

**Collier County Sheriff’s Office Criminal Alien Task Force  
An Overview of the 287(g) Program:  
Strategy, Outcomes and Benefits of the Partnership**

**BY DON HUNTER**

**Introduction and Background**

There are an estimated 11.5-12 million illegal immigrants living in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> In January 2007, the Collier County Sheriff’s Office determined approximately one-quarter of the jail population was comprised of illegally-present foreign nationals. At this time, the cost to house illegal immigrants committing crimes in Collier County totaled more than \$9 million per year.<sup>2</sup> In addition, it was determined that approximately 40 percent of total felony warrants and 60 percent of murder warrants were for illegally-present foreign nationals.

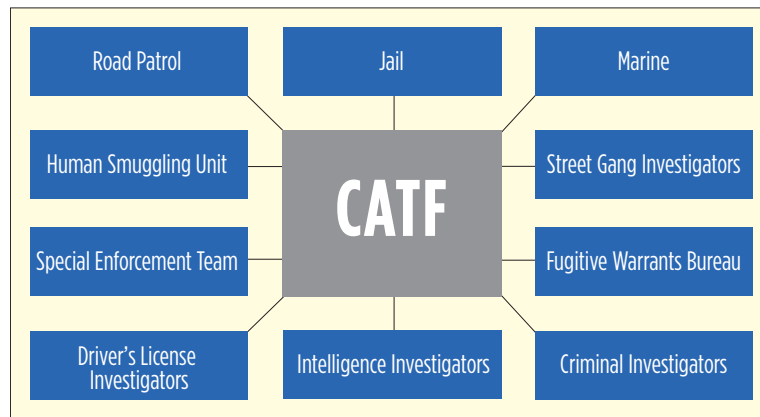
The Sheriff’s Office began formal efforts to address the problem of jail overcrowding and escalating costs associated with detaining criminal aliens. In June 2007, the Collier County Sheriff’s Office entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a component of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Among other things, the MOA outlines the purpose, authority, policy, training, ICE supervision and length of agreement.

Initially, in September 2007, 27 members of the agency graduated from extensive ICE training. In August 2008, another seven members of the agency graduated from ICE training. These members are authorized to perform certain immigration enforcement functions as specified in the MOA and Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. From this authority, the Collier County Sheriff’s Office developed the Criminal Alien Task Force (CATF).

**CATF Strategy**

The agency designated members from various disciplines throughout the agency to receive the ICE training and certification. These members function under the authority and direction provided by the MOA. The various agencywide components are critical to the CATF strategy. In addition, the strategy outlines key concepts such as operational flexibility, and clear understanding and communication agencywide and with ICE.

**CATF Agency Components**



Don Hunter was elected sheriff of Collier County, Florida, in 1988 and served in that office for twenty years.

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**Corrections Component and Process**

- CATF members initiate contact with newly arrested and/or already detained inmates to determine legal status in the U.S.
- Fingerprints and identification documents are used to search several databases, including the ICE Identification System.
- Subjects qualifying for detainers enter the detention and removal process.
- A deportation file (including arrest report, criminal history, detain order, etc.) is sent to ICE.
- Upon final order from a Federal Immigration Judge, deportation orders are processed.
- Subject is removed from the country once all sentences have been served.

**Law Enforcement Component**

**Phase 1:** CATF members identify violent criminal aliens, including gang members, violent felony offenders, career criminals and sexual predators. The primary goal is to apprehend violent criminal aliens representing the greatest threat to residents in Collier County.

**Phase 2:** CATF members identify other felony criminal aliens, including those charged with identify theft, narcotics and fraud.

**Phase 3:** CATF members concentrate on lower level crime, such as DUI and driving without a license. In addition, the CATF educates the community, particularly assisting local employers to assure they are hiring authorized workers.

In all phases, no arrest is made until the subject is approved by ICE. Removing the most serious and violent offenders, as outlined in Phase I, will always remain a priority.

**CATF — Descriptive Statistics and Program Activity**

**Corrections (October 1, 2007 – August 1, 2008)**

*Interviews Conducted* – In the jail, a total of 4,147 inmate interviews have been conducted to determine legal status. Of those, 2,867 inmates (69%) were illegally present in the country and 1,271 (31%) were legally present.

