



# Gang Crackdown Targets Illegal Immigrants

**'Worst of the Worst' Taken Off the Streets, Says Top ICE Official**

**By PIERRE THOMAS, JASON RYAN, JACK DATE and THERESA COOK**

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A summer surge against gang violence has yielded more than 1,300 arrests since June, Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials said. "We've arrested the worst of the worst," Assistant Homeland Security Secretary for ICE Julie Myers said at a Tuesday press conference announcing the results.

Operation Community Shield is part of a nationwide crackdown on gangs, with the goal of taking some of the most violent illegal immigrants off the streets. The surge in arrests is aimed at gang members -- illegal immigrants who law enforcement sources say have been terrorizing communities across the country.

"We've arrested quite a number of very serious criminals, individuals who frankly have worn out their welcome by coming [to] this country illegally and committing more crimes when they got here," Myers said.

Law enforcement has plucked suspected gang members from the streets of more than 30 cities -- including New York, Boston, Miami, San Diego, Oklahoma City, Dallas and Raleigh.

Among the gangs targeted were some of the nation's most notorious: Bloods and Crips, MS-13, the Latin Kings, and the 18th Street Gang. Some of those arrested -- many of whom are illegal immigrants -- will face criminal prosecution in U.S. courts, others deportation.

The campaign is part of a broad strategy aimed at aggressively expanding the enforcement of immigration laws. Speaking about one recent raid during an exclusive interview with ABC News last week, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff said to expect more.

"We were picking up a population of people who not only illegal in that instance, but actually criminal illegals who had committed crimes in the past," Chertoff said. "And I'd have to ask myself, and ask any community in the country, do you really want illegal aliens with criminal records staying in your community?"

Operation Community Shield was set up more than two years ago to target violent gang offenders. According to ICE, since the effort kicked off, authorities have arrested 7,655 gang members from 700 different gangs.

Criminal charges have been lodged against 2,444 and 5,211 individuals were charged with immigration violations and targeted for removal to their country of origin.

It is unclear how many of those removed seek to return to the United States, but Myers said that with increased border protection, the Border Patrol has seen fewer people seeking illegal entry into this country. She conceded, however, that some of those charged and removed have found ways back in.

"There are arrests where we see repeats," Myers said.