2013 FEDERAL EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER

Category 11 - Outstanding Law Enforcement Team

Secure Communities Second Shift

Department of Homeland Security, Immigration & Customs Enforcement

FACTOR I - Description:

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the principal investigative arm of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the second largest investigative agency in the federal government. The highest priority of any law enforcement agency (LEA) is to protect the communities it serves. ICE prioritizes the removal of criminal aliens, individuals who pose a threat to public safety and repeat Immigration violators. Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) is one of the two DHS primary operating components who focuses its attention and limited resources on those who have been arrested for breaking criminal laws.

Secure Communities (SC) carry out ICE's and ERO's priorities as it uses an already-existing federal information-sharing partnership between ICE and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that identifies criminal aliens without imposing new or additional requirements on state and local LEAs. Under SC, the FBI automatically sends fingerprints (biometric data) to DHS to check against its Immigration databases and if these checks reveal that an individual is unlawfully present in the U.S. or otherwise removable due to a criminal conviction, SC takes enforcement action by issuing a detainer.

Officers and Agents assigned to SC's second shift routinely responds to Immigration queries from local, county and state LEAs regarding the Immigration status of offenders facing criminal charges and convictions. While performing their regularly assigned duties, the second shift Agents and Officers discovered a breach in the SC process. Biometrically identified illegal and criminal aliens were being released by LEAs prior to an Immigration hold being issued. To mend the breach in SC's processes and procedures, the SC Officers and Agents went above and beyond their scope of duty and translated the problem into a practical solution. They formed a task team comprised of second shift SC Agents and Officers as well as other ERO law enforcement officers assigned to other Units. The key purpose of the task team is to locate and arrest criminal aliens who were released from local LEA's custody prior to SC issuing a detainer.

FACTOR II – IMPACT

As many criminal aliens are a threat to the general public and this nation's security, the removal of criminal aliens is a national priority for ICE and the SC's task team has proven they are dedicated to enforcing Immigration laws and upholding ICE's mission. To ensure ICE's goals were accomplished while also being fiscally responsible, the Officers/Agents developed effective methods to ensure the arrest of criminal aliens released by local LEAs by determining their scheduled court dates and collaborating with local LEAs to arrest the criminal aliens at their residences, places of employment, probation offices and during their local court appearances.

Since March 2012, the small team of seven (7) Agents and Officers has resulted in eighty (80) arrests. Of the 80 arrests, forty-four (44) have confirmed removals from the United States with five (5) cases pending federal sentencing for Re-Entry after Removal 8 USC 1326. One (1) subject is currently serving a thirty-six (36) month sentence in the U.S. Bureau of Prisons.

FACTOR III – Teamwork

SC's second shift Officers and Agents work as a group to solve problems in the most effective manner. They exert a strong effort in being part of the solution. They consulted with management for guidance and feedback and developed a creative and cost effective solution to ensure local communities and neighborhoods were safe. SC Agents and Officers sought a group of volunteers that were willing to work either prior to or after their assigned shifts to conduct fieldwork. Their efforts were well received by Agents and Officers who were previously not allowed to hone in on their fieldwork skills and applauded by management because their plans never incurred additional cost. In addition, their efforts have led to an increase in cross training opportunities which boosted morale and developed well rounded employees.

Each team member utilizes each other's experience and knowledge base and build upon everyone's strengths to form a solid and effective Law Enforcement Team. Their teamwork and perseverance have resulted in a significant number of illegal re-entry prosecutions, aggravated felon arrests and fugitive arrests. The criminal aliens arrested by this team had convictions for Murder, Sexual Assault, Child Molestation, Armed Robbery, Criminal Gang Activity, Manufacture/Deliver of a Controlled Substance, Unlawful Use of a Weapon and Domestic Assault.

FACTOR IV – SPECIAL EFFORTS for Category X, Outstanding Team only.

Members of this team have gone above and beyond the call of duty by identifying problems before becoming critical, taking initiative and implementing effective methods used to locate and remove criminal aliens from the United States in accordance to ICE's mission of protecting America and preserving public safety.