

## Remarks by Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff at a Joint Press Conference on Community Shield

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### Secretary Chertoff:

Good morning. I am delighted to be here at ICE, Immigration and Customs Enforcement headquarters, to celebrate a real accomplishment in the war against gang violence that has caused such a high toll in our cities and in the countryside from sea to sea.

This is -- this set of accomplishments, which culminates in today's announcement, is a reflection of the very fine work that has been done by our agents and supporting personnel here at Immigrations and Customs Enforcement in targeting gang violence as one of the critical threats which is faced by our society.

I'm particularly pleased today to recognize the very fine leadership of Michael Garcia, who is still the Assistant Secretary for ICE, but is very shortly to be assuming a new role as United States Attorney for the southern district of New York, having been confirmed last Friday. It's my pleasure to offer my congratulations to Mike Garcia. We will miss him here at ICE, but we will look forward to working with him in his new role in New York.

Today's announcement is the result of an active partnership over many months between ICE and federal, state and local law enforcement, all of which has joined in Operation Community Shield, an operation which is designed to target the very worst gang offenders here in the United States, those who commit some of the most serious crimes and who threaten the harmony and the fabric of our society.

Phase one of Community Shield began back in March of this year with an intensive two-week operation that led to over a hundred gang members from the very violent MS-13 gang being arrested. Since that time, we've had both phase one and phase two of Operation Community Shield culminating with a two-week offensive that just began in the middle of July and has ended today. That has resulted in arresting over 1,000 gang members, including 582 in the last two weeks, and a total of 515 MS-13 gang members. These individuals -- some of them are going to be prosecuted for criminal cases, the rest will be deported back to their native lands.

Collectively, we have arrested members of over 80 different gangs as part of Operation Community Shield, and over half those arrested in the last two weeks have prior criminal histories. Many were gang leaders with exceptionally violent criminal histories. Among the horrific crimes committed by some of the people we have apprehended include murder, rape, assault, burglary, and, of course, weapons and narcotics offenses.

For too long, these gangs have gone unchecked, flouting our laws and demonstrating a blatant disregard for public safety. I am joined today by members of the law enforcement community who have worked with us in enforcing Operation Community Shield and who join me in viewing gangs as a threat to our homeland security, and as a very urgent law enforcement priority.

From my left to your right, from my left to right, and that would be your right to your left is Chris Swecker, Assistant Director to the FBI; Michael Bouchard, ATF Assistant Director, Field Operations; Michael Holt, who is the ICE Special Agent in Charge in New Orleans; Ken Smith, the ICE SAC in Atlanta; Chief Nick Derzis, from Hoover, Alabama; Chief Lon Walker from Marshalltown, Iowa; Chief Jane Perlov of Raleigh, North Carolina; Marcy Forman, who is the ICE Director of Investigations, who has played a principal role in this Operation Community Shield; Chief Jerry Lance of Oceanside, California; Chief Steven Mazzi of Everett, Massachusetts; John Torres, the ICE Director of Detention and Removal; Mike Unzueta, the ICE SAC in San Diego; Mark Cangemi, ICE SAC in Minnesota; and Matthew Etre, Acting ICE SAC in Boston.

Throughout this entire Community Shield initiative, DHS has worked closely with international partners and with our domestic law enforcement partners at all levels to identify gang organizations and their memberships, and to act on this intelligence in order to target those criminal gangs who threaten our communities and our homeland.

In fact, gang enforcement is part of the very fabric of the mission here at ICE, and at the Department of Homeland Security, because gang violence is a very serious threat to the public welfare and the public safety of all of our communities.

Gang violence and gang criminal behavior is the kind of threat to our vulnerabilities that all of us -- federal, state and

local officials -- are very, very concerned about. Indeed, our threat assessments indicate that many gang members come to this country from overseas, or from other parts of the North and South American continent, which means that they are subject to our immigration laws and that when they violate those laws, we can take action against them. We are deeply committed to enforcing these immigration laws and restoring integrity to our immigration system.

ICE's combined immigration and customs authorities, together with its advanced financial crimes expertise, have provided valuable tools to hit these criminal organizations from all different angles, and, at the same time, we're aggressively using all of these tools to arrest and, when possible, to deport or prosecute gang members. Our investigators are following their money trails to cut off the funding and seize cash, weaponry, and other assets that are integral to gang operations.

We're also providing close to real-time response to our local law enforcement partners when they ask about the immigration status of potential gang members who are taken into police custody. And we are creating lookouts in our databases so we can better aid local law enforcement in determining gang membership and the potential gang threat to public safety before criminals are returned to the streets and begin again to terrorize our communities.

