



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

## News Release

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**ICE officers in Houston arrest 326 criminals, fugitives and immigration violators during "Operation Return to Sender"**

HOUSTON - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers here arrested 326 criminal aliens and immigration status violators during a recent weeklong initiative called "Operation Return to Sender." Return to Sender is an ongoing nationwide ICE initiative; however, this latest local operation ended yesterday.

This operation is part of ICE's ongoing process of targeting aliens who have final orders of removal from a federal immigration judge, aka absconders. ICE's fugitive operations teams throughout the United States are specifically trained and dedicated to arresting and removing these aliens. Other Houston-area law enforcement agencies that assisted in last week's operation include: the U.S. Marshal Service (USMS); the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); the U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Texas; U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Border Patrol (CBPBP); Montgomery County Sheriff's Department; Fort Bend County Sheriff's Department; Pearland Police Department, Precinct 3; Shenandoah Police Department; Oak Ridge Police Department; and Corpus Christi Police Department.

Of the 326 individuals arrested in Houston during this latest operation, 30 are fugitive criminal aliens with final orders of deportation; 89 are non-criminal fugitives with final orders of deportation; 17 are illegal aliens with criminal convictions; and 190 are immigration violators. ICE has already deported 142 of these individuals to their home countries.

The criminal aliens apprehended had committed crimes such as homicide, aggravated sexual assault of minors, and aggravated felony offenses involving: robbery, assault, human smuggling, narcotics trafficking, driving under the influence of alcohol, illegal aliens possessing firearms, and immigration violations.

Nationwide, many of the fugitives apprehended by the fugitive operations teams are individuals who have posed a serious threat to our nation's security and are a high risk to public safety. Of the more than 52,000 illegal aliens apprehended by ICE Fugitive Operations teams since the first teams were created in 2003, roughly 22,669 had criminal convictions.

"Criminal aliens are a threat to the safety of our children, families, community and our nation" said Kenneth L. Landgrebe, field office director for the ICE Detention and Removal Operations office in Houston. "Our goal is to remove these threats from the United States. ICE's Fugitive Operations teams are effective at identifying, apprehending and deporting these dangerous criminal aliens from our streets."

Some of the fugitive criminal aliens arrested during this operation include:

- Juan Aldaco-Garcia, 46, a Mexican national, was apprehended by ICE at his residence on Aug. 14. He has a criminal record including: possessing marijuana, drunken driving, resisting and evading arrest. ICE agents also seized about 588 lbs. of marijuana at his home. Aldaco-Garcia entered the United States near Brownsville, Texas, in 1986 and

was ordered deported by an immigration judge on April 3, 2006. Aldaca-Garcia currently faces charges for narcotics trafficking.

- Santana Roman-Salazar, 27, a Mexican national, was arrested by ICE agents Aug. 14. Roman-Salazar last entered the U.S. in May 2006. He was ordered deported by an immigration judge in 2003. He was convicted on charges of possessing a controlled substance in 2003, and he spent two years in prison. He is currently facing charges for "re-entry after deportation," a felony punishable by up to 20 years in federal prison.
- Daniel Mendoza-De la Cruz, 22, a Mexican national, was identified by ICE officers on Aug. 15. Mendoza-De la Cruz is a fugitive wanted in Illinois on charges of sexually assaulting a minor in February 2003. ICE officers found Mendoza-De la Cruz at a residence in the Houston area. He has been illegally living in the United States since 2003. He is currently in deportation proceedings.
- Servando Cruz-Valerio, 41, a Mexican national, was apprehended by ICE officers at his residence on Aug. 16. They also seized an SKS 5.56 assault rifle. Cruz-Valerio entered the U.S. illegally near Brownsville, Texas, in February 1995; he was ordered deported by an immigration judge six months later. After several appeals in 1999, Cruz-Valerio was granted voluntary departure from the United States but he failed to depart the country. He was convicted for driving while intoxicated in 2000. He is currently facing felony charges of being an illegal alien in possession of a firearm.
- Julio Cesar Uribe, 31, a Colombian national, was apprehended by ICE officers Aug. 16. Uribe entered the U.S. in Houston as a visitor. His criminal history includes a conviction for possessing a controlled substance in 2005, unlawfully possessing a firearm in 2003 and in 2005. Uribe is currently being processed for deportation.

Those aliens arrested during this operation are citizens of the following countries: Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia, India and Pakistan.

This operation is part of the Secure Border Initiative (SBI), a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) comprehensive, multi-year plan to secure America's borders and reduce illegal immigration. SBI complements DHS' border security efforts by expanding its existing efforts to target immigration violators in this country, employers of illegal aliens, as well as many criminal networks who support these activities.

By the end of September, a total of 52 Fugitive Operations teams are scheduled to be operational nationwide. The Administration's fiscal year 2007 proposed budget would allow ICE to deploy an additional 18 teams. The 45 Fugitive Operations teams currently in existence are collectively apprehending more than 1,000 illegal aliens per week.

The public is encouraged to report suspicious activity by calling ICE's toll-free hotline at 1-866-347-2423.

-- 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 four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.