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Manassas police take down more suspected gang members

By Kipp Hanley



Catholic priest Ramon Dominguez had just come from Georgetown South to lead a scheduled prayer service at the spot where 15-year-old Miguel Hernandez was fatally stabbed Friday.

Alongside him was a boy who said his name was Jonathan Garcia. After finishing a conversation on his cell phone, Dominguez stood silently near the intersection of Bartow and Brent streets, waiting.

Less than five minutes later, Garcia was whisked away in handcuffs by police officers armed with assault rifles.

Four police vehicles, several of them unmarked, screeched to a halt near the twosome. With guns in hand, the police got the boy on the ground, handcuffed him and drove him away -- all in the matter of a minutes.

There were shrieks of fear and swears of incredulity from the few people who had already gathered for the vigil. All in all, it was surreal moment in a weekend of disbelief starting with the stabbing death of "Mickey" Hernandez, a popular Osbourn High School freshman.

On Saturday, police were called to investigate a stabbing that occurred at the Grant Avenue Shopping Center across the street from the scene of the murder.

Police late Monday said they'd arrested 15-year-old Manassas teen and a 16-year-old Gainesville youth in connection with the Saturday incident.

After the recent outburst of violence, Manassas police joined forces with the Northern Virginia Gang Task Force to investigate any gang connections between the two crimes.

On Saturday, they arrested Mauricio Martinez, 18, of 9233 Byrd Drive in Manassas, and a 17-year-old juvenile from Fairfax and charged them with murder and gang participation in the death of Hernandez.

According to Neumann, the two stabbings are connected in some fashion. Neumann said MS-13, Sur-13 and Mexican Mafia have a presence in the city but did not say which gang either of the arrestees were affiliated with.

Neumann said the police don't know the motive for Friday's slaying or whether Saturday's incident was in retaliation to what occurred the day before. He also said he wasn't aware of any inordinate amount of gang activity in the city preceding this weekend's events.

Police Capt. Art Dennis, who worked Monday's after-school vigil, said that the heavy police presence was necessary given the timeliness of the service and the amount of students who cut through the neighborhood each day from school.

Part of that presence was a surveillance camera placed near the intersection of the killing. Dennis said the surveillance camera is a temporary security measure to make sure the department keeps a handle on what he called a very fluid situation.

"One spark and you have an incident," Dennis said.

For at least the first part of the prayer service, there were no more altercations. Candles were lit in Hernandez's honor and friends placed flowers on the spot where he lay. Many of the more than 150 people gathered were openly weeping as Dominguez began the service.

Manassas City Public Schools Superintendent Gail Pope was one of many who came to pay their respects to Hernandez. Regardless of recent events, Pope said that school officials always tell their students to walk in groups from school and take the bus if you normally take the bus.

Several children interviewed said they were either scared or would be more careful during their walks home to and from school. Pope said they work with parents on any issues staff may be unaware of so that they can attempt to nip any potential problems in the bud.

Unfortunately, Pope said there is only so much she and school officials can do to ensure the safety of her students while they are off-school grounds.

According to Neumann, there was a heavier than usual police presence in and around Osbourn Monday and that they will be there as long as they deem necessary.