We're pleased about the progress that we're making. Today's announcement of over a thousand arrests in Operation Community Shield, I think, is a powerful testament to the kinds of resources we can all bring to the table when we are fighting one of the scourges of our communities.

I commend the entire law enforcement community, represented by those who stand with me today, for uniting against the critical threat that violent gangs pose to our communities and to our security.

And now I am pleased to introduce one of the principal architects of Operation Community Shield, Director of ICE's Office of Investigations, Marcy Forman. Marcy.

**Director Forman:**

Thank you, Secretary Chertoff, and thank you, everyone, for being here, to help us announce our achievements in the expansion of Operation Community Shield.

The last two weeks have been pretty busy weeks for us, for all of us. ICE agents across 40 offices, working with more than 80 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, have arrested 582 gang members and their associates, representing 80 different gangs. More than 700 law enforcement officers have worked with us in this effort. Their resolve is backed up with results.

In Boston, 61 arrests; Houston, 14 arrests; San Diego, 18 arrests; another 18 in Des Moines; Raleigh, 59 arrests; Fort Myers, 12; Chicago, 20. We even had arrests in Sioux Falls, Sioux City, and Grand Rapids, and the list goes on and on.

Together, we are putting these street gangs on notice: Your violence and criminal activities will not go unchallenged. Let me tell you about some of the individuals we have arrested.

There was an MS-13 gang member in Boston whose criminal history includes assaulting a police officer, and assault and battery with a weapon; from Chicago, a high-ranking enforcer of the Latin Kings, whose criminal history includes weapons charges and resisting arrest. Moving west, we go to Colorado, where agents and officers arrested, among others, a member of Sureño 13. He's been arrested in the past for vehicle theft, vandalism, drug charges, and weapon charges. In California, in fact in the City of Oceanside, officers arrested a gang members whose criminal history includes lewd acts with a child under four years of age, inflicting bodily harm.

I'd like to tell you how we did this, because it's an excellent example of the type of partnership that ICE promotes -- sharing information to bring all our law enforcement partners together. We started with each ICE office within the United States. Our Special Agent in Charge offices went directly to their state and local counterparts to ask them what they, the state and locals, saw as their biggest gang threat in their respective communities. We got names of suspects and potential target information. We then took that information and ran it through ICE's Law Enforcement Support Center in Vermont. We vetted it through national security databanks, with the FBI, and with other federal and state partners. Then, with the new intelligence and refined target list, we went back to the same state and local law enforcement agencies and developed the operations to go out and pick these individuals off our streets.

It's a collaborative process that I am very proud of. I am pleased to be joined by a few of these partners, and I'd like you to hear from one of them. Chief Jerry Lance is with the Oceanside Police Department. He knows firsthand the devastating impact that gangs have on our community. I'd like to now turn this over to Chief Lance.

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**Chief Lance:**

Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Thank you, Director Forman. I appreciate being invited here today and speak on behalf of my fellow local law enforcement counterparts who are also here and across the country who are involved in

my fellow local law enforcement counterparts who are also here and across the country who are involved in Community Shield.

I've been a police officer in California for 39 years, and I know all too well the violence perpetuated by gang members. In 2003, my department, Oceanside, suffered the loss of a police officer, shot down by a violent gang member who also happened to be an illegal alien. The brutal killing of Officer Tony Zeppetella shocked both the community and the department.

Prior to my experience in Oceanside, I served in Long Beach as the chief of police and experienced the same thing in 2000, with the death of Officer Daryle Black, shot down by a violent gang member, and the ending of a career of a fellow officer.

These gang members do not care about human life. They do not care about their communities. They only care about the gangs. They only care about the violence that they create in these communities -- in fact, the violence that they wear as a badge of honor. Many of you report on that; look at what you report on and who they kill, who are the innocent victims.

Many of these gang members come from other countries. That makes it difficult for local law enforcement to deal with. Our partnership with ICE has led to several joint operations that have proven to be very beneficial in our battle against violent gang members.

Community Shield and other joint efforts with ICE have resulted in 76 gang members and 80 additional gang associates arrested in Oceanside. The arrest of these gang members and their removal from Oceanside has helped created a safer community.

Community Shield is the right program that brings together local law enforcement, state law enforcement, and most importantly federal law enforcement in our efforts to combat these criminals. I want to thank the Secretary and the ICE staff for their assistance in this battle to keep our communities safe.

