

The Washington Post

Suspects in fatal stabbing of Miguel Hernandez, 15, may be linked to gang feuds

By Josh White Washington Post Staff Writer
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Targeted stabbings in Manassas on Friday and Saturday - one fatal - appear to be linked to disputes between two rival Hispanic gangs, violence that has spurred investigations by local police and the Northern Virginia Gang Task Force.

Manassas police said the first stabbing happened on Friday shortly after the school day ended, as Osbourn High students were going home. Miguel Hernandez, 15, was walking with friends toward the Georgetown South neighborhood about 2:45 p.m. when several teenagers confronted him and pulled him aside.

A fight ensued, police said, and one of the teenagers held Hernandez while another stabbed him in the chest. Authorities said he was hit once in the heart and collapsed to the ground while the suspects fled. He died about eight hours later.

Mauricio Martinez, 18, of Manassas and a 17-year-old Fairfax teenager were arrested and charged with murder and gang participation. Authorities said they think Martinez, who is also an Osbourn student, and the 17-year-old were affiliated with the same gang and waited for Hernandez before the attack. The Washington Post does not identify crime suspects younger than 18.

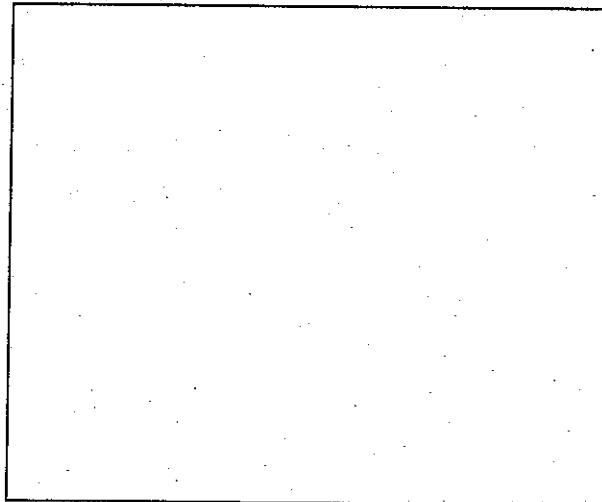
"We believe this was not just a random killing," said Sgt. Tim Neumann, a Manassas police spokesman. "It appears that he was targeted."

Police said that on Saturday night, six men dressed in black jumped a man thought to have a connection to attackers in the Friday stabbing.

The men grabbed the man about 9 p.m. in a store at the Grant Avenue Shopping Center - also near Georgetown South - dragged him outside, and beat and stabbed him in the back. The 19-year-old Manassas man survived, police said.

Authorities said they suspect that gang members who are connected to the victim in the Friday stabbing carried out the Saturday stabbing, but they stopped short of calling

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the act retaliation. The two groups have been feuding across the region over the past several months. Police said the violence has spilled into Manassas, escalating from stabbing and machete attacks over the summer to the homicide on Friday.

Police said the violence has been largely between gang members or those associated with them. Police stepped up their presence over the weekend, including at a vigil for Hernandez outside his home, and will continue to focus on the neighborhood and its surroundings.

"We don't feel random people are at risk, but we will increase security around the school and in the area," Neumann said.

Police ask that anyone with information about the incidents contact the confidential Crime Solvers tip line at 703-330-0330, where callers can receive a reward of up to \$1,000.

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