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[ICE launches Secure Communities strategy in 24 additional north Texas counties](#)

DALLAS - On Wednesday, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) began using a new biometric information sharing capability in 24 additional northeast Texas counties that helps federal immigration officials identify aliens, both lawfully and unlawfully present in the United States, who are booked into local law enforcement's custody for a crime. This capability is part of Secure Communities - ICE's comprehensive strategy to improve and modernize the identification and removal of criminal aliens from the United States.

Previously, fingerprint-based biometric records were taken of individuals charged with a crime and booked into custody and checked for criminal history information against the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS). Now, through enhanced information sharing between DOJ and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), fingerprint information submitted through the state to the FBI will be simultaneously checked against both the FBI criminal history records in IAFIS and the biometrics-based immigration records in DHS's Automated Biometric Identification System (IDENT).

If fingerprints match those of someone in DHS's biometric system, the new automated process notifies ICE, enabling federal authorities to prioritize immigration enforcement action against those who are or become subject to removal based on their criminal convictions. Top priority is given to criminal aliens who pose the greatest threat to public safety, such as those convicted of major drug offenses, murder, rape, robbery and kidnapping.

"The Secure Communities strategy provides ICE with an effective tool to identify criminal aliens in local custody," said Secure Communities Executive Director David Venturella. "Enhancing public safety is at the core of ICE's mission. Our goal is to use biometric information sharing to remove criminal aliens, preventing them from being released back into the community, with little or no additional burden on our law enforcement partners."

"North Texas now has 41 jurisdictions participating in the Secure Communities program," said Nuria T. Prendes, field office director for the Office of Enforcement and Removal Operations in Dallas. "This program will soon be incorporated throughout Texas and throughout the country so that we can best identify and target criminal aliens who are a threat to public safety." Prendes oversees 128 counties in north Texas and the State of Oklahoma.

"The ICE Secure Communities program brings 21st Century law enforcement technology to all agencies so we can share information," said Smith County Sheriff J.B. Smith. "This improved communication will better help us identify criminal aliens so we can make our communities safer."

Today's announcement adds the following 24 northeast Texas counties to the ICE Secure Communities program:

Anderson, Bowie, Camp, Cass, Cherokee, Delta, Fannin, Franklin, Gregg, Harrison, Henderson, Hopkins, Lamar, Marion, Morris, Panola, Rains, Red River, Rusk, Smith, Titus, Upshur, Van Zandt and Wood.

With the expansion of the biometric information sharing capability to these counties, ICE is now using it in 135 Texas jurisdictions. Across the country, ICE is using this capability in 437 jurisdictions in 24 states. ICE expects to make it available in jurisdictions nationwide by 2013.

Since ICE began using this enhanced information sharing capability in October 2008, immigration officers have removed from the United States more than 8,500 criminal aliens convicted of Level 1 crimes, such as murder, rape and kidnapping. Additionally, ICE has removed more than 22,200 criminal aliens convicted of Level 2 and 3 crimes, including burglary and serious property crimes, which account for the majority of crimes committed by aliens. In accordance with the Immigration and Nationality Act, ICE continues to take action on aliens subject to removal as resources permit.

The IDENT system is maintained by DHS's US-VISIT program and IAFIS is maintained by the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS).

"US-VISIT is proud to support ICE, helping provide decision makers with comprehensive, reliable information when and where they need it," said US-VISIT Director Robert Mocny. "By enhancing the interoperability of DHS's and the FBI's biometric systems, we are able to give federal, state and local decision makers information that helps them better protect our communities and our nation."

"Under this plan, ICE will be utilizing FBI system enhancements that allow improved information sharing at the state and local law enforcement level based on positive identification of incarcerated criminal aliens," said Daniel D. Roberts, assistant director of the FBI's CJIS Division. "Additionally, ICE and the FBI are working together to take advantage of the strong relationships already forged between the FBI and state and local law enforcement necessary to assist ICE in achieving its goals."

For more information, visit www.ice.gov/secure_communities.

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