

Homeland secretary wants criminal aliens out of US

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WASHINGTON -- If you're a criminal and you're not entitled to be in the United States, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano wants you out of the country. Napolitano wants what she calls "criminal aliens" off American streets. She is looking at existing immigration enforcement programs to see if taxpayers are getting the most bang for their buck.

"That sounds very simple, but it's historically not been done," Napolitano said, speaking to reporters and senior Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials Thursday.

About 113,000 criminals who were in the U.S. illegally were deported last year, Immigration and Customs Enforcement said. The agency estimates there are now as many as 450,000 criminals in federal, state and local detention centers who are in the country illegally.

Napolitano said she wants to improve data-sharing among local, state and federal facilities. So far, there are jails in 26 counties across the country with computer systems that can talk instantly with immigration systems.

The goal, Napolitano said, is for federal immigration officials to know whether an inmate is in the country illegally immediately after he is processed into a detention facility. After the criminal serves his or her sentence, immigration officials can be ready to deport that person right away.

ICE spokesman Richard Rocha said the agency plans to expand this connectivity to all state and local detention centers over the next four years.

Napolitano, whose job includes overseeing immigration laws, says she also will go after criminal fugitives who are in the country illegally.

(This version CORRECTS number of criminal aliens deported last year to 113,000, sted 201,000.)