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News Releases

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New ICE initiative launched at Pinellas County jails *Uses biometrics to identify and enhance removal of criminal aliens arrested in Pinellas County*

TAMPA, Fla. - On Nov. 10, booking centers for the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) will benefit from a new initiative developed by the Departments of Justice (DOJ) and Homeland Security (DHS) that modernizes the process used to accurately identify and remove dangerous criminal aliens from the community.

The initiative, Secure Communities, is administered by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and enables ICE to determine whether an individual arrested by a participating state or local law enforcement agency is a dangerous criminal alien and take the appropriate action to remove the individual from the community.

Pinellas County joins 12 Florida counties - Brevard, Broward, Charlotte, Clay, Collier, Duval, Hillsborough, Manatee, Marion, Miami Dade, St. John's and St. Lucie counties - to the growing list of law enforcement agencies to receive biometrics-based immigration history information about inmates via the new Secure Communities program. The program has already been implemented in more than 80 counties, with nationwide coverage expected by the end of 2013.

"Secure Communities is a DHS initiative to more broadly manage and modernize the processes used to identify and ultimately remove dangerous criminal aliens from our communities," said Acting Secure Communities Executive Director Marc Rapp. "Our goal with this 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."

Pinellas County Sheriff Jim Coats said, "We have a long history of communication and cooperation with ICE. "With the biometric systems we already have in place, this latest link in technology will be a benefit both to local and federal law enforcement."

"ICE's partnership with Pinellas County and the other Florida counties is a shining example of how

various government law enforcement agencies can work together to protect the public from dangerous criminals," said Michael Rozos, ICE field office director for the Miami Field Office of Detention and Removal. "Much of the success in the deployment of this initiative within the state of Florida is directly related to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and their commitment to working with ICE on this national initiative."

Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Gerald Bailey said, "This progressive program maximizes the use of biometric technology to exchange critical public safety information. FDLE is pleased to work with ICE and the Pinellas Sheriff's Office to help protect the citizens of our state."

Secure Communities is fundamentally different from other ICE programs, primarily because under Secure Communities, state and local law enforcement officials are not authorized to enforce immigration laws on behalf of ICE. ICE officials make immigration status determinations and take appropriate action under the law, consistent with ICE policies and regulations.

At the Pinellas County Jail, Secure Communities will provide technological enhancements to the collaborative efforts of ICE and the jail officers in identifying dangerous criminal aliens. Secure Communities enhances the ongoing joint efforts by Pinellas County and ICE to identify criminal aliens in the county's jail system and process them for deportation.

Formerly as part of the booking process, arrestees' fingerprints were taken and checked for criminal history information against the DOJ biometric system maintained by the FBI. With the implementation of Secure Communities in Pinellas County, the fingerprint information will now be simultaneously checked against both the FBI criminal history records and the biometrics-based immigration records maintained by the DHS.

If any fingerprints match those of someone in the DHS' biometric system, the new automated process notifies ICE. 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 bolsters 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.

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.

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.

[Read more about ICE's Secure Communities initiative. \(http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/secure_communities.htm\)](http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/secure_communities.htm)

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ICE comprises four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities. For more information, visit www.ICE.gov. To report suspicious activity, call 1-866-347-2423.

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