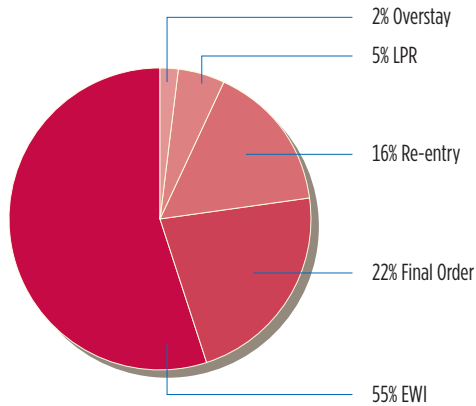
Detainers Placed for Removal	No.	Status of Detained Criminal Aliens	No.
Entry without Inspection (EWI)	340	Removed from the U.S.	344
Final Orders	137	In Collier County Custody	130
Re-Entries	102	In ICE or U.S. Marshal Custody	74
Legal Permanent Resident (LPR)	32	Transferred to Other Facilities	38
Overstays (expired Visas)	11	Case Terminated or Posted Bond	11
<b>Total Detainers Placed</b>	<b>622*</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>597</b>

\*25 lifted for various reasons for a total of 597 cases

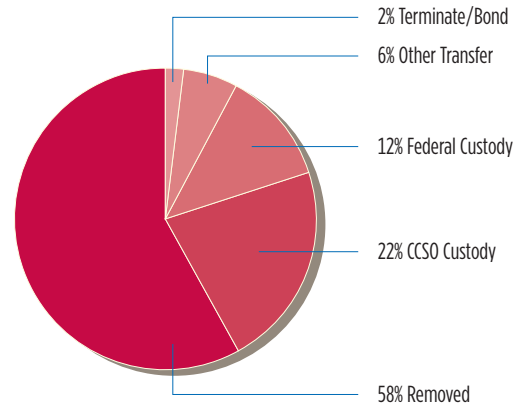
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Detainers Placed for Removal



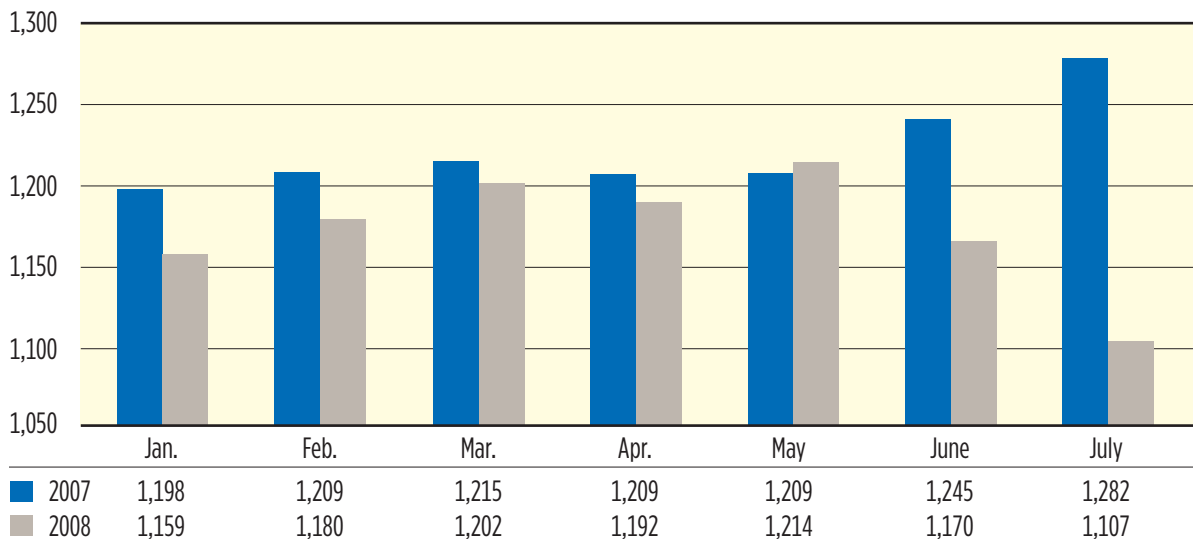
Status of Detained Criminal Aliens



*Prior Arrest History* – The total number of arrest charges for criminal aliens identified in the jail and detained for removal is 3,993 (2,899 misdemeanor and 1,094 felony arrest charges). On average, each criminal alien has 1.8 prior felony and 4.8 prior misdemeanor arrest charges, for a total of nearly seven (7) prior arrest charges each.

*Jail Population* – Overall, in 2008, the jail population has been at lower levels when compared to the same month in 2007. The time period of January through July 2007 was prior to CATF implementation (the CATF was implemented in the jail in October 2007). So far, the largest drop by month has been in July 2008, with a 14 percent decrease in the jail population from the previous year.

Average daily jail population 2007-2008, monthly comparison.



