



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY

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**U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

**AMERICAN-ARAB ANTI-DISCRIMINATION COMMITTEE
JUDGE'S NIGHT DINNER**

Tuesday, October 16, 2007

5:30 PM

Dearborn, MI

Good evening. Thank you for inviting me to share this special night with you. Let me begin by congratulating those individuals being recognized by the ADC here tonight – Judge Charles Binder and Judge David Allen, congratulations to you both. Each of you has earned the honor bestowed upon you because of your exemplary courtroom work in support of the civil liberties of all who appear before you. I also want to acknowledge all the many special guests tonight, all the federal and state court judges, the National ADC President Mary Rose Oakar, the Michigan Attorney General, the FBI SAC and the local DHS leadership.

I think perhaps it is a casualty of modern-day public service that one of the first things you do in the morning is read the set of news clips, professionally pulled, about the Department you work for and its activities. And I must admit it did not exactly improve my digestion this morning to see a piece in the New York Post called “Border Cop Bungles.” And as I gritted my teeth to see what awful thing we’d been accused of now, I discovered that it was nothing more than merely talking to you.

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And so while there are some who think I shouldn't address you tonight, I beg to differ. Although we may not agree on everything, I believe law enforcement can only gain by building and fostering relationships with the broader community, including groups like the ADC. Dialogue is the answer.

And so tonight I'd like to take this opportunity to share some thoughts with you about partnerships, about increasing the level of cooperation between law enforcement and community leaders. I believe our efforts to protect your families and your communities will always be more successful when we work together, and we can do this on many levels.

But first, a little bit of background; all of you know that the Department of Homeland Security was created in the aftermath of 9/11. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, was then created in an effort to build a single, federal law enforcement agency with broad investigative authorities relating to customs and immigration violations.

One thing that's interesting is that in the process of standing up DHS and ICE, the primary responsibility for improving, and even maintaining, critical community relations with civic leaders and advocacy groups such as the ADC was primarily placed with the new Citizenship and Immigration Services agency, or CIS. As ICE was formed to focus on criminal investigations and enforcing existing immigration laws, CIS operated within a much more service-oriented mandate. Accordingly, ICE did not get dedicated resources for community outreach.

And that may have been fine for the early stages of both agencies, but now we're in our fifth year of operations at ICE, and it's become clear that there is a compelling need to increase our partnerships within the communities we protect, and to do so at every level, from the individual to the businesses, from the non-governmental organizations to the state or local law enforcement agencies.

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I encourage the agents and investigators from all of our offices around the nation to actively seek and participate in local outreach meetings. There is no substitute for building trust at the local level. I believe that this trust results in substantial benefits to ICE's mission to protect national security and promote public safety.

For example, some of you may have heard about a California investigation that resulted in the arrest and conviction of Shabbir Ahmed, the former imam of a mosque in Lodi, California.

Ahmed was removed to Pakistan by ICE after abandoning his legal right to remain in the United States at a hearing before an immigration judge.

Our agents arrested Ahmed for violating the terms of his religious worker visa. During his removal proceedings, ICE attorneys presented evidence tying Ahmed to the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Our attorneys argued that Ahmed's long-term objective was to establish a madrassah in California similar to one that he had worked at in Pakistan, a school used to recruit individuals to engage in jihad.

Too often this is as far as the story goes with regard to what the rest of the country learns about a case like this. It's only reported that a mosque leader, an Arab, with ties to radical extremist groups was identified, arrested and removed.

But this case featured significant cooperation between the mosque in Lodi and law enforcement officials at every level. And that's what never gets reported. In fact, the leadership displayed by the local Muslim community throughout the case helped further a very difficult investigation.

In addition, the leaders of the Lodi Mosque voted to fire Shabbir Ahmed, following his arrest on immigration charges and the accusations that he supported the

violence preached by the Taliban. The decision by board members to terminate Ahmed was unanimous.

Without question, effective partnerships such as these are essential to the success of many of our cases and are often the very building blocks we need to strengthen the integrity of our country's immigration system.

Legal immigration to the United States of America has been the path to a better life for millions of hard-working families, and the contributions immigrants have made to the growth and prosperity of our country are immeasurable.

