

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

News Releases

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ICE gang surge nets 102 arrests in Phoenix, Yuma

PHOENIX - A total of 102 individuals with ties to 19 different street gangs are facing criminal charges or deportation following a six-day, multi-agency enforcement action in Phoenix and Yuma, Ariz. spearheaded by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

The arrests were made as part of Operation Community Shield, an ongoing initiative by ICE-HSI's National Gang Unit in which the agency uses its powerful immigration and customs authorities in a coordinated strategy to attack and dismantle criminal street gangs across the country. As part of the initiative, ICE partners with other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to target the significant public safety threat posed by transnational gangs.

Of the gang members and gang associates arrested during the enforcement action that concluded late Saturday, 29 are currently facing prosecution on state criminal charges, including outstanding warrants for gang-related violations. Three of the subjects arrested will also be presented to the U.S. Attorney's Office for prosecution for felony re-entry after deportation, a federal violation that carries a potential penalty of up to 20 years in prison.

"Gang activity poses one of the greatest threats to public safety in Arizona communities," said Matt Allen, special agent in charge for ICE-HSI in Arizona. "ICE is successfully targeting these gangs, arresting their leaders, disrupting their operations, and putting their members and associates behind bars."

Among those arrested during the enforcement action in Phoenix was a 33-year-old Mexican gang member in Mesa whose criminal history includes a conviction for aggravated assault in 2007. Another of the individuals taken into custody was a 27-year-old member of a Chandler gang wanted for burglary in California. The California Department of Corrections agreed to extradite Miguel Angel Lopez-Zuniga, who was booked into the Maricopa County Jail to await transfer to California.

In Yuma, ICE agents arrested gang member Fernando Ulloa, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen, on Arizona state charges related to a conspiracy to distribute marijuana and money laundering. Agents also arrested gang member Claudio Garcia, a 25-year-old U.S. citizen, for contempt of court.

Twenty-six of the gang members and gang associates arrested during the operation are U.S. citizens. The remaining 76 individuals are foreign nationals. The majority of the foreign nationals are from Mexico (58), but the group also includes citizens from Guatemala and Honduras. Those foreign nationals who are not being prosecuted on criminal charges are being processed for removal from the United States.

Since Operation Community Shield began in February 2005, ICE agents nationwide have arrested more than 18,000 gang members and gang associates. As part of the effort, HSI's National Gang Unit identifies violent street gangs and develops intelligence on their membership, associates, criminal activities and international movements to deter, disrupt and dismantle gang operations. Transnational street gangs have significant numbers of foreign-born members and are frequently involved in human and contraband smuggling, immigration violations and other crimes with a connection to the border.

To report suspicious activity, call ICE's 24-hour toll-free hotline at: 1-866-347-2423 or visit www.ice.gov.