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**Law Enforcement (October 30, 2007 – August 10, 2008)**

Investigations - Status	No.
Approved by ICE - detained by CATF	68
Approved by ICE - not yet located by CATF	35
Current Investigation	32
Pending ICE Approval	15
Detained by Other Agency	10
<b>Total Investigations</b>	<b>160*</b>

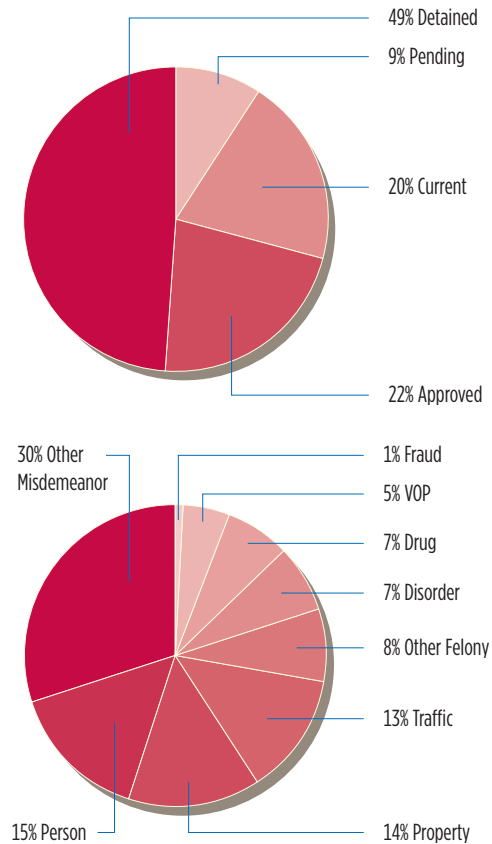
\*CATF conducted 210 preliminary investigations; 50 did not meet standards to continue into formal investigations

*Prior Arrest Charges*—Criminal aliens detained by CATF investigations have extensive prior arrest histories—a combined total of more than 1,300 prior criminal charges. On average, each criminal alien removed by CATF investigations has more than nine (9) previous arrest charges—with an average of 3.7 felony and 5.6 misdemeanor prior arrest charges each.

In this chart, person crimes include robbery, sexual assault, assault and battery, stalking and kidnapping. Property crimes include burglary and theft charges. Disorder crimes include disorderly conduct, disturbing the peace and resisting arrest. Traffic crimes include DUIs and all other traffic-related violations.

*Examples of Phase I Cases*—CATF investigations have apprehended and detained many violent, felony career criminals who otherwise would not have been identified.

- Subject with multiple prior arrests for robbery, burglary, drug/cocaine, and firearm charges was apprehended by CATF and charged federally. He used a false birth certificate to obtain US ID, including a passport and driver’s license.
- Subject was previously arrested on multiple occasions for molesting children. He was apprehended by CATF investigations before he could reoffend.
- Subject had been previously deported and had a warrant in another state for rape of a child with a firearm. He is suspected of murdering his eight-month-old daughter and has been arrested by CATF on immigration charges.
- Subject is a documented MS-13 gang member previously deported from another state after a gang-related shooting. He traveled to Collier County and has been arrested and detained by CATF on immigration charges.



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*Country of Origin* – Due to geographic location, most illegally-present criminal aliens detained and removed by CATF are from Mexico (on average, 60 percent). However, the CATF has identified and interviewed aliens from more than 50 countries. These countries include:

Albania	Costa Rica	Iran	Russia
Argentina	Cuba	Israel	Scotland
Australia	Czech Republic	Jamaica	Slovakia
Bahamas	Dominican Republic	Jordan	South Africa
Bangladesh	Ecuador	Kazakhstan	South Korea
Belize	El Salvador	Mexico	St. Lucia
Bolivia	England	Nicaragua	Thailand
Brazil	Germany	Nigeria	Trinidad & Tobago
Bulgaria	Guatemala	Panama	Turkey
Canada	Haiti	Peru	Turks & Caicos
Chile	Honduras	Philippines	Uruguay
China	Hungary	Poland	Venezuela
Colombia	India	Romania	Vietnam

**CATF Benefits**

This program promotes community safety, reduces jail overcrowding, reduces victimization and provides cost savings for Collier County. Early outcomes and indicators are promising. Our jail population has been reduced and our crime rate continues to decline, a remarkable accomplishment particularly in this difficult economy.

Further, this program has greatly improved intelligence gathering and identification—a critical element in local enforcement in our country’s post-9/11 environment. Through this program, the Collier County Sheriff’s Office has been able to identify very violent criminal predators, including sexual offenders and gang members, using fraudulent identities to further their criminal careers. Without the necessary resources and support to pursue criminal investigations, these offenders would not be identified, arrested and removed from our country.

**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup>Pew Hispanic Center, *Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the U.S.*, March 2006.

<sup>2</sup>Cost was determined based on the number of self-admitting illegal immigrants, calculated at several times throughout the year. This does not include other justice costs such as court costs and victim services.