



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

News Release

April 6, 2010

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3 Maryland counties join ICE Secure Communities initiative

Now the criminal and immigration records of all local arrestees to be checked

BALTIMORE — On Tuesday, law enforcement agencies in Frederick, St. Mary's and Queen Anne's counties in Maryland began employing an initiative, known as Secure Communities, spearheaded by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) that modernizes the process used to accurately identify criminal aliens arrested in the community.

The cornerstone of Secure Communities is the activation of new information-sharing capabilities developed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) that automatically alert local law enforcement and ICE when potentially deportable criminal aliens come into local custody.

Previously, local arrestees' fingerprints were taken and checked for criminal history information against the DOJ biometric system maintained by the FBI. With this new information-sharing capability, that fingerprint information will now be simultaneously checked against both FBI criminal history records and the biometrics-based immigration records maintained by DHS.

If any fingerprints match those of someone in DHS's biometric system, the new automated process notifies ICE, enabling the agency to take appropriate action to ensure criminal aliens are not released back into communities. Top priority is given to individuals who pose a threat to public safety, such as those with prior convictions for major drug offenses, murder, rape, robbery and kidnapping.

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

"Secure Communities affords local law enforcement an excellent tool to identify criminal aliens through biometric identification," said Frederick County Sheriff Chuck Jenkins. "In Frederick County, the program will strengthen an already very effective 287(g) immigration enforcement program. This initiative is clearly focused on keeping America's communities secure and free of crimes perpetrated by individuals in the United States illegally. I completely support this comprehensive program."

“The wellbeing of all persons in this community is my utmost concern,” said Queen Anne’s County Sheriff R. Gery Hofmann. “I strongly believe that a network of information sharing with allied agencies such as ICE furthers my goal and duty to provide a safe and secure Queen Anne’s County.”

“Through improved technology, communication and partnership, our community is given added protection from criminal aliens,” said St. Mary’s County Sheriff Tim Cameron. “I thank and commend ICE for including St. Mary’s County in this important public safety initiative.”

With the expansion of the information-sharing capability to these three counties, there are now four Maryland counties using this tool, including Prince George’s County. Across the country, 145 jurisdictions in 18 states have this capability, including the four counties in Maryland. By 2013, ICE expects to make Secure Communities available nationwide.

Since its inception in October 2008, ICE has identified more than 18,800 aliens charged with or convicted of Level 1 crimes, such as murder, rape and kidnapping—more than 4,000 of whom have already been removed from the United States. Most of the aliens subject to removal who have been identified but not yet removed are in legal proceedings or completing their sentences. Additionally, ICE has removed more than 24,700 aliens charged with or convicted of Level 2 and 3 crimes, including burglary and serious property crimes, which account for 90 percent of the crimes committed by aliens.

Secure Communities is part of DHS's comprehensive plan to distribute technology that links local law enforcement agencies to both FBI and DHS biometric systems. DHS's US VISIT Automated Biometric Identification System (IDENT) holds biometrics-based immigration records, while the FBI's Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS) contains biometrics-based criminal records.

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

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is 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. For more information, visit: www.ICE.gov. To report suspicious activity, call 1-866-347-2423.