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News Releases

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Secure Communities deployed to two more Calif. counties

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. - Law enforcement agencies in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties began benefiting Tuesday from an 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). Secure Communities 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.

The Secure Communities biometric identification technology is now accessible to the local law enforcement agencies in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties that use electronic booking machines. Formerly as part of the booking process, local 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, that 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 DHS's biometric system, the new automated process notifies ICE, enabling the agency to take appropriate action to ensure dangerous criminal aliens are not released back into communities. Top priority is given to individuals 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 provides local law enforcement with an effective tool to identify dangerous criminal aliens," said Acting Secure Communities Executive Director Marc Rapp. "Enhancing public safety is at the core of ICE's mission. Our goal with Secure Communities is to use information sharing to prevent criminal aliens from being released back into the community, with little or no additional burden on our law enforcement partners."

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With the expansion of Secure Communities to Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties, there are now six California counties participating in the initiative, including Los Angeles, Ventura, San Diego and Imperial. Across the country, Secure Communities is being used by 108 jurisdictions in 15 states. By next year, ICE expects Secure Communities to have a presence in every state, with nationwide coverage anticipated by 2013.

Since its inception in October 2008, Secure Communities has identified more than 11,000 aliens charged or convicted with Level 1 crimes, such as murder, rape and kidnapping - 1,900 of whom have already been removed from the United States - and more than 100,000 aliens convicted of Level 2 and 3 crimes, including burglary and serious property crimes.

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 ICE, 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," said Daniel D. Roberts, assistant director of the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services Division.

"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 its goals."

For more information, visit the [Secure Communities](#) page.

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

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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