

HOMELAND AGENTS NET 900 FUGITIVES

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Body

FEDERAL immigration **agents** have arrested more than **900 fugitives** in New York over the past seven months - more busts than in all of the previous year and a half, authorities said yesterday.

The **fugitives** tracked down by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers include a Brazilian man arrested Monday, who was convicted of sexually abusing his stepdaughter, and a Pakistani man nabbed last Friday for conspiring to sell military hardware to China.

All the **fugitives** will be deported, said Assistant **Homeland** Security Secretary Michael Garcia, who stopped by the city's **fugitive** operations unit yesterday to applaud its success.

"Dollar for dollar, you are the best investment in public safety," Garcia told the officers.

Some 26,000 **fugitives** - men and women who already have been ordered to leave the country - are hiding out in the New York area, **homeland** security officials said.

About 3,500 of the **fugitives** are convicted criminals and are being sought by federal officials.

The Immigration and Customs office in the city has captured 1,700 **fugitives** since March 2003, **900** of them since August. New York officials boosted the average number of arrests from 44 a month to more than 100 a month by putting more investigators on the street.

Immigration and Customs also is using new tactics, including cracking down on violent street gangs whose members violate immigration laws.

Thirty members of the Salvadoran gang Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13, were arrested on Long Island this month. The feds plan to do the same thing to crack down on the deadly Mexican gang M18.

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Graphic

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RON ANTONELLI DAILY NEWS Assistant Homeland Security Secretary Michael Garcia visits city offices to laud feds' efforts in netting fugitive immigrants.

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