

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

News Releases

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35 arrested in Las Vegas-area ICE gang enforcement action *Arrests part of ICE's national anti-gang effort -- Operation Community Shield*

LAS VEGAS - A total of 35 individuals with ties to more than a dozen different street gangs are facing criminal charges or deportation following a three-day, multi-agency enforcement action in the Las Vegas area spearheaded by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

The arrests were made as part of Operation Community Shield, an ongoing initiative by ICE-HSI's National Gang Unit in which the agency uses its powerful immigration and customs authorities in a coordinated strategy to attack and dismantle criminal street gangs across the country. As part of the initiative, ICE partners with other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to target the significant public safety threat posed by transnational gangs.

Of the gang members and gang associates arrested during the enforcement action that concluded late Thursday, six are currently facing prosecution on state criminal charges, including outstanding warrants for gang-related violations. A seventh individual, and two of the subjects arrested on state charges, will also be presented to the U.S. Attorney's Office for prosecution for felony re-entry after deportation, a federal violation that carries a potential penalty of up to 20 years in prison.

"This effort shows our collective resolve in the Las Vegas area to attack and dismantle these dangerous street gangs," said Richard Curry, assistant special agent in charge for ICE-HSI in Las Vegas. "For too long, gangs here and elsewhere have used violence and intimidation to hold communities hostage. As this operation shows, now it's the gang members who have something to fear."

Among those arrested during the enforcement action was a 26-year-old previously deported Mexican national with ties to the Park Avenue street gang who has prior arrests for weapons charges and drug possession. Another of the individuals taken into custody was an 18-year-old

Mexican national member of the 18th Street gang who had been previously arrested for attempted murder for his role in a drive-by shooting.

ICE received substantial assistance with this week's operation from the Nevada Department of Public Safety (two divisions, Probation and Parole and Investigations); the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department; the Mesquite Police Department; and the North Las Vegas Police Department.

Three of the gang members and gang associates arrested during the operation are U.S. citizens. The remaining 32 individuals are foreign nationals. The majority of the foreign nationals are from Mexico (27), but the group also includes citizens from six other countries: El Salvador, the Philippines, Honduras, Cuba, Guatemala and Laos. Those foreign nationals who are not being prosecuted on criminal charges are being processed for removal from the United States.

Since Operation Community Shield began in February 2005, ICE agents nationwide have arrested more than 18,000 gang members and gang associates. As part of the effort, HSI's National Gang Unit identifies violent 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.

To report suspicious activity, call ICE's 24-hour toll-free hotline at: 1-866-347-2423 or visit www.ice.gov.