News Releases

DECEMBER 21, 2010 RIDGELAND, SC

3 South Carolina counties to benefit from ICE strategy to use biometrics to identify and remove aliens convicted of a crime

RIDGELAND, S.C. - On Dec. 14, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) began using a federal information sharing capability in Colleton, Hampton and Jasper counties that helps federal immigration officials use biometrics to identify aliens, both lawfully and unlawfully present in the United States, who are booked into local law enforcement's custody for a crime. This capability is part of Secure Communities - ICE's comprehensive strategy to improve and modernize the identification and removal of aliens convicted of a crime from the United States.

Previously, biometrics - fingerprints - taken of individuals charged with a crime and booked into custody were checked for criminal history information against the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS). Now, through enhanced information sharing between DOJ and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), biometrics submitted through the state to the FBI will be automatically checked against both the FBI criminal history records in IAFIS and the biometrics-based immigration records in DHS's Automated Biometric Identification System (IDENT).

If fingerprints match those of someone in 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 crimes first-such as those with convictions for major drug offenses, murder, rape and kidnapping.

"The Secure Communities strategy provides ICE with an effective tool to identify criminal aliens in local custody," said Secure Communities Assistant Director David Venturella. "Enhancing public safety is at the core of ICE's mission. Our goal is to use biometric information sharing to remove criminal aliens, preventing them from being released back into the community, with little or no additional burden on our law enforcement partners."

With the expansion of the biometric information sharing capability to Colleton, Hampton and Jasper counties, ICE is using this capability in 13 South Carolina jurisdictions. Across the country, ICE is using this capability in 861 jurisdictions in 34 states. By 2013, ICE plans to be able to respond nationwide to all fingerprint matches generated through IDENT/IAFIS interoperability.

Since ICE began using this enhanced information sharing capability in October 2008, immigration officers have removed from the United States more than 50,600 aliens convicted of a crime. 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. In accordance with the Immigration and Nationality Act, ICE continues to take action on aliens subject to removal as resources permit.

The IDENT system is maintained by DHS's US-VISIT program and IAFIS is maintained by the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS).

"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 about how ICE is using biometrics to identify aliens convicted of a crime, visit 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 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.

AILA InfoNet Doc. No. 10122239. (Posted 12/22/10)

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