Thank you.

**Secretary Chertoff:** Thank you very much, Chief. And now I think we will take a few questions.

Yes.

**Question:**

Mr. Secretary, one of the main concerns of Central American countries like Guatemala and El Salvador are when we return these individuals there, and (inaudible) commit crimes and (inaudible) they come back here. (Inaudible.) Should these individuals be jailed here (inaudible)?

**Secretary Chertoff:**

Well, clearly, where we have the ability to prosecute and jail people for committing crimes here, we do that. But either in circumstances where we can't do that, or where they serve their prison terms and now they get out, it's obviously appropriate for us to send them back to the countries they came from because they're not here legally.

At the same time, we do recognize the challenge that our foreign partners have in dealing with gang threat. We are working with them in helping them do what they need to do to protect their own societies from the gang problem. I mean, this is really an international issue, and we have to tackle it with our partners overseas, as well as with our partners at home.

Yes.

**Question:**

Secretary Chertoff, can you give us approximately the percentage of the one thousand arrested so far who are here illegally?

Secretary Chertoff: I think it's close to a thousand. I think it's like 950 or 930, I think, people who are eligible for removal now. Also bear in mind that when people are convicted of crimes, the fact that they've been committed of a crime puts them into a situation in which they now are removable as well. So either because of the fact that they came in illegally, or they've violated the terms in which they came in, or because they've committed crimes which have now rendered them ineligible, I think the vast majority are subject to being removed.

**Question:** So from that I would assume that some of these did get out of jail and just (inaudible).

**Secretary Chertoff:**

I don't know that I would say that. I would say that in many instances we may have people who committed crimes, they weren't caught yet, let's say, they were out on bail. And of course, obviously, that makes them ineligible to stay. So it's -- I guess, there are a whole series of circumstances. But the vast majority of them will be removable.

So it's -- I guess, there are a whole series of circumstances. But the vast majority of them will be removable.

**Question:** Would you be willing to release the names of these one thousand individuals and their locations?

**Secretary Chertoff:**

You know I think that where people are charged publicly, that's part of a public file. I don't know that we've compiled a total list of names. We also want to make sure we are not violating court rules about what can be released and what can't be released. So I mean, we'll go and check and see what we can do, but I don't know if it's --

**Question:** To the extent that we can --

**Secretary Chertoff:** We'll do what we can, yes.

Yes.

**Question:**

Mr. Secretary, how many of the one thousand are you able to charge with criminal charges here in the U.S., charges that you believe will stick?

**Secretary Chertoff:**

I think we are planning to charge or have charged approximately 230 of the thousand-plus that we've apprehended. That's charged with a criminal violation, as opposed to an immigration offense which makes them removable, but doesn't have a prison term.

Yes.

**Question:**

Do any of these people arrested display or show any threat in terms of homeland security -- immigration fraud, document fraud?

**Secretary Chertoff:**

Well, I mean -- the menu of crimes that these people have committed range from homicide to burglary to narcotics trafficking to weapons trafficking. That is the kind of threat to public safety which ought to concern all of us, and is very much a part of the core of the mission of the Department of Homeland Security.

**Question:**

If there is still a problem with controlling the border in parts of the South, and therefore many of these people may just be able to walk back across in the United States, what is it that you -- are you accomplishing very much if they're just going to walk back in the United States in two weeks from now?

**Secretary Chertoff:**

Well, first of all, for a lot of them -- I mean, those who are going to go to prison are obviously going to serve their prison terms. Many of those whom we will deport are not going to be deported to Mexico; they'll be deported someplace else. Now, obviously, some of them may start the process of trying to get back in. But that suggests again the urgency of our doing what we need to do to get control of our borders. And one of the things we're focused on very intently now, both at the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice and all over the government is putting together a comprehensive strategy that will, in fact, get us real control of the borders. And that includes use of modern technology that gives us better surveillance. It includes changes in the infrastructure -- roads and vehicle barriers -- that will give a little better ability to intercept people who come across. It involves working with our counterparts in Mexico and other parts of the world in restraining people from coming back in, and it involves additional resources in terms of Border Patrol agents.

I'm delighted that Congress has given us some additional tools, and we've been working with leading members of Congress in the last few weeks to develop our full set of measures with respect to border control.

So, clearly, this is a part of a larger problem, but one big piece of this is interior enforcement. And we will continue to focus on trafficking organizations and other criminal organizations which are both the hand-maidens of illegal migration and also, in fact, some of the beneficiaries of illegal migration.

Thanks a lot.