



The Life Saving Missions of ICE

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Bottom Line: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) mission is to protect America from cross-border crime and illegal immigration that threaten national security and public safety. This mission is executed through the enforcement of more than 400 federal statutes and focuses on effective immigration enforcement, preventing terrorism and combating the illegal movement of people and goods.

First, ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) upholds America's immigration laws at, within and beyond our borders through efficient enforcement and removal operations. ERO enforces the nation's immigration laws in a fair and effective manner. It identifies and apprehends removable aliens, detains these individuals when necessary and removes aliens from the United States in accordance with law.

- Since ICE the establishment of ICE in March 2003, the agency has removed hundreds of thousands of criminal aliens, some of whom fall under the category of high-profile removals. High-profile removals are not only a danger to communities, but they also pose a threat to ERO officers who are responsible for escorting them back to their home countries.
- During fiscal year FY 2017, ERO administratively arrested more than 127,000 aliens with criminal convictions or pending criminal charges.
- Aliens administratively arrested by ICE ERO in FY 2017 were responsible for the following criminal convictions or pending criminal charges:
 - More than 48,000 assault offenses
 - More than 11,000 weapon offenses
 - More than 5,000 sexual assault offenses
 - More than 2,000 kidnapping offenses
 - More than 1,800 homicide offenses.

- Despite numerous stories and allegations in the media falsely accusing ICE of conducting indiscriminate raids and sweeps, the fact is that all ERO operations are targeted against specific offenders of which 92% of the total aliens administratively arrested in FY 2017 had either criminal convictions, pending criminal charges, were an immigration fugitive, or illegally re-entered the United States after being previously removed.

Second, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security and is a vital U.S. asset in combating criminal organizations illegally exploiting America's travel, trade, financial and immigration systems within and beyond our borders.

- HSI special agents are criminal investigators who enforce provisions of over 400 federal statutes. HSI's workforce includes special agents, analysts, auditors and support staff. Its men and women are assigned to cities throughout the United States and to offices around the world.
- HSI's International Operations is the department's largest investigative presence abroad and gives HSI one of the largest international footprints in U.S. law enforcement. This includes a network of approximately 400 personnel, including over 180 special agents deployed to 67 attache offices in 50 countries, who conduct investigations against transnational criminal organizations, terrorist, and other criminal organizations that threaten our national security.
- HSI operations in FY2017 demonstrate its vital public safety mission.
 - In 2017, HSI continued its fight to combat transnational gangs, making 4,818 criminal arrests in the fiscal year. Of that number, there were 809 MS-13 arrests, 567 of which were criminal and 242 administrative.
 - ICE identified and assisted 518 human trafficking victims and more than 904 child exploitation victims.
 - ICE is also on the front lines of the fight against illegal narcotics trafficking that is contributing to the country's deadly opioid epidemic. Special agents seized almost a million pounds of narcotics, including almost 7,000 pounds of heroin and more than 2,300 pounds of fentanyl, a drug so deadly, just a few grams can be lethal.

Third, ICE's legal office, the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor (OPLA), protects the homeland by diligently litigating cases while adhering to the highest standards of professional conduct, providing timely and accurate legal advice, and optimizing resources to advance the Department of Homeland Security mission.

- OPLA serves as the Department’s exclusive representative in administrative immigration proceedings before the nation’s immigration courts, handling a docket of well over 700,000 cases while they fight to keep terrorists, human rights violators, and other dangerous aliens in custody and get them ordered removed from the United States.
 - OPLA’s active national security caseload totals over 2,800.
 - OPLA’s active human rights violator caseload totals over 1,700.
 - OPLA has secured over 100,000 removal orders so far this fiscal year, including over 33,000 in cases involving criminal aliens.

- OPLA provides daily advice and counsel to ICE’s law enforcement officers and mission support professionals on issues ranging from administrative and fiscal law to customs and criminal law, helping to ensure that the agency acts within the bounds of the law.

- OPLA also acts as an indispensable partner to the Department of Justice (DOJ) attorneys who prosecute trans-border crime and who defend ICE’s authorities in federal court from a constant onslaught of complex class action litigation designed to undermine our nation’s safety and sovereignty.
 - This OPLA-DOJ coordination was recently exemplified in the successful prosecution of Jucontee Woewiyu, a Liberian war criminal responsible for mass murder, rape, and child soldier recruitment during that country’s civil war, who was convicted last month in federal district court for immigration fraud based on evidence and witnesses that OPLA was instrumental in developing.
 - OPLA also partners with DOJ through a robust Special Assistant U.S. Attorney (SAUSA) program, with OPLA’s SAUSAs prosecuting over 2,300 federal criminal cases so far this fiscal year and securing over 1,700 convictions for a wide-range of border-related crime.

Fourth, ICE plays a central role in preventing terrorism.

- ICE is involved in almost every foreign terrorism investigation related to cross-border crime. Foreign terrorists need to move money, weapons and people across international borders to conduct their operations, and ICE holds a unique set of law enforcement tools for disrupting these illicit activities.

- ICE is the largest federal contributor to the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). The agency also plays a critical leadership role through active participation in each of the JTTFs nationwide.

- ICE is also leading the way with a successful joint task force model is the Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST) initiative. BEST teams are ICE-led, multi-agency task forces that target illicit movement of people and contraband through border areas.
 - There are 62 BEST teams on the U.S.-Canada border and U.S.-Mexico border. Canadian and Mexican (multiagency) law enforcement partners work directly with DHS and other U.S. counterparts on investigative and interdiction missions.

Finally, ICE promotes homeland security and public safety.

- ICE enforces over 400 federal laws governing border control, customs, trade and immigration to promote homeland security and public safety. With more than 20,000 employees and more than 400 offices across the United States and in 50 foreign countries, the men and women of ICE execute our mission humanely, professionally, and in accordance with the law.

Topics: [Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(/topics/immigration-enforcement\)](/topics/immigration-enforcement).

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