

## News Release

November 4, 2004

### **ICE THREAT DISRUPTION EFFORT RESULTS IN MORE THAN 230 ARRESTS -- More than 900 Investigations Completed --**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Michael J. Garcia, the Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), today announced that, in a one-month period beginning October 1, 2004, ICE has arrested 237 immigration status violators nationwide as part of the government-wide Interagency Security Plan that will remain in effect through the 2005 Presidential Inauguration.

The ongoing initiative is designed to locate immigration status violators who may pose an elevated criminal or national security threat. The initiative combines the resources of ICE's Office of Investigations, Office of Detention and Removal, and the Office of Intelligence to apply real-time threat information to detect, prevent, and disrupt potential terrorist activities. Since October 1, ICE has completed more than 900 investigations as part of the stepped-up enforcement effort.

"Prior to 9/11, there was not an effective system in place to accurately monitor the status of foreign students and other visitors in the United States -- with disastrous consequences. Hani Hanjour, one of the 9/11 hijackers, as well as Eyad Ismoil, one of those who bombed the World Trade Center in 1993, both exploited their student visa status to remain in the United States. We now have systems in place to address this vulnerability and we are doing so aggressively. This initiative demonstrates how we effectively enforce immigration laws in the national security context, bringing legitimate charges against immigration status violators who may also pose an elevated threat," said Assistant Secretary Garcia.

The recent 9/11 Commission Staff monograph on terrorist travel noted that at least three of the 9/11 hijackers violated the terms of their visas before carrying out their attacks. The 9/11 Commission report further added that: "Had the immigration system set a higher bar for determining whether individuals are who or what they claim to be -- and ensuring routine consequences for violations -- it could have potentially excluded, removed, or come into further contact with several hijackers."

In conducting this initiative, ICE is relying primarily upon its Compliance Enforcement Unit, which was created in June 2003. This unit researches and assigns immigration status violator leads based on information from a variety of sources, including the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and the United States Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology program (US-VISIT). Neither of these databases was in existence before the terror attacks of 9/11.

In recent weeks, the Compliance Enforcement Unit has taken violator leads developed from these databases and reprioritized them according to national security criteria. The reprioritized leads have been sent to ICE field offices for immediate investigation and potential arrests -- without regard to race, ethnicity, or religion. Some of those arrested thus far under the initiative include:

- A 28-year-old Saudi national who violated the terms of his student visa (SEVIS violator) and is the subject of a national security lookout. Last year, the individual was prevented from carrying a high-voltage stun gun aboard a U.S. commercial aircraft. The individual was admitted to the United States in 2003 on a student visa and later terminated by a U.S. university for failing to maintain status as a

student. The individual remains in ICE custody as the investigation continues.

- A 34-year-old Jordanian national who violated the terms of his student visa (SEVIS violator) and is the subject of a national security lookout. The individual had entered the United States in 2000 on an F-1 student visa and was later terminated by a U.S. university for failure to maintain student status. The individual remains in ICE custody as the investigation continues.
- A 24-year-old Lebanese national who had violated the terms of his student visa (SEVIS violator). The State Department had revoked the individual's non-immigrant visa for national security reasons. The ICE investigation revealed that the individual was no longer a student, but was employed at a convenience store. The individual remains in ICE custody as the investigation continues.
- A 25-year-old Pakistani national who had violated the terms of his student visa (SEVIS violator) and is the subject of a national security lookout. The individual was admitted to the United States in 1998 and later terminated from SEVIS for failing to enroll in his master's degree program. The individual remains in ICE custody as the investigation continues.
- A 44-year-old Jamaican national who was identified through U.S.-VISIT as having been previously convicted of a controlled substance charge and having fraudulently entered the United States in 2004 under an alias. The individual was arrested for fraudulently obtaining admission to the United States after previously being deported. The individual remains in ICE custody.
- A 25-year-old South African national who had violated the terms of her J-1 student visa (SEVIS violator). The individual was admitted into the United States in 2004 for the duration of her student program, but was terminated from SEVIS for failing to enroll. The individual was arrested, processed for removal, and released with an electronic monitoring bracelet.
- A 30-year-old Thailand national who had violated the terms of her student visa (SEVIS violator). The individual was admitted into the United States in 2001 but was later terminated from SEVIS for failing to maintain student status. The individual remains in ICE custody.
- A 26-year-old Philippines national who had violated the terms of her student visa (SEVIS violator). The individual was admitted into the United States in 2002 as a student, but was later terminated from SEVIS for failing to comply with the terms of her student program.

The individual was arrested and processed for removal.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).*

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