

Immigrants picked up, but no massive raids, authorities say

U.S. and Mexican authorities are pushing back against reports of widespread raids that have sown panic in immigrant communities. But the “targeted operation” appears to be the largest of its kind since President Trump took office.

by [Jay Root](#) Feb. 11, 2017 12:19 PM



Consul General Carlos González Gutiérrez *Consulado General de México en Austin*

U.S. and Mexican authorities are pushing back against reports of widespread raids that have sown panic in immigrant communities. But the “targeted operation” launched in recent days by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) appears to be the largest of its kind since President Donald Trump took office.

In an interview with The Texas Tribune on Saturday, Carlos Gonzalez Gutierrez, the consul general of Mexico in Austin, shot down social media reports suggesting that ICE had set up traffic checkpoints or was rounding up immigrants indiscriminately. ICE called the reports of massive round-ups “false, dangerous and irresponsible,” the New York Times [reported](#).

In Austin, a liberal enclave with a [brand new](#) “sanctuary” policy at the local jail, Gonzalez Gutierrez said the raid was the most extensive he’d seen since he arrived in the Texas capital almost two years ago. He said some of those apprehended by ICE were not the original targets of the U.S. operation. All told there were 44 Mexican nationals apprehended in the Austin area on Thursday and Friday, he said. Typically the agency picks up a handful per day. It’s not clear how many immigrants from other countries may have been picked up in the operation.

Gonzales Gutierrez said ICE officials informed the consulate that they “are looking for specific persons that... have to be detained because they have failed to honor a deportation order or because they have a DWI-related warrant or because of domestic violence. It’s a wide range of issues.”

In some cases, he said some of the Mexican nationals who were with the targeted immigrants also got detained; he said that has happened in past operations.

“Whenever they find their target, for example in their vehicles, if in that same vehicle there [are] more people who are undocumented or who they presume are undocumented, then they detain everybody,” he said. “And so there [are] a few of our nationals that were caught up because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

While Gonzalez Gutierrez expressed concern about the specter of a large operation targeting immigrants, he said it’s important to let people know that is not what’s happening now.

“This is not the widespread massive raids that are sometimes described in social media,” he said. “We have found no evidence of those workplace raids, or school raids, [or] massive raids outside of hospitals that people were talking about in social media.”

Central Texas was prominently featured in several national news stories with unconfirmed reports of immigrant raids, vehicle checkpoints and random ID checks.

And in the last two days, immigrant lawyers and advocacy groups have sounded alarms in multiple cities over what they called unusual enforcement activity by ICE. In Los Angeles, for example, the American Civil Liberties Union tweeted: “URGENT: ICE conducted multiple raids of homes across the city.” [Protests erupted](#) soon after.

U.S. Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly said at a news conference in California Friday night that the reports were flat wrong, according to local media reports.

“They’re not rounding anyone up,” Kelly [said](#). “The people that ICE apprehend are people who are illegal, and then some.”

According to an ICE statement released to the news media in California, at least 160 people were apprehended over five days in the region as part of a routine “enforcement surge” targeting undocumented immigrants wanted by the agency. Of those, 150 had criminal records and five had removal orders, according to the reports.



KABC-TV in Los Angeles [reported](#) that 95 percent of the people detained in Southern California by ICE were men. Included were an MS-13 gang member from El Salvador, a Brazilian national wanted for cocaine trafficking and an Australian convicted of lewd and lascivious acts with a child, the station said.

Texas Tribune reporter Cassandra Pollock contributed to this story.