

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

News Releases

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Secure Communities leads to removal of more than 5,500 convicted criminal aliens from LA County in first year

LOS ANGELES - Since its activation in Los Angeles County a year ago, the biometric information sharing capability deployed as part of the Secure Communities initiative has resulted in the identification and removal of more than 5,500 convicted criminal aliens from the United States who were encountered by local law enforcement in the county.

The information sharing capability, a key component of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) comprehensive strategy to enhance efforts to identify and remove convicted criminal aliens from the country, uses biometric identification to alert ICE when potentially removable aliens are arrested by local law enforcement.

Of the 5,585 aliens removed from Los Angeles County in the last year, nearly 2,500 are considered Level 1 offenders, which includes those convicted of serious or violent crimes, such murder, sexual assault and robbery. Another 2,540 are Level 2 offenders, which includes individuals with convictions for offenses such as arson, burglary and property crimes. As part of the Secure Communities strategy, ICE is prioritizing its enforcement efforts to ensure individuals who pose the greatest threat to public safety are removed first.

Regardless of the offenses for which individuals are initially booked, the Secure Communities screening may reveal more serious criminal histories. In one Los Angeles case, a fingerprint check of an individual with multiple aliases arrested on a warrant for failing to appear in court turned out to be a foreign national with a lengthy criminal history, including convictions for voluntary manslaughter and carrying a concealed weapon. In addition, the subject had been removed from the United States multiple times. The subject was convicted of illegal re-entry after removal and sentenced to 27 months in federal prison. Upon completion of his sentence, ICE will remove him from the United States.

Prior to the activation of Secure Communities, fingerprint-based biometric records taken of individuals charged with a crime and booked into custody were checked for criminal history

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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), fingerprint information 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's biometric system, the new automated process notifies ICE. ICE evaluates each case to determine the individual's immigration status and takes appropriate immigration enforcement action. This includes aliens who are lawfully and unlawfully in the United States, but who have been arrested and booked into local law enforcement custody for a crime. Once identified through fingerprint matching, ICE prioritizes its response to focus on criminal aliens convicted of the most serious crimes first-such as those with convictions for major drug offenses, murder, rape and kidnapping. In accordance with the Immigration and Nationality Act, ICE continues to take action on aliens subject to removal as resources permit.

"Last year, ICE prevented thousands of convicted criminal aliens in Los Angeles County from being released back into the community," said David Venturella, assistant director for Secure Communities. "Through the Secure Communities strategy, we're increasing community safety by enforcing federal immigration law in a smart, effective way that targets the greatest threats for removal first."

Los Angeles County is one of 28 jurisdictions in California that are currently benefiting from Secure Communities. The information sharing capability has helped ICE remove more than 12,400 criminal aliens arrested throughout the state. Nationwide, ICE is using the capability in 574 jurisdictions across 30 states, and it has helped ICE remove more than 37,900 criminal aliens from the country.

For more information, visit www.ice.gov/secure_communities (http://www.ice.gov/secure_communities/).