

# *N.Y.C. Suburb Deploys Detectives to Aid Trump's Deportation Crackdown*

Nassau County, on Long Island, becomes the second county in New York State to join a federal program that uses local law enforcement officers as ICE agents.



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Reporting from Mineola, N.Y.

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President Trump's mission to widen and accelerate his immigration crackdown gained momentum in a New York City suburb on Tuesday, as Nassau County leaders announced a partnership with the Trump administration to empower law enforcement officers to arrest and deport undocumented immigrants.

Bruce Blakeman, the Republican county executive, said that 10 Nassau detectives would be trained and deputized to conduct immigration arrests, just like a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent. Those detectives would embed with ICE teams targeting undocumented immigrants who have committed crimes, he said. They could also be called upon to process immigrants arrested by the local police who, after a background check, are found to lack legal status or are wanted by ICE.

The county will also set aside up to 50 cells in the county jail to hold immigrants for up to 72 hours before they are transferred to ICE custody for immediate deportation or long-term detention elsewhere, Mr. Blakeman added, stressing that "this isn't about raids, this is about targeted enforcement."

“Our detectives are not out looking for illegal migrants,” Mr. Blakeman said during a news conference in the county’s executive and legislative building on Tuesday. “If a crime is committed, the officers will then do a background check, and if a background check says that they are here illegally or there is a detainer out there, then they will get ICE involved.”

The local-federal partnership in Nassau County, one of the most populous counties in the United States, could be a harbinger of others to materialize across the country.

The president has vowed to deport millions of undocumented immigrants, but he will have to greatly expand the resources and ranks of ICE to achieve his goal. Collaborating with friendly local law enforcement agencies is one way he could increase the number of migrants who are picked up and deported.

Patrick Ryder, the county’s police commissioner, said that Nassau had long cooperated with ICE, but that under the new approach, the local police would notify the federal agency about undocumented immigrants arrested even for low-level offenses who would have previously been released with a ticket.

“I will be notifying ICE that this person is here undocumented and that they will be able to come and pick that individual up,” Commissioner Ryder said.

Mr. Blakeman, who was elected to lead the county in 2021 as part of a rightward shift on Long Island, is an ally of Mr. Trump who has appeared at his rallies and has vowed to help the president enact his mass deportation plans. He has riled Democrats through his efforts to ban sports teams with transgender women from county facilities and to form a force of armed volunteers to deploy in the case of civil unrest.

The plan to work more closely with federal immigration officials comes as immigrants have fueled a profound demographic shift on Long Island over the past several decades, altering the politics and social fabric of one of the country’s most affluent suburbs.

An estimated 550,000 immigrants — including citizens, those with temporary legal status and those without documentation — live on Long Island, accounting for about one-fifth of the region's population, according to a 2023 analysis by the Immigration Research Initiative, a nonpartisan think tank.

About 50,000 undocumented immigrants — mostly from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala — live in Nassau County, according to 2019 census data analyzed by the Migration Policy Institute, while another 50,000 are estimated to reside in neighboring Suffolk County, on the eastern end of Long Island.

A majority of them are believed to work in crucial low-wage jobs, including in restaurants, construction, maintenance, transportation, retail, child care and home health care. There is also a large share of undocumented immigrants who are working seasonal jobs in the region's farms and vineyards, especially in Suffolk County.

Officials said that the partnership announced on Tuesday was permitted as of 1996 under Section 287(g) of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, which allows the Homeland Security Department, which houses ICE, to sign agreements with local law enforcement agencies to train and authorize officers to carry out certain immigration enforcement duties.

ICE had such voluntary partnerships with 135 state or local law enforcement agencies across 21 states as of December, according to the agency. They are common in some Republican states like Florida, Texas and North Carolina, but less so in Democratic states. In New York, only the sheriff in Rensselaer County, near Albany, has such a partnership with ICE.

The partnerships typically empower local officers to interrogate people arrested on local and state charges to determine their immigration status and request they be transferred to ICE custody. The partnerships can also give officers the authority to perform immigration arrests themselves, but only at local jails or correctional facilities.

Critics of the programs argue that the partnerships can lead to widespread racial profiling, high costs for localities, the arrests of immigrants with minor criminal histories and the erosion of trust between local governments and immigrant communities. The American Civil Liberties Union, which has forcefully opposed the programs, has argued that they have led to civil rights violations and deportations of people who have been detained for lesser violations, like a broken taillight.

Civil rights groups called on ICE and Mr. Blakeman to release the terms of the agreement to gauge its legality and scope. The details of similar partnerships between the federal agency and local police departments are typically made public. (Representatives for ICE and Mr. Blakeman did not immediately respond to requests for the document.)

Amy Belsher, the director of immigrants' rights litigation at the New York Civil Liberties Union, questioned how the policy would be implemented in accordance with New York case law that prohibits the police from holding people solely for immigration enforcement purposes.

"Any amount of time that they are holding somebody beyond the time that they would have been otherwise released," Ms. Belsher said, amounts to "detention that is unlawful."

Immigration activists immediately condemned the Nassau County initiative, arguing that it would spread fear among migrant communities and that localities shouldn't be enforcing federal immigration law.

"The agreement will only serve to make Nassau's most vulnerable residents less likely to communicate with government officials, whether it's police, schools or anyone else," said Angel Reyes, the Long Island coordinator at Make the Road New York, an immigrant advocacy group. "We all deserve to live in safety, but this agreement will have the opposite effect. It will only deepen the longstanding divisions that hamper public safety," Mr. Reyes said.

ICE officials argue that the partnerships with local police forces and jails serve as force multipliers and are crucial to more easily and safely transfer undocumented immigrants from local custody to ICE custody.

In justifying the partnership, Mr. Blakeman and his police officials expressed frustration with the state's bail laws, arguing that too many undocumented immigrants had been released into the community over the years after being charged with burglary and other crimes.

**Luis Ferré-Sadurní** is a Times reporter covering immigration, focused on the influx of migrants arriving in the New York region. [More about Luis Ferré-Sadurní](#)

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