



Gang Stalking

by John B. Lopes

Three years ago a male caller phoned my private detective agency and asked to speak with me. The caller said he was the victim of “gang stalking” and described how it was being done. I was reluctant to believe such a thing and asked him where I could find additional information on gang stalking.

Initially, I thought the caller was delusional. It was the same thought I had had about previous callers who described being harassed by—for lack of a better description—several people in their neighborhood. For example, a woman from Baltimore had earlier

told me she was finding items in her home mysteriously moved around while she was out. Her outgoing mail would reappear in her mailbox, several days after she sent it. Another male caller said he was certain he was being stalked and that he was not crazy. These, and other calls, began to make me doubt that these callers were imagining these events.

When interviewing prospective clients, one of my first steps is to try to sort out the “crazies” from the sane, which is difficult at best, especially over the phone in only a few minutes. With these calls, I would start by asking the

caller if he or she was taking any legal or recreational drugs/medication and whether she had ever been treated for dementia, hysteria, hallucinations, etc. I would also ask if there might be a person, persons or group that the caller may have injured or offended in some way—someone who would be motivated to do this. Was the caller a whistle blower? Our staff would also ask if the caller had a former friend or lover who might be having trouble letting go.

Prior to learning about gang stalking, I would tell callers to keep a journal with as much detail as possible. I

would also tell them to contact me once they had something tangible for our agency to build on, such as a vehicle tag number and/or descriptions of any of the individuals. This advice hasn't changed: I continue to recommend keeping a journal. The mere practice of keeping a journal can be therapeutic and help the writer to keep his or her facts straight.

Gang stalking (or "organized stalking") involves employing techniques of psychological warfare in a methodical and well-orchestrated manner. Often, victims become the target of ridicule by friends and family because the occurrences are so hard to believe. These tactics are intended to weaken the target to the point of physical and psychological collapse. Now that the number of targets has increased to the point where victims can network with one another, they find out that the same tactics are being used everywhere.

The reasons why someone is initially targeted for gang stalking may vary. Sometimes, the victim may be a political activist. Others may have simply been in the wrong place at the wrong time. Apparently, corporations have been known to hire these stalking groups to silence people who were once in their employ. Members of the stalking gangs may be lied to about the target; possibly convinced that the person is a deviant who should be driven out of town.

Many people ask: Why would anyone engage in this kind of activity? In order to answer this question, it is important to realize that the person who has decided to target an individual is not the same person (or persons in this case) doing the stalking. Gang stalking is stalking by proxy. Those who select the target may be doing so for any number of reasons, including revenge, jealousy, or a desire to keep someone silent. It may be that the perpetrator considers physically harming the victim to be too extreme or too

risky. In fact, this kind of psychological attack can be a far more effective way to harm someone. It ruins a person's life while leaving little or no evidence to incriminate the perpetrators.

The reasons why the stalkers engage in the activity may have little or nothing to do with why the person was targeted in the first place. It is not inconceivable that the participants don't know why the person has been targeted, or that the stalkers have no personal stake in harassing the victim. Certain things are clear: This is an addictive behavior as well as a form of entertainment for the stalkers. From descriptions of victims who have come face to face with their stalkers, the stalkers seem to derive a vicious pleasure from bullying their victim. Clearly, stalkers like the feeling of being "in control." For stalkers, organized stalking is probably the ultimate experience in "reality" entertainment. To the perpetrators, the targets are merely part of an ongoing game. But make no mistake: This is a vicious crime.

According to David Lawson, author of *Terrorist Stalking in America*, in some cases the victim may simply be a practice target, or used as an example to those in the stalking group of what can happen to them if they anger the group in some way. The intense fear of becoming a target serves to keep the members of these stalking groups tied to the group. It is a terrifying prospect because the gang members are intimately aware that the lives of the targets are being destroyed.

The types of activities that occur are often subtle; sometimes they can't be distinguished from normal everyday things that go wrong. But these activities typically occur much more frequently than they would normally. Lawson writes that the victim is intentionally "sensitized" to the presence of the stalkers, so that he or she will know that the occurrences are orchestrated. It is a psychological reign of terror intended to make victims look crazy and to keep

them in a constant state of hyper-vigilance (anxiety and stress) concerning what will happen next.

For example, perpetrators (who appear to frequently have access to their targets' homes) may sometimes come into the house while the target is out and move things around a little bit, spread some dirt on the floor or on furniture, or move an item from the house to the car. Usually, they will not cause enough damage to involve the police. In some cases, the victim does not know she or he is being targeted. It just appears as though the world is full of very rude people, and everything he or she owns constantly breaks.

Getting Help

In most instances of organized stalking—because there is little or no damage to property and victims are usually physically unharmed—local police will do little to help. If a victim does have tangible proof to present to the police—such as property damage or bodily harm—the next steps will be to identify the perpetrators. This can prove very difficult. How a private detective agency can help is by providing counter surveillance, or shadowing, to obtain tangible proof of the stalking to show to local authorities.

At the risk of encouraging "copycat" behaviors, I have written about gang stalking for two important reasons. The first reason is to make people aware of these occurrences, and to possibly remove any self-doubt they may experience if this happens to them personally. The second is to make people more sensitive to the concerns of a friend or family member who may be experiencing some or all aspects of gang stalking.

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