



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

To: The American Public

From: Field Office Directors, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE),
Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO)

Across the country, a national debate about current and future U.S. immigration policy is growing louder by the day. As field office directors for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO), we oversee the offices that enforce immigration laws within the interior of the United States, and we want to set the record straight.

ICE officers are sworn federal law enforcement officers who enforce U.S. immigration laws created by Congress to keep this country safe. As such, it greatly concerns us when advocacy groups, citizens and politicians share and support incorrect or misleading information about our mission that is a vital part of national security and public safety. These misconceptions may lead to violence, which places innocent bystanders, aliens and law enforcement officers in danger. This summer, two ICE facilities – the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Washington, and the ERO Field Office in San Antonio, Texas – have been targets of lawless gunfire. Transparency and accurate information are necessary to build trust and foster useful and ongoing collaboration in communities across the United States and should form the basis for civil discourse and for lawmakers as they attempt to address the border security crisis.

ICE makes targeted arrests every day; ICE does not conduct “raids”

ICE does not conduct raids or sweeps and does not operate roadblocks or checkpoints. The use of these terms evokes images of indiscriminate enforcement actions taken without probable cause. Nothing could be further from the truth. ICE focuses its limited resources first and foremost by targeting those who pose the greatest threat to public safety and border security, and our officers make arrests every single day. ICE does not target aliens indiscriminately; the agency conducts investigations and gathers intelligence on specific individuals and targets them for immigration enforcement based solely on their violations of federal law. Targets are most frequently those who were previously arrested on criminal charges or have blatant disregard for U.S. immigration laws. The agency's arrest statistics clearly reflect this. Nationally, approximately 90 percent of all people arrested by ICE during fiscal year 2019 either had a criminal conviction, a pending criminal charge, had illegally re-entered the United States after being previously removed (a felony charge) or were an immigration fugitive subject to a judge's final order of removal.

ICE does not need a warrant to make an arrest

ICE officers are sworn federal law enforcement officers who operate within the confines of the law. Section 287 of the Immigration and Nationality Act provides ICE officers the authority to arrest aliens without a judicial warrant. In fact, no judge in this country has the authority to issue a warrant for a civil immigration violation. Congress, by statute, vested this authorization solely to supervisory immigration officers.

Local police officers don't need a warrant when they encounter someone breaking the law in a public space, and the same holds true for ICE officers. Obstructing or otherwise interfering with an ICE arrest is a crime, and anyone involved may be subject to prosecution under federal law. In addition, encouraging others to interfere or attempt to obstruct an arrest is extremely reckless and places all parties in jeopardy.

ICE officers treat detainees with dignity and respect

ICE provides safe, humane and appropriate conditions of confinement for individuals in its custody. ICE has a series of detention standards that ensure that individuals with medical conditions or other specific needs receive exceptional care while in our custody, which exceed the standards of most local jails and prisons. Individuals in our custody are also provided access to legal representation, translation services, recreation, and a multitude of other offerings.

ICE officers are aware of the real and emotional impact of immigration enforcement

The immediate and extreme impact an immigration enforcement action has on an individual and their family is not lost on our officers. These ICE officers and their families live and shop, as well as attend schools and places of worship in the same communities. Casting aspersions about our officers' intentions only spreads fear in a community; this is unfair and without merit. Our officers do their jobs professionally, humanely, and treat those they encounter with dignity and respect. It is unconscionable when those who have ideological or political beliefs that differ from the law, misdirect their attacks on ICE officers who are charged with upholding laws Congress has passed.

We know that immigration enforcement is an extremely polarizing issue, but we ask the American people to understand that the federal laws we enforce today are the same ones that have been law for decades. Our mission remains consistent: to identify, arrest and remove aliens who present a danger to national security or are a risk to public safety, as well as those who enter the country illegally or otherwise undermine the integrity of our immigration laws and our border control efforts. We want the American public to know the truth, but also to understand how critical cooperation among ICE, local officials, and the community is an indispensable component to promote public safety and national security.

Respectfully signed,

ICE Field Office Directors