



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

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ICE-led operation arrests 149 gang members, associates in multi-agency action *This "Operation Community Shield" 6-day enforcement action occurred in 8 Houston-area cities*

HOUSTON — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents here, working jointly with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, locally arrested 149 people, including 67 gang members and their associates, during the latest six-day effort of an ongoing national program called "Operation Community Shield."

This multi-agency operation targeted gang members and their associates in Houston and seven other area cities including: Conroe, Galveston, Sugar Land, Bryan, Richmond, Beaumont and Corpus Christi.

Each of the 67 individuals arrested were targeted for their membership, participation or association with violent street gangs. Members or associates of 22 street gangs were arrested during this operation, including: 83 Mob, Brown Pride 13, Hermanos Pistoleros Latinos, Tango Blast Houstone, La Primera, La Quarenta, La Tercera Crips, Latin Kings, Mexican Mafia, Mara Salvatrucha (aka MS-13), NICA'S, North Side Crips, PVL (Puros Vatos Locos), Raza Unida, Ruthless Kings, Sacky Crew, Southside Bloods, Southwest Cholos, Sureno 13, Texas Syndicate, VNS (Barrio North Side) and Westside G.

Of the 67 gang members and associates placed in custody, 20 were arrested on outstanding state arrest warrants and turned over to local authorities; one was arrested on an outstanding federal drug arrest warrant. The other 46 arrested were in the United States illegally, of which 28 are facing federal criminal charges for illegal entry or illegal re-entry after deportation. In Houston, 71 were people arrested, of which 33 were gang members or associates. Forty-four people were arrested in Corpus Christi, Texas, which included 30 gang members or associates. In Beaumont, Texas, 34 people were arrested, which included four gang members or associates.

Thirty-two U.S. citizens were arrested by participating local law enforcement agencies on outstanding warrants. The other 117 non-citizens originated from the following countries: Belize, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Pakistan. Seven of those arrested were females.

ICE special agents worked with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies including: sheriffs' offices for Harris and Montgomery counties, the Houston Police Department's Gang Task Force, the Conroe Police Department, South Houston Police Department, Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office, La Porte Police Department, Brazos County Sheriff's Office, Corpus Christi Police Department, Beaumont Police Department, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, Orange Police Department, Port Arthur Police Department, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), U.S. Postal Inspectors, the FBI and the U.S. Attorneys' Offices for the Southern and Eastern Districts of Texas. In addition, the Air and Marine branch of U.S. Customs and Border Protection provided air support for the operation.

"ICE has unique immigration and customs law enforcement authorities which complement the authorities of our federal, state and local partners," said **Robert P. Rutt, special agent in charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Houston**. "Together, we can effectively remove dangerous gang members and their associates from the streets to make our communities safer."

"HPD will always stand ready to assist ICE in removal of all criminals from our city. I am pleased that the coordinated efforts of the federal and local agencies are targeting organized gangs and all other criminals in the Houston area," said **Houston Police Chief Harold L. Hurtt**.

"We know that these individuals are involved in crimes in our city. We continue to use our resources in concert with federal authorities to reduce our city's crime rate. This gang initiative is but one such cooperative effort," said **Charlie Ray, Conroe City police chief**.

Tommy Gage, Montgomery County Sheriff said, "We appreciate the effort of all those who participated. We are glad to be a part of this operation and look forward to the next time we can work together."

Also, **Corpus Christi Police Chief Bryan Smith** said, "We continue to look for ways to work with our federal counterparts to reduce crime and remove criminals from our streets. This operation was a huge success."

"Gangs use guns to further their business; by working together we bring all the tools in the law enforcement tool box to stop their violent criminal activities, said **Dewey Webb, special agent-in-charge of ATF's Office of Investigations in Houston**."

"The Harris County Sheriff's Office and ICE have a long history of working together to ensure the safety of our community. This latest operation serves as yet another example of that strong working relationship and provides evidence of our continued cooperation and commitment of public safety," said **Tommy Thomas, Harris County sheriff**.

Of those arrested during this operation, many were previously convicted of a variety of criminal offenses, including: aggravated sexual assault of a child; possession, manufacture and delivery of controlled substances; assorted firearms violations; aggravated robbery; and other crimes of violence. Following are five examples of those who were arrested during this operation (names are withheld due to pending federal charges of illegal entry or illegal re-entry after deportation). All will be transferred to ICE custody after their criminal charges are finalized.

1. A member of Southwest Cholos street gang who is an illegal alien from Mexico was arrested in Houston on June 5 at his place of employment. His criminal convictions include: aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, aggravated robbery, possession of a controlled substance (cocaine), and unlawfully carrying a weapon. Since he was previously deported, his deportation orders will be reinstated after his state criminal charges are addressed.
2. An illegal alien from Mexico was arrested in Galveston County. His previous criminal convictions include: burglary of a habitation, assault causing bodily injury, and assault causing bodily injury/family violence.
3. An illegal alien from Mexico was arrested in Sugar Land, Texas. His previous criminal convictions include: possessing a controlled substance, assault causing bodily injury to a family member, burglary of a building, unlawfully carrying a handgun, and burglary of a building.
4. An illegal alien from Mexico was arrested in Richmond, Texas. His previous criminal convictions include burglary of a habitation and unlawfully carrying a weapon.
5. An illegal alien from Mexico with a previous arson conviction was arrested in Ft. Bend County.

About Operation Community Shield

Operation Community Shield is a national law enforcement initiative that partners ICE with other federal, state and local law enforcement, combining resources, authorities and expertise in an effort to target members of violent street gangs. Since ICE began Operation Community Shield in February 2005, more than 8,000 gang members belonging to more than 700 different gangs have been arrested. More information on Operation Community Shield is available at: www.ice.gov.

Under this initiative, ICE works to:

- Identify violent gangs and develop intelligence on their members, associates and organizations.
- Deter, disrupt and dismantle gang operations by tracing and seizing their cash, weapons and other assets
- Criminally prosecute or remove gang members from the United States.
- Partner with other law enforcement agencies at the local, state and federal level – both in the United States and abroad – to develop a “force multiplier” effect in investigations and other law enforcement actions against gangs.
- Conduct outreach efforts to boost public awareness about the fight against violent gangs.

This latest local gang operation began Monday and ended Saturday afternoon.

The public is encouraged to report suspicious activity by calling ICE’s toll-free hotline at: 1-866-347-2423. This hotline is staffed around the clock.

#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 responsibility for a number of key homeland security priorities.