



Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee

County of Los Angeles



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~ FACT SHEET ~

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The High Intensity Criminal Alien Apprehension and Prosecution (HICAAP) Program

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In November 2001 Los Angeles County announced implementation of a multi-jurisdiction law enforcement initiative targeting criminal aliens who have illegally re-entered the country after deportation. Known as the High Intensity Criminal Alien Apprehension and Prosecution (HICAAP) Program, this effort resulted in an operational model for law enforcement coordination involving local, state and federal agencies and the integration of state-of-the-art data systems and fingerprint technology. In December 2002, this initiative became fully operational. The program will significantly expand the statewide database on deported criminal aliens and enhance INS linkages to existing statewide and federal Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) databases. Most importantly, however, HICAAP will give local law enforcement the means to positively identify criminal aliens at the time of arrest and enable INS to place an immediate hold based on a positive identification of the arrested person.

The HICAAP Project is funded through a \$2.3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Justice. This fiscal assistance was made possible through the support of the County's Congressional delegation who partnered with the County in securing funding in the Federal Fiscal Year 2000 Justice Appropriations Bill. The late Congressman Julian Dixon and Senator Dianne Feinstein, who served on the House and Senate Appropriations Committees respectively, have played key roles in this effort. As a result, the County is able to actively pursue the HICAAP Project which has developed and will now test a working model of interagency coordination and technology integration that will intensify law enforcement efforts to reduce the incidence of crimes committed by criminal aliens who continually re-enter the country following deportation.

Background

Development of the HICAAP Project in Los Angeles County is the product of over ten years of research and interagency collaboration on the problem of deportable aliens who are involved in patterns of habitual criminal activity. The magnitude of this problem and its impact on public safety and local resources was clearly documented in a series of three studies jointly conducted by the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee (CCJCC), the Los Angeles County Sheriff and the Los Angeles District Office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

In the latest study of this series, it was estimated in 1997 that deportable aliens comprised 17% of the County's jail population of 20,000 inmates and that, within a year of their release from custody, 45% would be re-arrested an average of 1.8 times. Of particular note was the fact that, despite formal deportations and voluntary removal orders, most returned to Los Angeles County where 87% of the recorded new arrests would occur. A multi-jurisdiction task force under CCJCC concluded that existing federal strategies had little or no impact on reducing the problem of deportable criminal aliens in Los Angeles County. The task force observed that federal strategies which focused on intensified border interdiction, deportations and felony prosecutions for criminal aliens who illegally re-enter the country following deportation had little or no impact during the years covered by the studies.

The task force also identified a number of other specific factors which it felt undermines enforcement efforts to address this escalating problem, including:

- Inability of local law enforcement to positively and rapidly identify previously deported criminal aliens at the time of arrest;
- Lack of effective operational protocols for coordination between and local law enforcement;
- Inability of INS to rapidly capture and send automated fingerprint records due to inadequate or incompatible systems technology;
- Inability for INS to rapidly and positively acquire critical criminal history information due to lack of access to state-of-the-art criminal history data systems;
- Inability to effectively target habitual criminal alien offenders for federal felony prosecutions for illegal re-entry after deportation; and
- Lack of adequate INS and U.S. Attorney resources to identify and prosecute previously deported criminal aliens.

As part of the grant funding, Los Angeles County will conduct a two-part evaluation of the program which will include: 1) Data Collection and Program Evaluation: This study will examine the effectiveness of HICAAP operations, analyze interagency policies and procedures, evaluate project impacts and outcomes, and develop policy recommendations and a model for expansion of HICAAP operations to other regions of the State of California; and 2) Jail Population Study: This portion of the evaluation will include the County's third population study of deportable aliens in the Los Angeles County jail system. The RAND Corporation has been contracted to perform the HICAAP evaluation.

Program Objectives

The overall purpose of the HICAAP Project is to improve public safety in local communities by intensifying law enforcement and prosecution efforts that target habitual criminal aliens who illegally re-enter the country following deportation. The program will improve interagency coordination and promote greater integration and standardization of key systems and automated fingerprint technologies.

Specific HICAAP Project objectives include:

- Develop operational linkages of fingerprint and data system technology among local, state and federal agencies to ensure positive identification and tracking of all repeat criminal aliens who illegally re-enter the United States after deportation;
- Establish interagency procedures to coordinate local, state and federal identification, prosecution, and sentencing of all repeat criminal aliens who illegally re-enter the United States after deportation;
- Increase federal prosecution and incarceration of criminal aliens who illegally re-enter the country after deportation;
- Reduce the number of deportable aliens who fail to make court appearances at proceedings involving state criminal charges;
- Identify unmet local, state and federal resource needs required to ensure the positive identification, prosecution, and sentencing of all repeat criminal aliens who illegally re-enter the United States after deportation; and
- Develop a regional model for interagency law enforcement coordination that could be replicated in other regions of the State and nation.