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Transnational Gangs

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Joint Operation nets 24 transnational gang members, 475 total arrests under Operation Matador





For still photos and B-roll for the operation, visit [DVIDS](#).

NEW YORK — Twenty-four were arrested Thursday under Operation Matador, the intelligence driven, unified effort to combat the proliferation of MS-13 and other transnational criminal gang activity in Long Island, the New York City metropolitan area and Hudson Valley. This brings the total arrested under this initiative to 475.

Operation Matador, operating under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Transnational Organized Crime Initiative (DHS TOCI), was launched by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) New York along with ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO). This joint initiative is comprised of HSI special agents, ERO deportation officers and the ICE Office of Principal Legal Advisor (OPLA); U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP); U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and state and local law enforcement partners to include Suffolk County Police Department (SCPD), Nassau County Police Department (NCPD) and the Hempstead Police Department. The DHS TOCI is responsible for identifying, interdicting and investigating a wide variety of transnational border crime with a concentration on MS-13 gang activity.

“Operation Matador sends a clear message to violent street gangs that there are consequences for their actions. Since this operation began last year, we have seen a decrease in the amount of violent crime directly related to MS-13 and other transnational gangs,” said ICE Deputy Director Thomas D. Homan. “That is a direct result of the strong partnerships between ICE Homeland Security Investigations, local law enforcement, and our community partners in support of a common goal: targeting and dismantling transnational criminal organizations. We will not rest until our communities are safe and these dangerous individuals are brought to justice.”

“U.S. Customs and Border Protection is extremely proud to have assisted in this operation,” said Leon Hayward, Acting Director New York Field Office. “It is through our interagency partnerships and collaborative approaches like the one leading to today’s arrests, that law enforcement successfully combats modern criminal organizations.”

“U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services’ New York District and New York Asylum Offices are proud of the role we played in investigations leading to the arrests of violent gang members who have plagued Nassau and Suffolk Counties,” said Thomas M. Cioppa, USCIS New York District Director. “We will continue to support Immigration and Customs Enforcement and our other state and local partners in any issues concerning public safety or national security.”

“I would like to congratulate all of the associated agencies and their investigators on their dedication and relentless pursuit to ensure that all of our residents and communities are safe from the violence that these gangs promote,” said Patrick Ryder, Commissioner of Police for NCPD. “The arrests should send a strong message to all gangs that we will not tolerate their unlawfulness and intimidation. Our agencies will continue to collaborate to decrease the violence that is associated with these gangs”.

Operation Matador results since May 2017

A total of 475 individuals were arrested during this ongoing enforcement effort, most of which were confirmed as gang members and affiliates. The most prominent gangs with arrests during this operation were MS-13 with 274 arrests and the 18th street gang with 15 arrests. This operation yielded 227 total criminal arrests and 248 administrative arrests.

Of the gang members arrested during this ongoing enforcement action, 80 had additional criminal histories, including prior convictions for assault and weapons charges. 5 are facing serious criminal charges. Others taken into custody during the operation included:

- An MS-13 member from El Salvador who admitted to killing rival gang members at the age of 12 in his home country and assimilated to the gang on Long Island, involved in criminal activity was arrested and deported.
- An El Salvador national wanted, pursuant to an Interpol Red Notice for killing law enforcement in El Salvador.
- An MS-13 member arrested in Brentwood admitted to killing three gang members in El Salvador at the age of 13.
- An 18th Street Gang Member as part of this enforcement operation yielded a handgun that was likely going to be used against a rival gang.

The arrestees, 462 male and 13 female, included nationals from 10 countries – El Salvador (199); Honduras (56); Mexico (31); Guatemala (27); Ecuador (05), Dominican Republic (21) and St. Lucia (1).

Nassau County accounted for 210 arrests, the largest number of arrests during this operation to date, but DHS TOCI personnel conducted enforcement actions in multiple communities throughout Long Island, New York City and the Hudson Valley area.

Area Arrest Totals

Nassau County	210
Suffolk County	177
Queens	36
Brooklyn	12
Bronx	18
Spring Valley	19
Other States	3

Ninety-nine individuals arrested during this operation crossed the border as unaccompanied minors, all of which were confirmed as MS-13 gang members. 64 individuals arrested during this operation obtained Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJ) after entering the country, all of which were confirmed as MS-13 gang members. Of the 99 UACs, 64 had SIJ status.

Of those arrested during this ongoing operation, 65 have been ordered released from ICE detention by an immigration judge. 4 have been re-arrested for local criminal charges.

It is important to note that not all evidence is presented before an immigration judge for a detention hearing. Some evidence is withheld in order to safeguard the integrity of law enforcement’s investigative techniques and protect concurrent or future investigations.

Some of the individuals arrested during the enforcement action will be presented for federal prosecution for re-entry after deportation, a federal felony. Those not being criminally prosecuted will be processed for removal from the country. Individuals who have outstanding orders of deportation, or who returned to the United States illegally after being deported, are subject to immediate removal from the country on federal charges. The remaining arrestees are entered into immigration proceedings and will go before an immigration judge. To date, a total of 70 have received a final order of removal issued by an immigration judge and have been removed from the United States to their home countries.

Partnerships are key to this ongoing effort in combating transnational gangs. Special thanks to the Hempstead Police Department, New York National Guard (NYNG) Counter Drug Taskforce, Drug Enforcement Administration’s (DEA) Long Island District Office, U.S. Border Patrol Westchester County District Attorney’s Office, Rockland County Sheriff, Rockland County Intelligence Center, Piermont Police Department, Ulster County Sheriff, and Sullivan County Sheriff.

Operation Matador in New York is conducted under the auspices of the national gang enforcement effort, Operation Community Shield.

About Operation Community Shield and MS-13

As part of [Operation Community Shield](#), HSI has effected nearly 5,000 criminal arrests and more than 3,200 civil immigration arrests of MS-13 leaders, members and associates, including criminal arrests for Racketeering Influence Corrupt Organizations (RICO), Violent Crime in Aid of Racketeering (VICAR) and gang conspiracy violations investigated by HSI New York, HSI Long Island, HSI Baltimore, HSI DC, HSI Charlotte, HSI Newark, HSI Boston, HSI San Francisco, HSI San Jose, HSI Los Angeles, HSI Detroit, HSI Nashville, HSI Houston, and our state and local law enforcement partners.

In October 2012, HSI worked with the U.S. Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control to designate MS-13 as the first transnational criminal street gang as a TCO. As a result of the designation, any property or property interests in the United States, or in the possession or control of U.S. persons in which MS-13 has an interest, are blocked.

HSI's National Gang Unit

HSI's [National Gang Unit](#) oversees HSI's expansive transnational gang portfolio and enables special agents to bring the fight to these criminal enterprises through the development of uniform enforcement and intelligence-sharing strategies.

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