



Fact Sheets

October 1, 2008

Operation Community Shield

Targeting Violent Transnational Street Gangs

Overview:

In February 2005, ICE began Operation Community Shield, a national law enforcement initiative that targets violent transnational street gangs through the use of ICE's broad law enforcement powers, including the unique and powerful authority to remove (deport) criminal aliens, including illegal aliens and legal permanent resident aliens.

Initially, the focus of ICE's efforts were directed toward the Mara Salvatrucha organization, commonly referred to as MS-13, one of the most violent and rapidly growing transnational street gangs. In May 2005, ICE expanded Operation Community Shield to include all transnational criminal street gangs and prison gangs

During the months of June through September 2008 ICE conducted a coordinated, nationwide summer enforcement action targeting gangs, Operation ICE Surge 2008, which tallied 1,759 arrests of persons with citizenship from 20 different countries. Arrests were made in 53 cities across 28 states and the District of Columbia.

Operation Community Shield Overall Results:

Since inception through September 26, 2008, ICE agents working in conjunction with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies nationwide have arrested a total of 11,106 street gang members and associates.

These apprehensions include 3,997 criminal arrests and 7,109 administrative immigration arrests. 145 of those arrested were gang leaders and 2,018 were MS-13 members or associates. 4,331 of the arrested suspects had violent criminal histories. Through this initiative, ICE has seized 388 firearms.

Under Operation Community Shield, ICE:

- Partners with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, in the United States and abroad, to develop a comprehensive and integrated approach in conducting criminal investigations and other law enforcement operations against violent street gangs and others who pose

a threat to public safety.

- Identifies violent street gangs and develops intelligence on their membership, associates, criminal activities and international movements.
- Deters, disrupts and dismantles gang operations by tracing and seizing cash, weapons and other assets derived from criminal seized activities.
- Seeks prosecution and/or removal of alien gang members from the United States.
- Works closely with our attaché offices throughout Latin America and foreign law enforcement counterparts in gathering intelligence, sharing information and conducting coordinated enforcement operations.
- Conducts outreach efforts to increase public awareness about the fight against violent street gangs.

Sample Operation ICE Surge 2008 Enforcement Actions

- In July 2008, office of the special agent in charge, Chicago, Ill. agents arrested the 10,000th known gang member/associate since the inception of Operation Community Shield. Agents, in conjunction with the ICE Office of Detention and Removal Operations (DRO) and local law enforcement agencies, arrested Valentin Sierra-Martinez, a documented Nortenos 14 criminal street gang member from the Elgin, Ill. area. Sierra, a citizen of Mexico illegally present in the United States, was turned over to DRO for removal proceedings. His criminal history includes convictions of residential burglary, domestic battery and knowingly damaging property.
- During two weeks spanning June and July 2008, office of the resident agent in charge, Wichita, Kan. agents conducted an enforcement operation with the Wichita Police Department which resulted in the arrests of 21 gang members for violations including burglary, theft, assault, drive-by shootings, weapons charges and misdemeanor charges.
- June 18-21, 2008, office of the resident agent in charge, Boise, Idaho agents participated in a major local law enforcement operation targeting high profile criminals and gang members dubbed "Street Sweeper", which resulted in a total of 13 felony arrests, 149 misdemeanor arrests, 33 administrative immigration arrests, 41 probation searches of gang member's homes, one search warrant execution and 182 contacts with gang members and associates. Numerous weapons were seized including two Molotov Cocktails, one assault rifle, three handguns, two machetes, one knife, and three brass knuckles. Approximately one quarter pound of methamphetamine, one pound of marijuana and thirteen pieces of paraphernalia were also seized.
- June 17-20, 2008, office of the special agent in charge, Newark, N. J. agents, along with the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office, Union City Police Department and West New York Police Department, conducted an enforcement operation in the Hudson County, New Jersey area, which resulted in the arrests of 39 violent gang members.
- On June 18, 2008, office of the special agent in charge, Newark, N. J. agents reported the seizure of a graffiti marked Mexican flag from the New Jersey residence of three members of the La Gran Familia (LGF) street gang. Subsequent analysis of the graffiti written on the flag revealed several local LGF cliques, including Los Pitufos, Primos Locos,

and Winners, along with each cliques' respective area of illicit gang activity in New Jersey and New York. LGF is a transnational criminal street gang comprised of Mexican nationals suspected of committing auto thefts, robberies, and assaults within the greater Hudson County metropolitan area.

- On June 17, 2008, office of the resident agent in charge, Provo, Utah agents reported the recovery of a 15-year-old female who had been missing for two months. She was discovered inside an apartment as ICE agents were affecting the arrest of seven members of the criminal street gang Surenos-13. The girl was reunited with her parents at the scene. All seven suspects were charged criminally with controlled substance violations and two suspects were charged with harboring a minor.
- In June 2008, office of the special agent in charge, Atlanta, Ga. agents conducted an enhanced gang suppression operation in the metro Atlanta area, in coordination with over 30 local law enforcement agencies, including the Gwinnett County Police Department and the Hall County Sheriff's Office, which resulted in the arrest of 127 gang members and the seizure of two firearms.

Intelligence Gathering and Sharing:

Under Operation Community Shield, ICE has received thousands of names of known and suspected gang members from federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, as well as from foreign governments. This information is routinely compared with ICE's immigration and customs databases to identify and prioritize gang suspects who may be subject to ICE's legal jurisdiction.

ICE's Law Enforcement Support Center (LESC) in Vermont plays a central role in this effort by running data on gang suspects provided by other law enforcement agencies against its immigration databases to determine whether these individuals are subject to ICE's federal immigration authorities. This data is then shared with ICE field offices and law enforcement partners to compile target lists.

