

South Tahoe gang members plead guilty

South Lake Tahoe police officers are calling this week's sentencing of three gang members the dismantling of the command structure of the Cyclones street gang.

Jorge Casillas, Carlos Trejo and a 16-year-old male pleaded guilty to first degree burglary, assault with a deadly weapon and participating in a criminal street gang in the June stabbing of a 15-year-old South Lake Tahoe youth.

Casillas was given 11 years and four months in state prison for the June incident and an earlier crime involving a gun. Trejo's sentence is one year in county jail and five years of probation. The teenager will be sentenced later.

The Cyclones street gang is a clique associated with the South Side, or Sureño, street gangs originating in Southern California and the California State Prison system.

This is the second such street gang in South Lake Tahoe to have its command structure deconstructed by South Lake Tahoe gang investigators in the last year. By November 2009, several East Side Familia gang members and their leader had been arrested on charges ranging from drug sales to firearms and attempted homicide. The East Side Familia was a local street gang associated with the North Side, or Norteño street gangs, also originating in Southern California and the California State Prison system.

These investigations have led to the identification of several street gangs operating in and about South Lake Tahoe, with more than 500 gang members and their associates being contacted. The Cyclones and East Side Familia street gangs are only two of the street gangs contacted by police gang officers. Other gangs range from tagging crews, white

supremacist and non-traditional street gangs.

Although the police department's gang officers view these convictions as victories, they also view them with concern. It is not uncommon for street gangs to re-assemble command structure or to splinter off forming other street gangs once their core has been disrupted.

The police department has formed a new task force to deal with new threats to investigating officers involved in this attempted homicide investigation.