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News Releases

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ICE arrests 39 in San Diego-area operation targeting criminals aliens and immigration fugitives

SAN DIEGO - A total of 39 criminal aliens, immigration fugitives and immigration violators are facing deportation following a three-day enforcement operation carried out by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Fugitive Operations Teams (FOTs) in San Diego County last week.

Of those taken into custody, 26 were immigration fugitives with outstanding orders of deportation, or previously deported aliens who returned to the United States illegally after being removed. Fifty percent of the aliens arrested during the enforcement action also had criminal records, in addition to being in the country illegally. Their criminal histories included prior arrests and convictions for a variety of violations, including domestic violence, indecent exposure, theft, vehicle theft, fraud, driving under the influence and drug charges.

Since many of the individuals have outstanding orders of deportation or have been previously deported, they are subject to immediate removal from the country. The remaining aliens will be held by ICE pending a hearing before an immigration judge or the completion of travel arrangements. The group included 29 males and 10 females from five different nations - Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Somalia and the Philippines.

Last week's 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. Locally, the San Diego FOTs have made 1,343 total arrests in fiscal year 2010 through Sept. 19, surpassing the 1,157 total arrests made in all of fiscal year 2009.

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.

The officers who conducted last week's operation received substantial assistance from ICE's Fugitive Operations Support Center (FOSC) located in Williston, Vermont. 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.

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).