

News Release



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

March 28, 2008

Contact: Richard Rocha
202-616-8895

ICE unveils sweeping new plan to target criminal aliens in jails nationwide

Secure Communities aims to identify and remove criminal aliens from all U.S. jails and prisons

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Immigration Enforcement (ICE) today unveiled its Secure Communities plan, a comprehensive, multi-year initiative to more effectively identify, detain, and return removable criminal aliens incarcerated in federal, state and local prisons and jails.

ICE's plan will use expanded integration technology and build upon the relationships with state and local law enforcement agencies to ensure that incarcerated criminal aliens are removed from the country instead of being released into our communities after their time in custody.

One of the key components of the Secure Communities plan is the distribution of integration technology that will link local law enforcement agencies to both DHS and FBI biometric databases. Currently, as part of the routine booking process, local officers submit an arrested person's fingerprints through FBI databases to access that individual's criminal history. With interoperability, those fingerprints will also automatically be checked against DHS databases to access immigration history information. The automated process would also notify ICE when fingerprints match those of an immigration violator. ICE officers would conduct follow-up interviews and take appropriate action.

"The Secure Communities plan presents a historic opportunity to transform immigration enforcement and improve public safety by focusing on those criminal aliens who pose the greatest threats to our communities," said Julie L. Myers, Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for ICE. "Although ICE has made considerable progress over the past several years in identifying criminal aliens and removing them from this country, this comprehensive initiative aims to identify and remove all aliens convicted of a crime."

"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 John S. Pistole, FBI Deputy Director. "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 their goals."

Last year under CAP, ICE charged a record 164,000 aliens in law enforcement custody with immigration violations and removed approximately 95,000 aliens with criminal histories. ICE estimates that approximately 300,000 to 450,000 convicted criminal aliens who are removable are detained each year at federal, state and local prisons and jails. The total estimated cost to remove all convicted criminal aliens in custody annually will be from \$2 to 3 billion.

“The support of the Congressional appropriations committees, especially their Chairmen, Price and Byrd, and Ranking Members Rogers and Cochran, has been critical to our ability to develop this comprehensive plan. Congress affirmed its commitment to this important initiative by providing ICE an initial \$200 million to begin transforming our approach to immigration enforcement in correctional institutions,” said Myers.

Additional components of the Secure Communities plan:

- ICE will identify removable criminal aliens and prioritize their removal based on the threat they pose to the community.
- ICE will continue working with local, state and federal detention centers and the Department of Justice Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR), which oversees the immigration courts, to increase the number of facilities that use video conferencing technology.
- Working with ICE, U.S. Attorney’s Offices will seek to prosecute more criminal aliens who illegally re-enter the country. This initiative is aimed at deterring recidivism.
- ICE will continue and expand the use of its Rapid REPAT (Removal of Eligible Parolees Accepted for Transfer) program whereby non-violent criminal aliens serving state sentences receive early parole in exchange for assisting in their removal from the United States. The program has proven successful in New York and Arizona and ICE seeks to establish Rapid REPAT programs in four additional states by the end of FY 2008.
- ICE will provide 24/7 nationwide operational coverage for the Criminal Alien Program by assigning additional personnel in field offices, standing up command centers in priority areas, and expanding use of video conferencing to remotely interview and process criminals who are subject to removal.
- ICE will increase local law enforcement partnerships through 287(g) cross-designation that allows trained officers to interview and initiate removal proceedings of aliens processed through their detention facilities.

The Secure Communities plan will continue to evolve as ICE’s partners provide input and as the program matures. Partner agencies will be asked to join a project management team that will oversee SC’s implementation.

In addition to numerous state and local enforcement agencies and the FBI, ICE’s partners within DHS include U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the United States Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT) Program. ICE’s federal interagency partners include the Bureau of Prisons (BOP), the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR), U.S. Attorneys, the Department of State (DOS), the Department of Justice (DOJ), and the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS).

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.