Yet, as long as there are ways to exploit our immigration and customs laws for monetary gain or other more sinister motives, there will be criminals willing to do so, and once exposed, we need to have solid partnerships with individuals in the community and organizations such as the ADC to help us quickly identify where we are at risk.

Of course, the necessity of partnerships goes well beyond our immigration investigations. Our work to prevent the proliferation of arms and strategic technology is a significant piece of our investigative portfolio that relies on the strength of our relationships with the business community, and we have an active public/private partnership in that arena.

ICE officers routinely work with local businesses through Project Shield America, educating them to look for signs of questionable behavior. This type of educational outreach is crucial to creating greater national awareness of the risk posed by this kind of criminal activity.

These partnerships have led to some noteworthy cases, including the arrest and conviction of a man named Asher Karni, from Cape Town, South Africa, who attempted to buy, among other things, US-made dual-use trigger mechanisms. These items are

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commonly used by hospitals to break up kidney stones, but they could also be used to detonate nuclear weapons.

Here is where a local business stepped up and got involved.

An employee at the trigger gap business knew that Karni's transaction, ordering 200 of the devices for a single hospital in South Africa didn't pass a reasonability test and decided to share his suspicions with the authorities.

The business didn't have to do that. They had no obligation to call federal law enforcement but they did. They could have just hung up the phone, but they didn't. They called federal law enforcement, and we started an investigation. We knew Karni didn't want to send these triggers to a hospital, but we did not know where he intended to send them. Thanks to the company's cooperation, the triggers were modified to be non-functioning and fitted with tracking devices so they could be followed. This allowed us to unravel the entire undercover operation that identified a large nuclear smuggling network. Ultimately, as a result of this partnership, we arrested Karni in Denver, the next time he attempted to enter the United States.

And right here in the Detroit area, a single tip from an individual citizen recently led to the dismantling of a disturbing human trafficking network, involving Eastern European women who were smuggled into the country and forced to work as exotic dancers in local clubs.

On August 16, 2007, Michail Aronov, a 34 year old Lithuanian national, was sentenced to 7 1/2 years in prison for his role as a ringleader in this involuntary servitude and money laundering conspiracy. Aronov was the last of nine convicted defendants to be sentenced for crimes associated with this conspiracy.

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Aronov was also ordered to pay more than \$1 million in restitution to the victims. Of the eight woman trafficked in this case, six have been issued “T” visas, one is a green card holder and one has left the country to return to the Ukraine.

There’s no doubt that our ability to stop all kinds of criminal behavior is greatest when our agency and agents in the field have worked to build solid, positive and trusting relationships with citizens, civic and business leaders as well as local law enforcement throughout the communities in which we live and work.

We can only do this when we practice what we preach, when our commitment to protecting civil liberties has earned your trust and your respect. Helping local leadership stop the crimes that occur right here, every day, on your streets, in your parks and in your playgrounds goes a long way toward building these solid long-term relationships.

In addition to increasing our partnerships with individuals, businesses and NGO’s, we are working to increase our relationship with state and local law enforcement as well. We’ve recently bundled many of our community-focused programs into a suite of services we call ICE ACCESS, which stands for ICE Agreements of Cooperation in Communities to Enhance Safety and Security. ICE ACCESS was born from the need to more accurately match the many services we offer to the specific needs identified by local officials at the local level.

We found, for example, communities who really had a gang problem were coming to ICE for more traditional immigration enforcement training, or a county that really needed a strong human trafficking investigation thought they were dealing with a drug smuggling operation.

Through ICE ACCESS, we provide the specific training and, if applicable, the appropriate cross-designation of local law enforcement officers that your communities need to effectively target the specific criminal organizations that are operating in your

own back yards. This includes cultural sensitivity training to eliminate all forms of profiling from influencing the course of any investigation.

Those are a few of the ways we're working to provide every city, town, and community with the expertise, the training and the tools they need to raise public safety to the highest possible level.

You can be assured that we will continue to work closely with all of you to maintain the open dialogue and strong working relationship that Special Agent Brian Moskowitz has built here in the Detroit area. We believe the cooperative environment that exists between our Detroit office and the surrounding communities can serve as a model for other ICE offices around the country.

Thank you once again for inviting me to speak with you tonight, and congratulations once again to both judges honored here this evening.