) At least two US federal agencies — in addition to the FBI and the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) — had followed the trail of these wire transfers made from Washington and Maryland to Monterrosa Larios, alias "Enano" (The Dwarf). On June 5, 2013 — three years after finding the Western Union receipts in Edgar Granados' house — the Treasury Department declared Viejo Santos and Enano the subjects of criminal investigations by the US government. According to police sources in El Salvador, the two men were part of the MS13 leadership that had participated in truce negotiations with rivals the Barrio 18 and the government of President Mauricio Funes. The government was represented at these negotiations by state and military intelligence agents under the order of Security Minister Gen. David Munguia Payes and General Francisco Salinas, the director of the national police (PNC). MS13 Leaders with Influence in the US The name Moises Humberto Rivera Luna (now 44 years

old) — and his alias “Viejo Santos” — is rarely mentioned in newspaper headlines. Nor does his name come up in the few and contradictory statements Salvadoran authorities make about the gang truce. Nor is the name Monterrosa Larios (now 41 years old) heard very much. However, according to US and Salvadoran police, both men are important MS13 leaders. “Moises Humberto Rivera Luna is an international leader of the MS13, sending orders and instructions to cliques in the Washington area from his prison in El Salvador via cell phone,” a US federal agent said. “Monterrosa Larios, also imprisoned in El Salvador, leads the coalition of MS13 cliques that has formed in the Washington area.” One document, entitled “The MS Gang Phenomenon in El Salvador” — prepared by the Salvadoran Center for Police Intelligence in July 2011 — consists of a 39-slide PowerPoint presentation detailing the basic functions of the gang, its rules, its communication methods, and its leadership. On the fifth slide, titled “Hierarchical Status of the Gang,” appear 13 names of gang members who police have identified as founders of the MS13 in El Salvador. The third name on that list is Viejo Santos. Also included are the leaders of the truce: Borromeo Henriquez Solorzano, alias “Diablito de Hollywood,” Adalberto Ricardo Diaz, alias “Rata de Leewards,” and Saul Antonio Angel Turcios, alias “El Trece.” A Salvadoran police intelligence report names Viejo Santos — who ordered other gang associates killed in the Washington DC area — as one of the founders of the MS13 in El Salvador. According to a June 2007 decision issued by a court in Greenbelt, Maryland, between 2005 and 2007, El Trece became the first top MS13 leader incarcerated in El Salvador to authorize executions and order extortions in Maryland (he was imprisoned in Zacatecoluca in 2006). His criminal case (No. DKC-05-0393) — which included charges of homicide and racketeering — said that, through the Teclas Locos Salvatruchos (TLS) clique, he was able to increase his power and influence over the gang during those years. SEE ALSO: Coverage of El Salvador gang truce Several examples of this influence are contained in records annexed to El Trece’s criminal trial (No. 199-1-2006) for racketeering, which was resolved by a Santa Tecla court on October 9, 2006. Information in these documents puts Angel Turcios’ date of birth as May 17, 1975. He attended school through the fourth grade, and worked in a metal factory where he earned \$9 a day. The unofficial biography, however, taken from the testimonies of fellow TLS members who became witnesses for the prosecution in this trial, is much less modest. Nonetheless, despite the life sentences handed down in these recent trials... communications between the Salvadoran jails and the streets of metropolitan Washington remain active... One of the witnesses in the Santa Tecla trial said that near the end of 2005, El Trece began receiving up to \$4,000 a week as “tribute,” a gang reference to quotas from criminal activities paid to the maximum leader. The 16 cliques he controlled in the La Libertad area paid these fees to him. The year 2005 also saw weapons sales produce two income payments of around \$9,000 and \$10,000, respectively. Estimated roughly, Angel Turcios was receiving about \$670 a day from the tributes alone. According to the judge in Maryland, he was also receiving money from the United States during this period. In 2010, the MS13 leader receiving tributes from the United States was Viejo Santos. This development essentially reversed the way the gangs had initially expanded — with orders traveling from North America to Central America, as opposed to vice versa. The Normandie and Viejo Santos case was so important for the US government that the FBI and DHS did not hesitate to offer Luis Avila Mendez, a gang member from Maryland, an S visa. These are typically reserved for witnesses in criminal cases of great significance. This visa allowed Avila Mendez to collaborate with authorities and record meetings where criminal acts were discussed. According to immigration lawyers from Baltimore, the S visa is very difficult to obtain. In fact, even in this case the process was problematic because Avila Mendez had committed other crimes while collaborating with the authorities. Despite Manuel Saravia also being identified by police as an accomplice in one of the murders for which Jose Martinez Amaya was sentenced to life imprisonment, Saravia’s punishment was not as severe. This is because he confessed to authorities that Martinez Amaya committed the murder: “It seems that the jury found Mr. Martinez guilty of murdering Felipe Enriquez, who was known as Zombie, based solely on the testimony of Manuel Saravia,” the court decision reads. Nonetheless, despite the life sentences handed down in these recent trials, and the attention the US Treasury Department has placed on MS13’s imprisoned leadership in El Salvador, communications between the Salvadoran jails and the streets of metropolitan Washington are as active as they were in 2005 and 2006. Indeed, the MS13 has proven capable of practicing a variety of illicit activities. According to authorities, this includes extortion and other crimes — namely, prostitution — that they had not

previously carried out in the United States. * Hector Silva Avalos is a Research Fellow at American University's Center for Latin American & Latino Studies and the editor of the Revista Factum, an online media outlet that focuses on El Salvador.