[Fact Sheet \(http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/opshieldfactsheet.htm\)](http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/opshieldfactsheet.htm)

[Media Gallery \(http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/multimedia/archive/index.htm\)](http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/multimedia/archive/index.htm)

[News Release \(http://www.ice.gov/pi/nr/0810/081001washington.htm\)](http://www.ice.gov/pi/nr/0810/081001washington.htm)

[Map of Total Arrests by City \(PDF | 214 KB\)](#)

[\(http://www.ice.gov/doclib/pi/investigations/comshield/operation_surge_map.pdf\)](http://www.ice.gov/doclib/pi/investigations/comshield/operation_surge_map.pdf)

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News Releases

October 10, 2008

ICE arrests more than 1,700 during largest ever nationwide gang surge *Four-month long Operation Community Shield initiative takes dangerous criminals off the street*

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced today the arrests of 1,759 gang members and associates, criminals and immigration violators as part of a comprehensive law enforcement operation led by ICE agents. Law enforcement agencies at the federal, state and local level partnered during this four-month long public safety surge, which ended yesterday, that targeted violent street gangs and their criminal associates in 53 cities across 28 states.



These arrests are the result of Operation Community Shield, a comprehensive initiative launched by ICE in 2005 to disrupt and dismantle transnational violent street gangs. Through Operation Community Shield, the federal government uses its powerful immigration and customs authorities in a coordinated, national campaign against criminal street gangs in the United States.

"Street gangs prey on the neighborhoods in which they operate and they instill fear through intimidation and violence," said Julie L. Myers, Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for ICE. "By partnering with other law enforcement agencies across the country, we are successfully targeting these gangs, arresting their leaders, disrupting their operations, and putting their members and associates behind bars."

Of the 1,759 individuals arrested during the surge, nearly 1,500 were gang members, associates or those otherwise criminally charged -- including more than 30 percent with violent criminal histories and 17 gang leaders. The remaining individuals were encountered and arrested for immigration violations during the enforcement action and have been placed into removal proceedings. ICE agents arrested 730 individuals on new criminal charges ranging from attempted murder, aggravated assault and drug and firearms violations to charges of re-entering the country after deportation.

"Operation Community Shield and the 287(g) programs have assisted us in

making great strides in combating gang activity in our community," said Major Ramone Gilbert, Hall County Sheriff's Department in Georgia. "With these programs, we have seen a decrease of over 200 gang members in our area in 2008."

"Although ICE rightfully has a responsibility to enforce the immigration laws of this nation, they also have responsibilities and goals which are common to the responsibilities and goals of my department. It is in this narrow area of mutual purpose that we have chosen to enthusiastically and unabashedly partner with ICE," said Chief Charles Everett, Union City Police Department in New Jersey. "As a result, Union City has benefited greatly from the manpower, resources, expertise and special enforcement powers that ICE brings to the table and this partnership has resulted in the arrest and detention of over 26 violent street gang members in the recent surge."

Transnational street gangs have a significant number of foreign-born members and are frequently involved in human and contraband smuggling, immigration violations and other crimes with a nexus to the border. Like any street gang, these transnational gangs also have a propensity toward violence. Their members commit a number of crimes including robbery, extortion, assault, rape and murder.

Among those arrested during the 2008 Operation Community Shield surge were:

- Walter Garza-Morales, 26, a Mexican national and member of the 18th Street Gang, who was arrested in Ogden, Utah. Garza-Morales has an extensive criminal history for crimes including aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, assault with intent to cause bodily harm on a family member, aggravated assault against a public servant and others;
- Jeffrey Diaz, 20, a national from the Dominican Republic and member of the Dominican's Don't Play (DDP) street gang, who was arrested and charged under New Jersey law for aggravated assault and attempted murder;
- Roberto Dominguez, 27, a Mexican national and leader of the Inland Empire gang who was arrested in Atlanta. Dominguez was previously convicted for conspiracy to commit assault in racketeering (RICO). He served 33 months in prison, was deported and illegally re-entered the country. He now faces criminal prosecution for illegally re-entering the United States;
- Kinske St. Vilus, 33, a Bahamian national and leader of the Uptown Gang, who was arrested in Miami for an open warrant on RICO conspiracy charges. St. Vilus has numerous criminal convictions including possession with intent to sell or deliver cocaine and aggravated battery; and
- Valentin Sierra-Martinez, 20, a Mexican national and confirmed Norteno-14 gang member who was arrested in Chicago. Sierra-Martinez was the 10,000th gang member or associate arrested by ICE as part of Operation Community Shield. Sierra-Martinez was in the U.S. illegally and has an extensive criminal background including convictions for

residential burglary, domestic battery, possessing drug paraphernalia and knowingly damaging property.

Operation Community Shield partners with existing federal, state and local anti-gang efforts to share intelligence on gang organizations and their leadership, share resources and combine legal authorities to arrest, prosecute, imprison and/or deport transnational gang members. In addition to MS-13, targeted gangs included Surenos-13, 18th Street Gang, Latin Kings, Bloods, Crips, and Vatos Locos to name a few.

Since 2005, ICE has arrested more than 11,100 members and associates from 890 different gangs and seized 388 firearms. Of those arrested, 145 were gang leaders. Many of those arrested under Operation Community Shield are prosecuted criminally and are eventually removed from the United States. To date, 3,997 have been charged criminally, and 7,109 have been charged with immigration violations and processed for removal.

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-- ICE --

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) 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.

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