

ICE gang crackdown nets 17 arrests of foreign nationals in Santa Clara County

San Jose Mercury News (California)

June 5, 2009 Friday

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Section: BREAKING; Communities; San Jose - Valley; Crime; News; Local

Length: 421 words

Byline: Bay City News Service

Body

An operation by federal and local law enforcement agents in **Santa Clara County** Thursday has resulted in the **arrest** of **17 foreign nationals** with alleged ties to violent street **gangs** who now face criminal charges or deportation, a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement special agent said today.

The **arrests**, made Thursday evening, are part of an ongoing initiative called "Operation Community Shield" by the **national gang** unit of **ICE**, which works with other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies throughout the country.

Arrests were made beginning at 5 p.m. Thursday at homes in Morgan Hill, San Jose, San Martin and Gilroy, said Joseph Vincent, assistant special agent in charge of the operation.

The majority of the people **arrested** were members of the Varrio Sur Rifa clique of the Sureno street **gang**, while one man **arrested** was part of the Abstract Minds clique of the Norteno **gang**, Vincent said today.

A female associate of a local street **gang** who had previously been convicted of carrying a loaded gun in a public place was also one of the people taken into custody. A .38-caliber snub-nose revolver was also recovered during the operation.

All **17 arrests** happened to be of **foreign nationals**, and at least five will face prosecution on state or federal criminal charges, such as re-entry after deportation and various drug violations, according to Vincent.

The other suspects were **arrested** on administrative immigration violations and placed in removal proceedings. They will be held in **ICE** custody and scheduled for a deportation hearing before an immigration judge.

Vincent said the **arrests** made Thursday will likely lead to more **arrests** in the future of additional **gang** members in the region.

"I don't think it's any mystery that there's a proliferation of **gangs** in the South Bay," he said.

ICE received substantial assistance from the Gilroy and Morgan Hill police departments during the operation, according to Vincent.

Gilroy police Sgt. Jim Gillio said eight people were **arrested** in that city.

Since the start of Operation Community Shield in February 2005, **ICE** agents nationwide have **arrested** more than 13,000 **gang** members and associates linked to more than 900 different **gangs**. More than 150 of those **arrests** involved **gang** leaders, according to **ICE**.

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

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Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: **ARRESTS** (93%); **GANGS** (91%); IMMIGRATION (90%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (90%); CRIMINAL OFFENSES (90%); CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS (78%); POLICE FORCES (76%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (73%); CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES CRIME (73%); JUDGES (72%)

Organization: US IMMIGRATION & CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT (58%)

Geographic: SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, CA, USA (93%); SAN JOSE, CA, USA (79%)

Load-Date: June 7, 2009

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