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News Releases

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Secure Communities leads to removal of more than 460 convicted criminal aliens from Sacramento County in first year

SACRAMENTO, Calif. - Since its activation in Sacramento 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 460 convicted criminal aliens from the United States who were encountered by local law enforcement in Sacramento 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 461 convicted criminal aliens removed from Sacramento County in the last year, 192 are considered Level 1 offenders, which includes those convicted of serious or violent crimes, such as murder, sexual assault and robbery. Another 126 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 that 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. For example, the fingerprint check of a man who used an alias following his arrest in September by Sacramento police for carrying an open container of alcohol in public, revealed he had multiple prior convictions for drug trafficking as well as a conviction for assault with a firearm and had been previously deported. ICE presented the individual, Jorge Vega-Reyes, to the U.S. Attorney's Office for prosecution for felony re-entry after deportation. Vega was convicted in November and is currently serving a 27-month prison sentence, following which he will be deported to Mexico.

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 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'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 hundreds of convicted criminal aliens in Sacramento County from being released back into the community," said Secure Communities Assistant Director David Venturella. "Through the Secure Communities strategy, we're increasing community safety by enforcing federal immigration law in a smart, effective way that targets individuals who pose the greatest potential threat to public safety for removal first."

Sacramento County is one of 41 jurisdictions in California that are currently benefiting from Secure Communities. The information sharing capability has helped ICE remove nearly 22,000 convicted criminal aliens arrested throughout the state. Nationwide, ICE is using the capability in 969 jurisdictions across 37 states, and it has helped ICE remove more than 59,000 aliens who have been convicted of a crime. By 2013, ICE plans to respond nationwide to all fingerprint matches generated through IDENT/IAFIS interoperability.

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, visit www.ice.gov/secure_communities/ (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.

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