



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

News Releases

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ICE arrests 32 in Atlanta-area operation targeting criminal aliens and immigration fugitives

ATLANTA - More than 30 criminal aliens, immigration fugitives and immigration violators are facing deportation and criminal charges following a four-day enforcement operation spearheaded by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Office of Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) Fugitive Operations Teams (FOTs) in the Atlanta area.

During the operation, which concluded today, ICE made a total of 32 arrests in Houston, Peach, Bibb, Dougherty, Toombs, and Thomas counties.

Of those taken into custody, 13 were aliens with prior criminal convictions, four had been previously deported who returned to the United States illegally after being removed, and 15 were immigration fugitives who failed to comply with a final order of deportation issued by an immigration judge.

Their criminal histories included prior arrests and convictions for a variety of violations, including reentry after deportation, driving under the influence of alcohol, weapons violations, and assault and disorderly conduct among others. Since many of the individuals have outstanding orders of deportation or have been previously deported, they are subject to immediate removal from the country.

"A top priority for the Atlanta Field Office is to locate and arrest criminal aliens and ultimately remove them from our country in a safe and humane manner," said Felicia Skinner, field office director of ICE ERO in Atlanta. "This operation is yet another example of the critical roles that multi-agency cooperation and targeted immigration enforcement play in protecting our communities."

The U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Georgia has accepted prosecution for the four aliens who reentered the U.S. after being deported. If convicted, they face a sentence of up to 20 years in prison.

The remaining aliens will be held by ICE pending the completion of their criminal cases, a hearing before an immigration judge, or the completion of travel arrangements.

The group included 13 males and two females from six different countries - Mexico (13), El Salvador (2), Guatemala, (9), Honduras (5), India (1), China (2).

This enforcement action was spearheaded by ICE's Fugitive Operations Program, which is responsible for locating, arresting and removing at-large criminal aliens and immigration fugitives. ICE's Fugitive Operations Teams (FOTs) give top priority to cases involving aliens who pose a threat to national security and public safety, including members of transnational street gangs and child sex offenders.

In fiscal year 2010 (through Aug. 20), ICE's FOTs nationwide have made 30,787 arrests. More than 89 percent of those arrests involved immigration fugitives and aliens with prior criminal convictions.

As a result of the FOT's efforts, the nation's fugitive alien population continues to decline. Estimates now place the number of immigration fugitives in the United States as slightly under 525,000, a decrease of more than 71,000 since October 2007.

ICE's Fugitive Operations Program is just one facet of the Department of Homeland Security's broader strategy to heighten the federal government's effectiveness at identifying and removing dangerous criminal aliens from the United States. Other initiatives that figure prominently in this effort are the Criminal Alien Program, Secure Communities and the agency's partnerships with state and local law enforcement agencies under 287(g).