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**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

## **U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement**

### **News Releases**

**May 19, 2009**

### **Texas prison system is the first to partner with ICE to automatically identify and remove criminal aliens** ***All detainees sent to prison will have criminal and immigration records checked***

HUNTSVILLE, Texas - The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) is now the first prison system in the country to receive biometrics based immigration history information about inmates via the new Secure Communities program. Secure Communities, which is administered by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), streamlines the process by which ICE determines if an individual in the prison system is a removable criminal alien.

Beginning today, every individual booked into a Huntsville intake site now has their biometrics-or fingerprints-checked in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) biometric system for any immigration record. Before this new program, as part of the standard booking process, these fingerprints were only checked for criminal history information in the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) biometric system. Eventually, all 24 TDCJ intake sites across the state will have the same capability.

If any fingerprints match those of someone in DHS's biometric system, the new automated process notifies ICE and the TDCJ intake site submitting the fingerprints. ICE evaluates each case to determine the individual's immigration status and takes appropriate enforcement action after offenders complete their prison terms. Top priority is given to aliens who pose the greatest threat to public safety, such as those with prior convictions for major drug offenses, murder, rape, robbery, and kidnapping.

"Secure Communities is an ICE initiative to more broadly manage and modernize the processes used to identify and ultimately remove dangerous criminal aliens from our communities," said Executive Director for ICE Secure Communities David Venturella. "Our goal with this ICE effort is to use information sharing to prevent criminal aliens from being released back into the community, with little or no additional burden on our local law enforcement partners."

"Gaining information from the DHS system will help the Texas Department of Criminal Justice identify criminal aliens in the custody of the agency and is a significant enhancement to the ongoing partnership

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between TDCJ and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement," said TDCJ Executive Director Brad Livingston.

Secure Communities enhances the ongoing joint efforts by ICE and participating law enforcement agencies in the United States. Eventually, with DOJ and other DHS component collaboration, ICE plans to expand this capability to all state and local law enforcement agencies throughout the nation. Approximately 50 counties and law enforcement agencies nationwide are currently participating in Secure Communities - including 17 here in Texas.

Secure Communities is part of DHS's comprehensive plan to distribute technology that links local law enforcement agencies to both FBI and DHS biometric systems. DHS's US VISIT Automated Biometric Identification System (IDENT) holds biometrics-based immigration records, while the FBI's Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS) contains biometrics-based criminal records.

"US VISIT is proud to support the Secure Communities program, helping provide decision makers with comprehensive, reliable information when and where they need it," said US VISIT Director Robert Mocny. "By enhancing the interoperability of DHS's and the FBI's biometric systems, we are able to give federal, state and local decision makers information that helps them better protect our communities and our nation."

"Under this plan, ICE will be utilizing FBI system enhancements that allow improved information sharing at the state and local law enforcement level based on positive identification of incarcerated criminal aliens. Additionally, ICE and the FBI are working together to take advantage of the strong relationships already forged between the FBI and state and local law enforcement necessary to assist ICE in achieving their goals," said FBI Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Acting Assistant Director Jerome M. Pender.

Secure Communities is a key facet of ICE's enforcement priority to identify, locate and remove criminal aliens, building on the success of the agency's Criminal Alien Program. In fiscal year 2008, ICE identified more than 221,000 potentially removable aliens incarcerated nationwide. This fiscal year, the agency anticipates spending more than \$1 billion on such efforts, which in addition to Secure Communities, also includes expanding the agency's Criminal Alien Program and Fugitive Operations Program.

More information about ICE's Secure Communities effort is available at [www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov).

-- ICE --

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.

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