



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

March 26 , 2004

Contact: Sue Brown
404-331-0253 ext 5617

News Release

ICE EXPANDS PILOT PROJECT TO DETAIN DEPORTABLE ALIENS

Atlanta, GA- A new Department of Homeland Security (DHS) pilot program aimed at reducing the number of illegal aliens on American streets will soon be expanded into Atlanta and Denver, officials with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced today.

Currently, ICE's Office of Detention and Removal Operations (DRO) is conducting the "Hartford Pilot Program" in Hartford, Connecticut, to determine the impact of detaining aliens who have been issued final orders of removal. Typically these aliens are afforded several weeks to reappear for their deportation by the immigration courts. By immediately detaining these aliens, ICE hopes to ensure that those who have been issued removal orders are removed swiftly and efficiently.

Each year, more than 40,000 non-detained aliens fail to leave the United States as ordered after they have been granted voluntary departure or are ordered removed by an immigration judge. These alien "absconders", allowed to remain at liberty during the immigration hearing process, add to a growing backlog of more than 400,000 absconders who must be apprehended by ICE and removed from the United States. Approximately 80,000 of these alien absconders are criminals.

DHS Assistant Secretary for ICE Michael J. Garcia commented on the pilots: "The failure of these individuals to report for their removal dates has caused a critical backlog in the enforcement of our immigration laws. This pilot, as well as several others being explored by ICE, will help us to ensure the integrity of U.S. immigration laws."

A General Accounting Office review concluded in late 2001 revealed that only 15 percent of all aliens not detained immediately after an immigration judge orders their removal actually depart the country as ordered or are eventually located and removed by immigration authorities.

Conversely, the Hartford Pilot Project results so far have shown that 94 percent of aliens detained by ICE at the time of the immigration judge's order are removed from the United States. The remaining 6 percent generally cannot be removed due to diplomacy/foreign relations issues.

This undertaking by ICE's DRO is part of its strategic plan "Endgame," which targets more than 400,000 alien absconders currently in the United States for removal. Other projects under "Endgame" include ICE's Electronic Monitoring Pilot, currently underway in five U.S. cities, as well as the soon to be implemented Intensive Supervision Appearance Program, which employ a number of tools and programs to improve monitoring and supervision of aliens who are released

from detention while their immigration cases are pending. Through these initiatives, ICE's DRO is seeking to prevent further growth in the number of alien absconders and, in conjunction with increased fugitive operations, to eliminate the existing backlog of alien absconders.