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Transnational Gangs

05/11/2017

### ICE-led gang surge nets 1,378 arrests nationwide



WASHINGTON — A six-week nationwide gang operation led by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) concluded this weekend with 1,378 arrests across the United States – the largest gang surge conducted by HSI to date. The operation targeted gang members and associates involved in transnational criminal activity, including drug trafficking, weapons smuggling, human smuggling and sex trafficking, murder and racketeering.

Of the 1,378 total arrested, 1,098 were arrested on federal and/or state criminal charges, including 21 individuals arrested on murder related charges and seven for rape and sexual assault charges. The **ATLA Doc. No. 17041232. (Posted 5/12/17)**

remaining 280 were arrested on administrative immigration violations. Of the total arrested, 933 were U.S. citizens and 445 were foreign nationals from 21 countries in South and Central America, Asia, Africa, Europe and the Caribbean.

Numerous state, local and federal law enforcement partners, including ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO), participated in the HSI-led operation, which ran March 26 to May 6.

"Gangs threaten the safety of our communities, not just in major metropolitan areas but in our suburbs and rural areas, too," said ICE Acting Director Thomas Homan. "Gang-related violence and criminal activity present an ongoing challenge for law enforcement everywhere. Our efforts to dismantle gangs are much more effective in areas where partnership with local law enforcement is strongest."

Of the 1,378 total arrested, 1,095 were confirmed as gang members and affiliates – including 137 affiliated with the Bloods, 118 with the Sureños, 104 with MS-13, and 104 with the Crips. The remaining 283 claimed no gang affiliation but were arrested on either criminal or administrative charges.

Individuals are confirmed as gang members if they admit membership in a gang; have been convicted of violating Title 18 USC 521 or any other federal or state law criminalizing or imposing civil consequences for gang-related activity; or if they meet certain other criteria such as having tattoos identifying a specific gang or being identified as a gang member by a reliable source.

Three individuals arrested during this operation previously had deferred action under DACA ([Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals](#)). Aliens granted DACA who are found to pose a threat to national security or public safety may have their deferred action terminated at any time and the Department of Homeland Security may seek their removal from the United States. Since the start of DACA in 2012, DHS has terminated deferred action for approximately 1,500 recipients due to criminality or gang affiliation concerns.

Ten individuals arrested during this operation crossed the border as unaccompanied minors. Nine of the 10 were confirmed as gang members, eight of whom were MS-13 gang members.

During this operation, HSI and its partner law enforcement agencies seized 238 firearms; various narcotics including 790.15 ounces of cocaine, 546.96 ounces of methamphetamine, 113.42 ounces of heroin, 1.59 ounces of fentanyl, and 8,019.46 ounces of marijuana; and \$491,763 in U.S. currency.

Enforcement actions occurred around the country, with the greatest activity taking place in the HSI Houston, HSI New York, HSI Atlanta, and HSI Newark areas.

### **Enforcement actions conducted during the operation include:**

- HSI Washington, D.C., administratively arrested 10 members of MS-13, and criminally arrested one member of MS-13, on April 26 at a stash house in Falls Church, Virginia. HSI and local law enforcement partners were originally surveying the house because they had received reports about alleged sex trafficking taking place at the residence. Two of the individuals had outstanding orders of removal. The Fairfax County Police Department and ERO assisted with the arrests.
- HSI San Antonio (Texas), working in conjunction with the San Antonio Police Department Violent Crimes task force initiative, arrested Gilbert Vasquez III, an associate of the Tango Orejon Gang in San Antonio on April 5. A search of the house found cocaine, meth, heroin, four handguns – one of which was stolen – and over \$48,000 in cash. Three other subjects found in the house were also arrested including Brent Reum, a known member of the Tango Orejon Gang.
- HSI San Diego (California) Border Enforcement Security Taskforce (BEST) arrested 23 gang members and associates on April 25-27. They also seized 17 firearms, meth, marijuana, over \$25,000 in U.S. currency and several thousand rounds of various calibers of ammunition. The HSI-led investigation targeted several documented street gangs working together, across territorial lines, to promote their criminal enterprises. All subjects arrested are being prosecuted federally for violations of various narcotics, money laundering, weapons and criminal street gang connected offenses. The U.S. Marshals, San Diego Police Department, Chula Vista Police Department, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Bureau of Prisons assisted HSI with this case.
- HSI Newark (New Jersey), the Union County Prosecutor's Office and the Essex County Prosecutor's Office arrested Crips associates Olufemi Odeyemi and Brenda Jackson on April 7

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the for possession and distribution of heroin in Irvington, New Jersey. Search warrants of Jackson's vehicle and Odeyemi's residence yielded 2.8 kilograms of raw heroin.

## About Operation Community Shield

This operation is the latest example of ICE's ongoing efforts, begun in 2005 under [Operation Community Shield](#), to target violent gang members and their associates, eradicate the violence they inflict upon our communities and stop the cash flow to transnational organized crime groups. Since 2005, HSI special agents working in conjunction with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies have made more than 47,000 gang-related arrests.

Operation Community Shield is a global initiative in which HSI collaborates with federal, state and local law enforcement partners to combat the growth and proliferation of transnational criminal street gangs, prison gangs and outlaw motorcycle gangs in the United States and abroad. Through its domestic and international Operation Community Shield task forces, HSI leverages its worldwide presence and expansive statutory and civil enforcement authorities to mitigate the threats posted by these global networks, often through the tracing and seizing of cash, weapons and other illicit proceeds.

Partnerships with state, local, federal and international law enforcement agencies are critical to the success of HSI gang enforcement operations. Law enforcement partners provide actionable intelligence which is critical in the targeting of gangs and their membership for enforcement actions. HSI special agents use intelligence gathered from surge operations to pursue complex criminal enterprise investigations and federal prosecutions.

### MS-13

As part of Operation Community Shield, HSI has effected more than 4,300 criminal arrests and nearly 3,000 civil immigration arrests of MS-13 leaders, members and associates, including criminal arrests for Racketeering Influence Corrupt Organizations (RICO), Violent Crime in Aid of Racketeering (VICAR) and gang conspiracy violations investigated by HSI Baltimore, HSI DC, HSI Charlotte, HSI New York, HSI Long Island, HSI Newark, HSI Boston, HSI San Francisco, HSI San Jose, HSI Los Angeles, HSI Detroit, HSI Nashville, HSI Houston, and our state and local law enforcement partners.

In October 2012, HSI worked with the U.S. Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control to designate MS-13 as the first transnational criminal street gang as a TCO. As a result of the designation, any property or property interests in the United States, or in the possession or control of U.S. persons in which MS-13 has an interest, are blocked.

## HSI's National Gang Unit

HSI's National Gang Unit oversees HSI's expansive transnational gang portfolio and enables special agents to bring the fight to these criminal enterprises through the development of uniform enforcement and intelligence-sharing strategies.

Recent NGU-led operations have included: [Southern Tempest](#) in 2011, targeting gangs affiliated with drug trafficking; [Project Nefarious](#) in 2012, targeting gangs involved in human smuggling and trafficking; [Project Southbound](#) in 2014, targeting the Sureños, the fastest growing transnational gang in the U.S.; [Project Wildfire](#) in 2015, and [Project Shadowfire](#) in 2016.

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