The Trump Effect: ICE Immigrant Arrests Rose by 30% in 2017

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ICE carried out more than 140,000 arrests that year after Trump authorized federal agents to target all immigrants regardless of criminal record.

Arrests of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. rose by 30 percent in 2017 compared to a year earlier under the administration of Donald Trump who has expanded the authority of immigration agents and ramped up anti-immigration policies in the United States, an analysis by the Pew Research Center showed Thursday.

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Data from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE, shows that it made 143,470 arrests over the course of 2017 and that the biggest percentage increases of arrests were in Florida, northern Texas and Oklahoma.

Meanwhile from Jan. 20, when Trump was inaugurated, to the end of the fiscal year on Sept. 30 ICE made 110,568 arrests, 42 percent more than over the same time period in 2016, according to the research center.

“Recent immigration arrest patterns demonstrate a growing emphasis by federal authorities on interior enforcement efforts,” the center said meaning that ICE federal agents are targeting undocumented immigrants who live in cities around the U.S. rather than those around border areas with Mexico or Canada.

The rise in arrests stems from a Trump executive order signed shortly after he came to office expanding ICE enforcement to include all undocumented immigrants instead of the limits that had been placed on the agency by his predecessor Barack Obama to focus on those who committed serious crimes.

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However, the research center points out that the number of arrests made in 2017 is far less than those made in Obama’s first year in office. ICE arrested almost 300,000 undocumented immigrants in 2009, which had prompted pro-immigration activists to call Obama “deporter-in-chief”.

Also the 2017 record of arrests is only the highest over the past three years, meaning that arrests during Obama’s presidency were still higher the first few years of his eight-year tenure before declining towards the end of his presidency.

Official data shows that between 2009 and 2015 his administration deported more than 2.5 million people through immigration orders.

However, Trump might manage to beat Obama’s record as he has signed several orders in recent months that could see the the deportation of hundreds of thousands of immigrants from Haiti, El Salvador and other countries.

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Some of the ICE arrests in recent months generated large backlash in the U.S. as they targeted immigration activists and immigrants who have been living in the country for decades with families and jobs and had not committed any crimes.

Jorge Garcia made international headlines last month when pictures of him hugging his family at the airport as he was being deported by ICE agents despite having lived in the U.S. for 30 years, paying taxes and having children in the country with no criminal record. The 39-year-old came to the U.S. when he was 10-years-old from Mexico and had sought legal status for years without luck.

Also last month, Jean Montrevil, Haitian immigrant rights activist and co-founder of the New Sanctuary Coalition of New York City, was deported back to his country less than two weeks after he was arrested by ICE, agents, despite having lived in

the U.S. for more than 30 years and having no criminal record.