News Releases

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4 additional Georgia counties to benefit from ICE program to enhance identification and removal of aliens convicted of a crime

ATLANTA - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on Tuesday began using a federal information sharing capability as part of the Secure Communities program in Clark, Habersham, Jackson and Pickens counties to help federal immigration officials identify criminal aliens in state prisons and local jails by running their fingerprints against federal immigration databases when they are booked into the system.

"Secure Communities enhances public safety by enabling ICE to identify and remove criminal aliens more efficiently and effectively from the United States," said Secure Communities Acting Assistant Director Marc Rapp. "As we expand ICE's use of biometric information sharing nationwide, we are helping to keep communities safe and ensuring the integrity of our immigration system."

With the expansion of the use of biometric information sharing to these four counties, ICE is using this capability in 34 Georgia jurisdictions. Across the country, ICE is using this capability in 1,400 jurisdictions in 43 states and territories. As a result of ICE's use of this enhanced information-sharing capability, which began in October 2008, ICE has removed more than 77,000 criminal aliens - more than 28,000 of whom were convicted of felonies such as murder, rape, kidnapping and the sexual abuse of children.ICE continues to work with its law enforcement partners across the country to responsibly and effectively implement this federal information sharing capability and plans to reach complete nationwide deployment by 2013.

Prior to the implementation of Secure Communities, fingerprints taken of individuals charged with a crime and booked into state or local custody were checked for criminal history information against the Department of Justice's (DOJ) criminal history records. Once it is activated in a jurisdiction, the fingerprints that jurisdiction submits to DOJ's biometric system to check for criminal history records are also automatically sent to DHS' biometric system to check against its immigration law enforcement records. When a match is discovered, ICE evaluates the specific case to determine the individual's immigration status and takes appropriate enforcement action. ICE prioritizes removing criminal aliens convicted of the most serious crimes such as major drug offenses, murder, rape and kidnapping. ICE also gives high priority to other threats to public safety, such as aliens with known gang affiliations, drunk driving arrests, or fugitives, or those who frequently try to game the immigration system.

The biometric systems are maintained by DHS's US-VISIT program and the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS).

"US-VISIT is proud to support ICE by providing comprehensive, reliable information to assist in the smart and effective enforcement of our immigration laws," said US-VISIT Director Robert Mocny. "By enhancing the interoperability of DHS's and the FBI's biometric systems, we are helping federal, state and local government better protect our communities and our nation."

"Under this federal information-sharing initiative, 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 Criminal Justice Information Services Division. "Additionally, ICE and the

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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 Secure Communities, visit

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.

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