

## U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

### News Releases

June 21, 2010 

### **Secure Communities now activated in all Virginia counties** *Secure Communities strategy prioritizes immigration enforcement actions against convicted criminal aliens*

RICHMOND, Va.- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced Secure Communities was activated as of last week in every county in the Commonwealth of Virginia. This biometric information sharing strategy enables ICE to identify any alien booked into local law enforcement's custody for a crime. This capability is part of ICE's comprehensive strategy to improve and modernize the identification and removal of criminal aliens from the United States.

Formerly, during the booking process, arrestees' fingerprints were checked for criminal history information only against the biometric database maintained by the FBI. With the implementation of Secure Communities, this fingerprint information is now automatically and simultaneously checked against both the FBI criminal history records and the biometrics-based immigration records maintained by the Department of Homeland Security (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. This includes aliens who are in lawful status and those who are present without lawful authority. Once identified through fingerprint matching, ICE will respond with a priority placed on aliens convicted of the most serious offenses first - such as those with convictions for major drug offenses, murder, rape and kidnapping.

"The Secure Communities strategy provides an effective tool to help ICE identify aliens in the criminal custody of law enforcement with little or no cost to our law enforcement partners," said John Morton, assistant secretary for ICE. "Applying this biometric information sharing tool in Virginia improves public safety by enabling ICE to prevent the release of convicted criminal aliens back into our communities when they complete their sentences."

"This information sharing enables criminal aliens to be identified at the time they are booked in a jail anywhere

in Virginia, and those convicted of serious crimes can be prioritized for deportation after serving their sentences. Secure Communities will help us get these convicts off our streets and make Virginia safer - a goal I've pursued for eight years in public service," said Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli.

With the expansion of the biometric information-sharing capability throughout Virginia, ICE is now using it in 336 jurisdictions in 22 states. ICE expects to make it available in jurisdictions nationwide by 2013.

Since ICE began using this enhanced information sharing capability in October 2008, immigration officers have removed from the United States more than 8,500 criminal aliens convicted of Level 1 crimes, such as murder, rape and kidnapping. Additionally, ICE has removed more than 22,200 criminal aliens convicted of Level 2 and 3 crimes, including burglary and serious property crimes, which account for the majority of crimes committed by aliens. ICE does not regard aliens charged with, but not yet convicted of crimes, as "criminal aliens." Instead, a "criminal alien" is an alien convicted of a crime.

"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 CJIS 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 [www.ice.gov/secure\\_communities](http://www.ice.gov/secure_communities) ([http://www.ice.gov/secure\\_communities](http://www.ice.gov/secure_communities)).

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

ICE is a 21<sup>st</sup> century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities. For more information, visit [www.ICE.gov](http://www.ICE.gov). To report suspicious activity, call 1-866-347-2423.

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