News Releases

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25 arrested in Chicago area during ICE operation targeting gang members

CHICAGO - Special agents with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), in close partnership with local law enforcement, arrested 25 individuals during a week-long operation that ended late Tuesday. This is the latest local effort in an ongoing national ICE initiative to target foreign-born gang members.

The arrests were made as part of Operation Community Shield, a national initiative whereby ICE partners with other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to target the significant public safety threat posed by transnational street gangs. Partnerships with local law enforcement agencies are essential to the success of Operation Community Shield.

The multi-agency operation was conducted Sept. 6 through 13. Arrests were made in the following Illinois communities: Aurora, Barrington, Chicago, Elgin, Joliet, Palatine, Rolling Meadows, and Romeoville. All of the 25 male Mexican nationals arrested are members or associates of the following street gangs: Latin Kings, Vice Lords, Satan Disciples, Latin Saints, Party People, and Sureño 13. They range in age from 18 to 35.

Nearly all of those arrested (22 individuals) have criminal histories that include arrests and convictions for a wide range of crimes committed in the United States. Some of

their convictions include drug possession, aggravated assault, vehicle theft, battery, and concealing a homicide.

Two were turned over to the Aurora Police Department to face state drug-related charges and are in custody at the Kane County Jail with ICE detainers. The remaining individuals are in ICE custody pending deportation.

"Violent street gangs account for a burgeoning amount of crime in Chicago and our surrounding communities," said Gary Hartwig, special agent in charge of ICE HSI in Chicago. "ICE HSI works in close partnership with local law enforcement to identify these gang members and remove them from the streets in the name of public safety." Following are two arrests from this operation:

- A 29-year-old Sureño 13 gang member and U.S. permanent resident whose criminal convictions make him deportable. He has criminal convictions for burglary, attempted possession of a controlled substance, and concealing a homicide. During his arrest in Aurora, ICE HSI agents found hypodermic needles used to inject heroin and turned him over to the Aurora police department on state charges of possession of a narcotic instrument. An immigration detainer was issued and he will be turned over to ICE for deportation once the state charges are completed.

- A 27-year-old member of the Vice Lords and U.S. permanent resident with criminal convictions for drug possession, battery, domestic battery and DUI, which make him deportable. He was arrested in Joliet and is in ICE custody pending deportation.

ICE was assisted in the operation by the police departments of the following Illinois communities: Aurora, Elgin, Joliet, Palatine, Rolling Meadows, and Romeoville. Since the launch of Operation Community Shield in February 2005, ICE and its partners have arrested more than 23,600 gang members and associates, representing more than 1,800 different gangs.

These apprehensions include more than 11,900 criminal arrests and more than 11,600 administrative immigration arrests. Of these, more than 270 arrests were of gang leaders, and more than 8,900 of the arrested suspects had violent criminal histories. Through this initiative, ICE has also seized more than 2,300 firearms.

As part of the effort, ICE HSI's National Gang Unit identifies violent transnational criminal street gangs and develops intelligence on their membership, associates, criminal activities and international movements to deter, disrupt and dismantle gang operations. Transnational street gangs have significant numbers of foreign-born

members and are frequently involved in human and contraband smuggling, immigration violations and other crimes with a connection to the border.