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## House of Representatives State of Tennessee

December 4, 2024

**COMMITTEES:**  
CALENDAR AND RULES  
COMMERCE  
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS  
HEALTH

**SUBCOMMITTEES:**  
POPULATION HEALTH  
BUSINESS AND UTILITIES

Hon. David Rausch  
Director, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation  
901 R.S. Gass Boulevard  
Nashville, TN 37216

RE: Venezuelan Gang Members and Violent Crime Rates

Dear Director Rausch:

On November 12, 2024, you raised several concerning issues prior to commencing your budget presentation – Venezuelan gang activity and violent crime. Because you prioritized a discussion of these issues before commencing your formal budget presentation, I assume these issues are the most pressing issues facing the TBI. Therefore, I write to pose a few follow-up questions to you in my legislative capacity for purposes of determining whether legislation or a budgetary amendment for the TBI would be helpful or necessary.

I have summarized your preliminary remarks below, quoting you where possible. Please correct any unintentional mistakes in this summary.

The Tren de Aragua (“TDA”) is a gang that was “created in prisons in Venezuela” and is comprised of “illegal individuals.” The TDA is now “prevalent” and “ever-present in Tennessee” after they fled our state two years ago when the TBI uncovered their human trafficking operation. The TDA is now “back in all of our major cities.” The TDA’s criminal activities are organized in a manner with “a pathway to more violence,” starting with human trafficking operations and moving on to “organized retail theft” as a “next phase” before “they get into the drug trade.” The TDA’s drug trade activity is in direct competition with the cartels, and the TDA has produced a video showing the TDA shooting “a cartel member 31 times.” All of the above information is based on the “trends and intel [the TBI has] on them.”

- What are the “trends and intel” to which you refer? If possible, please share all such information with me and my fellow legislators.
- When did the TDA return to Tennessee in the past two years and why are some of us just now learning of this serious threat to public safety?
- Please share some of the specific instances of their criminal activity in all of our major cities so that we can gain a better understanding of the prevalence and types of their illegal conduct.

- Please elaborate on what you meant by “ever-present.”
- What does the TDA’s drug trade entail? Is it fentanyl-related?
- Was the video of the cartel member’s murder filmed in Tennessee?
- Does the TBI expect more violence in our state as a direct result of the TDA and cartel’s competition over the drug trade?
- Are any TDA members currently incarcerated within any state or private prisons in our state?
- Has the TDA drug trade infiltrated any state or private prisons in our state?
- Does the TBI possess any information about how the illegal individuals migrated from Venezuela to Tennessee?
- To whom or what do you attribute any blame for illegal individuals’ presence in Tennessee?
- What can we legislators do to best assist the TBI’s efforts to end TDA criminal activity and its presence within our state?


You continued your preliminary remarks by arguing that violent crime rates are most impacted by performing investigations well, which would in turn result in more prosecutions. In support, you stated that, “Showing prosecution is the way you impact the violent crime rate” and said we should be asking ourselves, “How can we increase prosecution rates?” You then concluded by saying, “If a case is prosecuted, that means the investigation was done well.”

- Does the TBI have sufficient resources to perform investigations well, which would result in more prosecutions?
- What resources, if any, does the TBI lack which inhibit its performance of investigations?
- Does the TBI formally prioritize certain crimes for purposes of utilizing resources to conduct good investigations? If so, what is the priority list?
- Are there any specific instances of when the TBI performed an investigation well but a prosecution did not result? If so, what was the reason?
- What can we legislators do to best assist the TBI’s efforts to perform good investigations that would, in turn, result in more prosecutions?

I would value your input on these important topics and respectfully request your prompt response. Similar to you and my fellow state legislators, I am interested, first and foremost, in addressing issues of concern to Tennessee families to the extent we are able within our respective jurisdictions. Illegal immigration and violent crime are top concerns among Tennesseans, so if there is anything we, as legislators, can and should do to address the serious issues you raised, it is imperative that we have access to all available information in a timely manner.

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



John Ray Clemmons  
State Representative