

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

News Releases

August 12, 2010 

63 convicted criminal aliens, fugitives arrested in ICE enforcement surge

PHOENIX - In the largest operation of its kind ever carried out in Arizona, more than 60 convicted criminal aliens and immigration fugitives have been arrested following a three-day targeted enforcement operation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

During the operation, which concluded Wednesday evening, ICE officers located and arrested 55 aliens with prior criminal convictions. In addition, 16 of the individuals ICE officers took into custody were immigration fugitives, aliens with outstanding orders of deportation who had failed to leave the country. Of those arrested during the enforcement action, at least 25 have already been removed from the United States.

At a news conference here Thursday, ICE Director John Morton announced the results of the enforcement action, which involved more than 60 ICE agents and officers, as well as personnel from the U.S. Marshals Service. Those officers fanned out across the state making arrests in Phoenix, Tucson, Sedona, Mesa, Tempe and Prescott.

"These are not people we want to see walking the streets here in Phoenix or in any other community in Arizona," said ICE Director John Morton. "Those who come to the United States to prey upon communities in Arizona will be prosecuted for their crimes and ultimately returned to their home countries. The results of this operation demonstrate ICE's commitment to that principle."

Because of their serious criminal histories and prior immigration arrest records, at least 12 of those arrested during the enforcement surge have been presented for federal prosecution for reentering the country illegally after a formal deportation. A conviction for felony re-entry carries a penalty of up to 20 years in prison.

"We are dedicated to bringing criminals to justice all along the southwest border, and in particular we will aggressively prosecute offenders with violent criminal convictions and who pose a threat

to our communities," said Dennis Burke, U. S. Attorney for the District of Arizona. "We are pleased to stand together with our partners in Homeland Security and the Marshals Service and our state partners in the Offices of Probation and Parole to secure the southwest border through targeted enforcement strategies like today's action."

Among the arrestees is a 45-year-old Mexican woman who was convicted in California for conspiracy to commit wire fraud, a scheme that netted her and her conspirators more than \$820,000.

Also arrested was a 55-year-old Mexican man who was convicted of selling methamphetamine in 2003. This individual has already been convicted once of felony reentry into the United States in 2009, and following this arrest he will be prosecuted again in federal court.

The foreign nationals detained during the operation who are not being criminally prosecuted will be processed administratively for removal from the United States. Those who have outstanding orders of deportation, or who returned to the United States illegally after being deported, are subject to immediate removal from the country. The remaining aliens are in ICE custody awaiting a hearing before an immigration judge, or pending travel arrangements for removal in the near future.

Of those arrested, 52 were male and 11 were female. They represent 9 different nations, including countries in Latin America, Europe and the Middle East.

This week's special 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 - aliens who have ignored final orders of deportation handed down by the nation's immigration courts. 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.

The officers who conducted this week's operation received substantial assistance from ICE's Fugitive Operations Support Center (FOSC) located in South Burlington, Vt. The FOSC conducted exhaustive database checks on the targeted cases to help ensure the viability of the leads and accuracy of the criminal histories. The FOSC was established in 2006 to improve the integrity of the data available on at large criminal aliens and immigration fugitives nationwide. Since its inception, the FOSC has forwarded more than 550,000 case leads to ICE enforcement personnel in the field. In addition, leads were developed through the assistance of the Arizona Supreme Court Adult Probation Division.

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).

Largely as a result of these initiatives, ICE removed a total of 136,126 criminal aliens from the United States last year, a record number.

[ICE Enforcement in Arizona Fact Sheet \(http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/az-enforcement.htm\)](http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/az-enforcement.htm)

[Arizona Cross Check Overview Fact Sheet \(http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/cross-check.htm\)](http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/cross-check.htm)

[View photos from Operation Cross Check \(http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/multimedia/archive/index.htm?top25=yes&year=all&month=all&state=all&topic=all\)](http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/multimedia/archive/index.htm?top25=yes&year=all&month=all&state=all&topic=all).