

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

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SPACE NASA readies for one try at Mars landing

Map the rover's journey

Two-year mission: The Mars rover Curiosity is to explore more than 12 miles of the Gale Crater's surface. **A15**

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Get regular updates on the Curiosity and the overall Mars mission at Eric Berger's SciGuy blog at blog.chron.com/sciguy



By Eric Berger

NASA is going for gold early on Monday with its efforts to land a 1-ton rover on the surface of Mars.

"We're all going to stick the landing, right guys?" Doug McCuiston, director of the Mars Exploration Program at NASA headquarters in Washington, asked his engineers on Thursday.

Alas there are no silver medals for the rover, named Curiosity. It either sticks the landing or NASA loses by far its largest, most powerful and scientifically equipped rover.

With less than three days to go before the planned landing, all is well.

"Everything really is on track," said Pete Theisinger, director of the Mars Science Laboratory mission. "It's real quiet in my office right now."

The key words are "right now," because all the action is set for early Monday morning, seven minutes before the 12:17 a.m. CDT touchdown on the Red Planet.

As the landing date nears, public interest has spiked, with this cer-

Mars continues on A15

Internet now dragnet for top gang fugitives



Raul Sergio Madrigal
Accused of directing drug-trafficking ring in Houston area.



Samuel Rodriguez Hernandez
Charged in bus stop robbery in which victim was injured.



Johnny Lewis
Charged with aggravated robbery during a home invasion with another man.



Demond Deshay Ford
Charged with robbery with bodily injury at a store on Bellfort.



Nathaniel L. Wiggins
Accused of robbing an individual at gunpoint in Houston.



Anthony Scott
A felon known as "Luck," wanted on charges of possession of a firearm.



Jonathan Earl Williams
Known as "Pluck," accused of possessing firearms.

Online tipsters help take these seven of Houston's most wanted off streets

By Dane Schiller

With an old-school idea and a few modern twists, most of Houston's "Top Ten Most Wanted Gang Fugitives" have been captured within the past 100 days.

With their faces pushed through cyberspace and plastered on donated roadside billboards, the public was called on to anonymously go to their computers, smartphones or tablets to share online tips on the gangsters' whereabouts.

And apparently they did. Six gangsters were nabbed in

the Houston area, including reputed robbers and home invaders. An accused drug trafficker was apprehended in Mexico.

"It is social networking at its finest," said Larry Karson, a retired Customs Service agent who is a criminal justice lecturer at the University of Houston-Downtown. "It is simply an extension from John Walsh's 'America's Most Wanted,' a continuation of it in the 21st century."

Among the highest-profile fugitives to be captured is Raul Madrigal, affiliated with the

Fugitives continues on A17

Got a tip?

To submit an anonymous report on a gang crime, a wanted fugitive or provide tips involving Houston gang members, go to www.stophoustongangs.org

Fugitives forced to go underground

Fugitives from page A1

Houston's Tango Blast, who is accused of leading a cocaine-trafficking organization.

He was arrested in Mexico in May and has not yet been sent back to the United States.

As Madrigal roamed Mexico, presumably out of the reach of American authorities, pictures were posted on a MySpace page that showed him on the beach, soaking in a giant bathtub of bubbles and

hanging out in nightclubs.

U.S. authorities confiscated an array of his expensive toys, including such luxury cars as a Bentley, Maserati, Hummer and BMW.

Houston Police Capt. Dale Brown, in charge of the Gang Division, said there are 10,000 documented gang members in Houston and the surrounding counties, and more than 200 gangs.

"There is a gang presence in basically every part of our city and sur-

rounding counties," he said. "There is no such thing as, gang members are only hanging out in the inner city. For years now they have spread out into the suburbs and the rural regions."

The public now has at their fingertips the wanted posters of Houston's most sought gangsters on the law-enforcement website, stophoustongangs.org. They can, and have, left real-time tips leading police or federal agents right to fugitives.

Authorities in turn post status reports to let tipsters know what happened, including whether an arrest has been made or more help is needed. As soon as one "Top Ten" fugitive is captured, another moves onto the list.

"When your picture is put up, and you are aware of it, it means you have to go underground," said Karson, of the University of Houston-Downtown. "Depending on the level of the criminal, it might be from someone moving out

of the neighborhood or going on the road and living in campsites and hopping not to get spotted."

Since mid-April, authorities at HPD, the FBI, and other agencies behind the website have singled out one member of "Top Ten" for extreme online and billboard attention.

Clear Channel Outdoor has donated spots on several billboards.

Since the Top 10 program was launched, visitors to the website, which includes a wealth of information on gangs, have soared, leaving 430 tips on gang activity in

a recent 90-day period, authorities said.

Brown, the HPD captain, said people who previously have been hesitant to offer information on gang members due to fears of retaliation should find more comfort in the website's anonymity.

"The public, the citizenry have the information we need to solve crimes, to identify the bad guys, to help locate and arrest them," he said. "Somebody out there knows who these people are."

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