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Just a Minute on 287(g) Task Force Model Agreements

Bad premises beget worse policies. Spend just a minute with us so that we can do better.

Sipa USA via AP/Jen Golbeck

Last week, regular funding for the Department of Homeland Security ran out, but DHS is not short on cash. It already sits on at least $150 billion left from last summer's reconciliation bill. Though there has been plenty of coverage about this unprecedented infusion, there has been less attention paid to the fact that spending it, alongside the Administration's goal of deporting one million immigrants each year, requires infrastructure — much of which is being built through collaborations with state and local law enforcement via a revamped 287(g) Task Force Model.

Let's Back Up

You've probably heard of 287(g) agreements as deals between sheriff's offices and ICE to identify immigrants in jails and transfer them into federal custody — this was by far the most common type of 287(g) agreement in the past, and its many problems have been covered extensively.

Many people are less familiar with a newly revived version of 287(g) that goes even further — deputizing state and local officers to stop and arrest people in the community they suspect are undocumented. This "Task Force Model" version was discontinued in 2012 after public backlash to the racial profiling and abuses it produced.

As part of his anti-immigrant campaign, President Trump reinstated the Task Force Model on his first day back in office, and dramatically shifted its funding structure after passing the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act." In the past, ICE paid for training and IT infrastructure for participating departments. Now, if agencies sign up for the Task Force Model, ICE is promising to also pay startup costs for new vehicles and equipment as well as the full salaries, benefits, overtime, and even "performance" bonuses tied to immigration arrests for local and state officers trained to do immigration enforcement.

From nothing, enrollment in the program has already ballooned to 764 agencies nationwide — dramatically widening immigration enforcement across the country and massively expanding law enforcement budgets nationwide. Our newest research brief dives deeply into the dangerous consequences of this expansion. But if you've only got a minute, spend it here on three things to know about 287(g) Task Force Model agreements.

1 Local and state law enforcement officers are being deputized for immigration enforcement faster than ICE is expanding

Advertised by ICE itself as a "force multiplier," the 287(g) program has expanded significantly in President Trump's second term. Based on public documents and statements by ICE, new research by FWD.us estimates that between 13,800 and 15,800 police officers, sheriff's deputies, and state troopers across the country are now deputized by ICE to perform immigration enforcement. This is an even larger increase in force than the 12,000 new officers and agents hired directly by ICE since Trump's second inauguration.

Unlike in the past, over half of the agencies signed up for the new Task Force Model are local police departments. Because 287(g) agreements are spread across the country, their rapid expansion into the country's 12,000 police departments greatly increases ICE's ability to meet their quotas and puts immigrants at risk in communities far outside the urban areas the administration has publicly targeted for ICE surges.

2 Federal dollars are flooding into police departments and sheriff's offices

ICE has issued conflicting information about funding eligibility, but we estimate that ICE has already distributed $137 million dollars to local and state police departments and county sheriff's offices through the Task Force Model. **Based on the number of agencies currently signed up, this new ICE funding pipeline could send between $1.4 and $2 billion more to local and state law enforcement in 2026**. If sign-ups continue at a similar rate, that number could reach $3.6 billion by 2027. This spend would swamp current federal spending on local law enforcement; the two biggest grants in FY24 were COPS spending at $665 million and JAG-Byrne funds at $346 million.

3 This expansion has serious consequences for immigrants and non-immigrants alike

We have tried the Task Force Model before to extremely concerning results. The Obama Administration discontinued the model in late 2012 after public outcry, organizing, and DOJ investigations documenting egregious patterns of racial profiling and related abuses in Maricopa County, Arizona under Sheriff Joe Arpaio and in Alamance County, North Carolina. Researchers have documented a wide range of negative impacts from 287(g) agreements during the Task Force Model period, including increased chronic absenteeism of children from school, decreased employment, worsened mental health, and increased vulnerability of immigrants to crime. All of these negative effects were not balanced by any positives: these programs had no measurable effect on crime.

Similarly, the influx of federal funding into local law enforcement on a scale not seen in at least three decades has long been understood to harm communities more than help. From 1995-1999, the federal COPS program sent nearly $1 billion per year to state and local law enforcement to hire more officers. While studies found that this dramatic transfer of federal funding had little to no impact on crime, it did significantly increase arrests for drug possession and other petty offenses like loitering, and helped fuel the militarization of police nationwide, the consequences of which we continue to see today. These practices and harms persisted long after the funding was reduced.

Today's expansion of local-federal collaboration repeats these policy failures of the past, but at a bigger scale and at an ever-more frightening time. Funding comes with minimal oversight and at a time when everyday activities — protests, detention center visits, even miscarriages — are increasingly criminalized. Once in place, these systems become very hard to undo, especially when funding is involved.

Continue the Conversation

Read

- "Force Multiplier": How ICE is Promising Billions to Local Law Enforcement to Expand Its Reach in Dangerous Ways, the full-length research brief released yesterday by FWD.us.
- A recent study from public health researchers finds that increased spending on police predicts higher rates of suicide and police killings for Black Americans, but no such effect on white Americans.

Act

- Check out Detention Watch Network's Communities Not Cages campaign toolkit for local, state, and federal strategies to oppose immigrant detention and deportations, and email program@detentionwatchnetwork.org to get plugged into local campaigns.
- Search The Markup's database of 287(g) agreements to see if your state or local police or sheriff has signed an agreement to partner with ICE.

Kena Betancur/AP

We can't afford to scale up, export, or leave unchecked what we've already gotten wrong. We'll be using this note to unpack the faulty thinking about crime, safety, and justice that underpins some of the most consequential discussions and decisions playing out in this American moment. You can find our previous notes here.

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