

## **More Illegal Immigrants Turned In; U.S.-Trained Unit In Sheriff's Office**

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### **Body**

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The number of **illegal immigrants turned** over to federal authorities by the Loudoun County **Sheriff's Office** went up sharply last year with the addition of a small team of federally trained **sheriff s** deputies, according to figures released this week.

The **sheriff's office** transferred 135 such cases to Immigration and Customs Enforcement last year, compared with 83 cases in 2007, an increase of 63 percent, **sheriff s** spokesman Kraig Troxell said.

In the summer, three **sheriff s** investigators in the gang intelligence **unit** completed training under the federal 287(g) program, which gives local law enforcement officers access to a federal database to check the residency status of criminal suspects they arrest. Other Loudoun **sheriff s** deputies, as in the past, have called ICE when they think a suspect might be in the country illegally so that ICE can run the status check, Troxell said.

Of the 135 people **turned** over to ICE last year, about 30 were the result of investigations by the three trained deputies, he said.

"With the 287(g) program, it enables us to skip a step and get the ball rolling ourselves," Troxell said.

Loudoun is one of several localities in the region that participates in the program. Others include Prince William County and Manassas. But unlike Prince William authorities, who check the residency status of every person arrested, the Loudoun **Sheriff's Office** runs checks that are **more** selective.

Of the people they come in contact with during criminal investigations, Loudoun **sheriff s** deputies will check the residency status of those who provide "reason to believe" they are in the country illegally, **Sheriff** Stephen O. Simpson said. Such indications could include providing false identification, giving a false name or not having a driver's **s** license when pulled over for a traffic infraction, Troxell said, adding that a person does not have to be arrested for a check to be performed.

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In a recent incident, a man was identified as an **illegal** resident after being pulled over for speeding in Sterling on Feb. 11, Troxell said. He could not produce a driver's **s** license, instead handing over a passport that said he was from El Salvador. Further investigation showed that he was wanted by ICE on an unrelated matter, and he is being held locally on an ICE detainer, Troxell said.

Kent Willis, executive director of ACLU of Virginia, which has raised concerns over Loudoun's **s** program in the past, said policies that call for selective checks of suspects' residency status are "recipes for profiling."

"It's **s** that very process of selectivity that creates all kinds of problems," Willis said.

He said that local authorities using that approach might be **more** inclined to check the residency status of a person of color, or of someone who doesn't speak English. Willis said he opposes local enforcement of immigration policy, viewing it as a federal responsibility, but prefers Prince William's **s** universal checks to Loudoun's **s** system.

Simpson said he would like to be able to check the residency status of everyone who passes through the Adult Detention Center. But that is not feasible right now because the jail staff in Loudoun is not certified under the 287(g) program, he said.

He defended his agency's **s** approach, saying the **sheriff's office** hasn't received any complaints of racial profiling, and added that everyone in the department undergoes "cultural diversity training."

Simpson said the federal training of the three **sheriff's** investigators has paid dividends.

"I do think it has been a useful tool," Simpson said.

When **illegal** residents are identified by the Loudoun **sheriff's office**, they first serve out time on whatever local charge they were arrested for. They are then transferred to federal authorities, who ultimately determine whether to deport them.

Before agreeing to participate in the federal program, Simpson had raised concerns that the county's **s** jail would become overcrowded as inmates awaited transfer to federal facilities. But Simpson said that crowding has not been an issue, and that inmates with ICE detainees have been picked up by federal authorities within days of serving their local time.

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