

Big rise in arrests of immigrants

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Body

In recent months, newly created teams of federal agents have **arrested** thousands of illegal **immigrants** who have lived and worked in the United States for years without interference. Most have been deported immediately.

Since October, 13,089 **immigrants** have been detained, a more than 60 percent increase from the same period in 2004.

Immigrant advocates called the sweeps excessive and heavy-handed, while supporters of tougher enforcement said that even more must be done.

"Whenever we do any sort of enforcement action, we get praise and criticism," said Dean Boyd of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Since October, the number of fugitive-search teams assigned to finding **immigrants** where they live has increased from 18 to 38. The agency plans 14 more teams by the end of September.

"It's a higher priority," said John Torres, the director of ICE's detention and removal operations.

Between October and mid-February, ICE agents **arrested** 620 people in Northern California and Bakersfield. Of them, 400 had criminal records, according to Virginia Kice, an ICE official in Laguna Niguel.

Torres said officers were not arbitrarily **arresting** people off the streets, but were targeting **immigrants** who had been ordered deported after exhausting all appeals.

Mercury News Staff Writer Jesse Mangaliman contributed to this report.

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