

United States Marshals Service



FACT SHEET Fugitive Investigations

The Marshals Service is the federal government's primary agency for conducting investigations involving: escaped federal prisoners; probation, parole and bond violators; and fugitives based on warrants generated during drug investigations. The Marshals Service is the custodian of all federal arrest warrants until execution or dismissal, and for more than 20 years the agency has specialized in apprehending fugitives. In fiscal 2004, the Marshals Service apprehended more than 36,000 federal fugitives, clearing 39,000 federal felony warrants. This is more than all other law enforcement agencies combined. Working with authorities at federal, state and local levels, Marshals Service-led fugitive task forces arrested an additional 31,600 state and local fugitive felons, clearing 37,900 state and local felony warrants.

Domestic Investigations

15 Most Wanted Fugitive Program

The Marshals Service established the *15 Most Wanted* Fugitive Program in 1983 to prioritize the investigation and apprehension of some of the country's most dangerous and high-profile fugitives. These offenders tend to be career criminals with histories of violence, and they pose a significant threat to public safety. Current and past *15 Most Wanted* fugitives include murderers, sex offenders, major drug kingpins, organized crime figures and individuals wanted for high-profile financial crimes. They are generally considered the "worst of the worst." Cases may be drawn from: Marshals Service primary jurisdiction cases; cases sent to a Marshals Service fugitive task force by another federal agency; state/local cases that have been adopted by Marshals Service task forces; or cases referred to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Since the program began, 175 of the *15 Most Wanted* fugitives have been arrested. In fiscal 2004, the Marshals Service captured 10 of them.

Major Case Fugitive Program

To supplement the *15 Most Wanted* Fugitive Program, the Marshals Service established the Major Case Fugitive Program in 1985. Major

cases garner a stronger focus within the agency and receive more resources from Marshals Service headquarters than do regular cases.

District Fugitive Task Forces

The Marshals Service has a long history of providing assistance and expertise to other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies in support of their fugitive investigations. The Marshals Service currently leads 83 full-time district fugitive task forces across the country. In addition, the agency leads ad-hoc fugitive task forces which operate in response to a targeted group of fugitives or a specific case — such as when an inmate escapes from prison. District fugitive task forces are the backbone of the Marshals Service fugitive apprehension efforts. Combining the resources of Marshals Service district offices with other federal, state and local agencies, these task forces provide an extremely effective network of investigators dedicated to catching fugitives. The success of the district task forces, which began more than 20 years ago, paved the way for Congress to fund five regional fugitive task forces.

Regional Fugitive Task Forces

The Presidential Threat Protection Act of 2000 (Pub. L. No. 106-544) established permanent fugitive apprehension task forces consisting of federal, state and local law enforcement authorities in designated regions of the United States "to be directed and coordinated by the United States Marshals Service." The purpose of these regional fugitive task forces (RFTFs) is to combine the efforts of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to locate and arrest the most dangerous fugitives and to serve as the focal point for information sharing concerning fugitive matters. The Marshals Service currently operates five RFTFs — New York/New Jersey, Pacific Southwest, Great Lakes, Southeast and Capital Area. These task forces have significantly enhanced the Marshals Service's fugitive apprehension program. In fiscal 2004, RFTFs closed nearly 14,000 felony warrants by arrest, including 587 warrants for homicide.

Domestic Investigations Branch

The Domestic Investigations Branch of the Marshals Service's Investigative Services Division develops, manages and oversees programs related to domestic fugitive investigations. One such program is the Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force — OCDETF — created to identify, investigate and prosecute high level money laundering and narcotics organizations. Another program is HIDTA — High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas — aimed at reducing drug-related crimes and violence in designated locations. The Marshals Service also participates in Project Safe Neighborhoods and takes part in Violent Crime Impact Teams — companion initiatives aimed at reducing gun violence. The Marshals Service has numerous, formal agreements whereby it goes after other agencies' fugitives, and it works with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to locate and arrest fugitives wanted for crimes against children. The Marshals Service also combats gang violence by prioritizing investigations of violent fugitives with ties to gangs. In support of the agency's fugitive mission, the Domestic Investigations Branch oversees liaison activities with the El Paso (Texas) Intelligence Center and is developing new programs such as the Financial Surveillance Unit, which tracks fugitives through financial means.

International Investigations Branch

The Marshals Service is responsible for tracking fugitives who flee the territorial boundaries of the United States, and the agency has also been designated by the Department of Justice to locate and apprehend fugitives wanted by foreign nations who are believed to be in the United States. The Marshals Service has the statutory responsibility to extradite international and foreign fugitives after they are captured. In fiscal 2004, the Marshals Service successfully completed a record 541 extraditions from 56 different countries. The Marshals Service has established foreign field offices in Mexico, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic. The Marshals Service has also established a law enforcement liaison program along the borders of Mexico and Canada. In support of international fugitive investigations, Marshals Service chief inspectors currently serve as assistant directors for the alien/fugitive units at Interpol headquarters in Lyon, France, and Interpol's United States National Central Bureau (USNCB) in Washington, D.C. For the first time in history, a senior manager from the Marshals Service serves as the director of the USNCB. Also, a Marshals Service chief inspector serves as a liaison at the Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs. To further extend its investigative reach to foreign locations, the Marshals Service provides special deputations to approximately 400 regional security officers with the Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service (DSS). These officers serve at embassies and consulates around the world. To facilitate worldwide coordination, the Department of State has assigned an agent from the DSS to the Marshals Service's International Investigations Branch.

Analytical Support Unit

The Analytical Support Unit is a team of analysts that provides tactical and strategic expertise to Marshals Service operations. The unit evaluates all reported inappropriate communications and threats to federal judicial employees. It researches and analyzes information during fugitive investigations and oversees special information systems used by the Marshals Service, including the Warrant Information Network — the agency's central, law enforcement information system.

Technical Operations Group (TOG)

Electronic Surveillance Unit

The Electronic Surveillance Unit (ESU) provides covert investigative and intelligence support for the Marshals Service's major cases and *15 Most Wanted* fugitive investigations. In addition, ESU provides assistance when requested by other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to solve complex criminal investigations or crimes of violence. ESU achieves a very successful case clearance rate by deploying some of the most sophisticated technologies available. ESU members: help prepare court orders; serve as expert witnesses in the field of electronic surveillance; and train law enforcement personnel from the United States and the international law enforcement community in the use of electronic surveillance. ESU maintains a central monitoring facility and electronic surveillance operation centers, with field offices throughout the United States.

Aviation Support Unit

The TOG Aviation Support Unit provides aerial surveillance, electronic tracking and other aerial platform functions in support of Marshals Service operations. TOG aircraft provide vital intelligence during the investigation, arrest and prosecution of some of the country's most dangerous fugitives.

Tactical Support Unit

The Tactical Support Unit provides support to Marshals Service districts, task forces, fugitive investigations, prisoner operations, special operations and judicial security/witness security details. It also provides force protection measures during Marshals Service missions — including covert audio, video, alarms and sensors, as well as other techniques and applications necessary to protect Marshals Service personnel and protectees. The unit includes the Operational Wireless Communications Support (OWCS) Group, which provides digital, narrowband, encrypted wireless communications in support of Marshals Service operations. OWCS maintains a cache of radio and satellite communications equipment as well as tactical repeaters, base stations, portable tower trailers and other specialized gear. The Tactical Support Unit also has personnel trained to conduct technical surveillance countermeasures — which protect government property and sensitive information as well as identify technical surveillance devices and hazards.