

Immigration Program Stirs Clash Of Views; Frederick, Montgomery Chiefs Testify to Congress

The Washington Post

March 5, 2009 Thursday, Suburban Edition

Copyright 2009 The Washington Post All Rights Reserved



Distribution: Maryland

Section: METRO; Pg. B04

Length: 532 words

Byline: N.C. Aizenman

Washington Post Staff Writer

Body

Two suburban Maryland law enforcement **chiefs testifying** before **Congress** yesterday gave dramatically different assessments of a controversial federal **program** that deputizes local officers to enforce **immigration** law.

Montgomery County Police **Chief** J. Thomas Manger warned members of the House Committee on Homeland Security that the **program** could severely undermine trust between police and immigrant communities.

"Public safety increases when people have trust and confidence in local police forces," Manger said. "The bottom line is local law enforcement needs to work closely with our **immigration** authorities, but we cannot do their job for them."

But Sheriff Chuck Jenkins of **Frederick** County characterized his force's participation in the **program** as "an overwhelming success."

Known as 287(g) for the section of **immigration** law that authorizes it, the **program** has garnered more than \$114 million in funds since its launch four years ago and has trained 951 officers in 67 state and local agencies on how to determine a person's **immigration** status.

Jenkins said the four weeks of training provided to 52 of his county's sheriff employees and corrections officers last year had enabled them to identify 337 illegal immigrants -- 309 of whom were put into removal proceedings by **immigration** authorities.

Jenkins told the panel that nine of those arrested were members of the "notoriously violent gangs MS-13 and 18th Street" and that others were picked up for such crimes as attempted second-degree murder, second-degree rape, armed robbery, first-degree assault, child abuse and burglary.

Immigration Program Stirs Clash Of Views; Frederick, Montgomery Chiefs Testify to Congress

"I would urge every law enforcement executive . . . to request participation" in the program, Jenkins said. He added that doing so was essential to combating "the enormous increase in crime throughout the United States . . . which can be tied directly to the unchecked flow of illegal immigrants through our southern border with Mexico." Later, he added, "We are dying on American soil, and there is a role for enforcement of immigration laws by local law enforcement."

Although some lawmakers on the panel praised Jenkins, others noted that a Government Accountability Office report released yesterday found that the government had failed to provide sufficient oversight to ensure its state and local partners were focusing on the dangerous criminals the program was intended to target rather than those guilty of minor violations.

Advocates for CASA of Maryland, an immigrant rights group that recently obtained information on 85 percent of the illegal immigrants identified by Frederick officials, contend that more than half were stopped for driving without a license and that only 20 were charged with felonies.

Lawmakers did not ask Jenkins for a breakdown of the severity of offenses in his most recent arrest figures. However, they did press him about the profit the county makes on room and board fees while holding illegal immigrants awaiting pickup by immigration authorities. Jenkins answered that though the actual cost to the county is only \$7 per day, the county charges the federal government \$83 per day to house illegal immigrants arrested for offenses that would otherwise warrant their release.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: IMMIGRATION (93%); IMMIGRATION LAW (91%); POLICE FORCES (90%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (90%); SHERIFFS (90%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (89%); CRIME RATES (89%); ARRESTS (89%); CRIMINAL OFFENSES (87%); SEX OFFENSES (77%); CHILD ABUSE (76%); ROBBERY (74%); CORRECTIONS WORKERS (73%); GOVERNMENT CONTROLLERS & AUDITORS (73%); NATIONAL SECURITY (72%); RESEARCH REPORTS (72%); CORRECTIONS (71%); BURGLARY (71%); VEHICULAR OFFENSES (71%); CRIMINAL ASSAULT & BATTERY (70%); FELONIES (70%); MURDER (65%); SEXUAL ASSAULT (65%)

Organization: US DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (58%); MARA SALVATRUCHA (MS-13) (54%)

Industry: GOVERNMENT CONTROLLERS & AUDITORS (73%)

Geographic: FREDERICK, MD, USA (73%); MARYLAND, USA (92%); UNITED STATES (92%)

Load-Date: March 5, 2009