

ICE tried to share info with Pacific County sheriff

Johnson still pressing feds on detainees

By AMY NILE
Chinook Observer

SOUTH BEND, Wash. — Sheriff Scott Johnson has been clamoring to get information about immigrants being shucked out of Pacific County for almost a year. However, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers were calling his office throughout 2017 to report at least some details the sheriff said he wasn't getting about their work in the area.

ICE shared information with local law enforcement on at least 42 days between late December 2016 and late September, county dispatch reports and call recordings show. Johnson had said his office hadn't heard from the agency since President Donald Trump ordered authorities to get rid of anyone living in the country illegally early last year.

Communications between the sheriff and ICE are a hot-button issue for opponents of Trump administration deportation policies, while other county residents have voiced support for stricter enforcement of immigration laws. In order to determine

the extent of contacts between local and federal authorities, documents and recordings were obtained via public records and Freedom of Information Act requests.

While this information shows ICE conveys basic facts about its activities to sheriff's office employees, it does not suggest the sheriff's office aids ICE in finding or detaining undocumented immigrants.

ICE talked to dispatch

Federal officers have been calling county dispatch to provide their whereabouts, what type of work they plan to do and other details that might help sheriff's deputies and city police identify them.

During one such call in April, officer Lonnie Miller said ICE was headed to Nahcotta to do surveillance and possibly make an arrest.

"I've got another real quick question for you guys," Miller told the dispatcher. "The sheriff's been doing a number of town halls out here and he's consistently saying we don't notify you guys. I don't know if it's like a disconnect, because it's part of our policy to call you guys every time we're out here."

"So," he continued, "I don't know if he's just not aware of



Scott Johnson

that or something? But he's consistently saying we're not communicating with you guys and we really try to do our best with that."

Miller told the Observer he couldn't comment and referred questions to the ICE press office. Lori Haley, an ICE spokesperson, confirmed officers usually notify local dispatch when they're around.

Miller's comment prompted Johnson to change the way his office handles information from ICE, emails show. Dispatchers started calling a supervisor immediately after hearing from ICE, but the policy was dropped after a few months.

Supervisors' sleep was being interrupted for routine calls, and paying them overtime for alerts that weren't urgent ate up county money.

Dispatchers are now supposed to log the information in one place and text a supervisor.

The two ICE officers who've been working in the county also usually follow up with the sheriff's office after they leave an area, records show. The calls often include more details about their work, such as the number of immigrants they're hauling away in handcuffs.

During the first nine months of 2017, officers reported at least 20 arrests in the county. When dispatchers asked, they

gave the names of the immigrants they'd picked up.

Based on surveillance spots ICE reported to the county during the first half of 2017, officers focused heavily on Nahcotta and Ocean Park, often picking people up near the Port of Peninsula or outside Okie's Thriftway Market. They also frequently made arrests in Long Beach and Seaview and occasionally nabbed immigrants in Chinook.

In August, Miller emailed Johnson to let him know federal enforcement would be expanding to the Raymond and South Bend area.

The officer offered to text the sheriff when ICE was working, but Johnson told him to keep calling dispatch instead. Miller also requested a meeting to discuss an August newspaper report in which Johnson said federal authorities weren't sharing information with local law enforcement.

All versus any

Still, Johnson continued to tell the public and the press that ICE did not start providing information until late September.

"This was the first time ever (I think) that ICE notified us," Johnson wrote in a Sept. 25 email to the Observer. "They provided few, if any, details, pretty much a 'one in custody.'"

At the time, Johnson suggested he'd pressed ICE to crack the silence with a letter he sent to the agency twice, once in April and again in August.

"The power of the pen," he wrote in an August email.

Johnson also met with Miller and another officer and later with the assistant field directors from ICE's Seattle and Portland offices.

At a meeting in September, they agreed to let the sheriff's office know when ICE would be in the area, when officers left and whether arrests were made. Corey Heaton, the Portland field director for ICE, wrote a letter to Johnson in October that summarized ICE's commitment to providing basically the same information dispatch was already getting.

A few days after making the agreement, Johnson told the Observer, federal agents came into his office in South Bend without warning to arrest a man at the front counter.

Records show dispatch was notified just a couple of minutes before officers arrived. They also advised the sheriff's office they were working nearby earlier that day.

During an interview in January, Johnson said dispatch takes "thousands and thousands of calls" and he's generally not involved. He trusts his staff to convey information to him as needed.

When he said his office wasn't getting any information from ICE, he meant he wasn't — and still isn't — getting all of it, Johnson explained.

"I've never tried to mislead anyone," the sheriff said. "I've tried to be totally transparent on this issue."

Information still lacking

The sheriff said he wants the name and birthdate for each immigrant who's taken from the county. That would allow him to check their backgrounds to see if ICE is arresting the criminals federal officials promised to deport, or if the agency is taking people who have overstayed a travel visa or entered the country without permission.

Johnson said he also needs to know who's being taken so he can confirm whether someone has been arrested or if they're missing when neighbors call with concerns.

Federal agents have recently started to include the number of arrests along with the gender and age of each person they take to the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, January dispatch records show.

"We believe they're continuing to provide that information every time they're here," Johnson said. "It's a step in the right direction to get those first few things. But it's still an awkward situation for us."

Two women who died while clam digging identified

Chinook Observer

LONG BEACH, Wash. — The two women who died while digging for clams on Washington state beaches on Friday have been identified.

Jerilynn Kay Reinke, 70, and Sharon Kay Leseman, 61, appear to have drowned under strikingly similar circumstances. The tragedies occurred within about an hour of low tide during an authorized clam dig. Both victims' bodies were recovered over the weekend.

Although an early press release from the Pacific County Sheriff's Office said the calls came in within four minutes of one another, dispatchers later clarified that the calls actually came in about one hour apart.

Ocean Park resident Henry Reinke called 911 to report his wife's disappearance just before 9 p.m. on Friday night, Chief Criminal Deputy Pat Matlock of the Pacific County Sheriff's Office said. The Reinkes were digging for clams near Leadbetter Point,

roughly 7 miles north of the Oysterville beach approach.

Reinke said his wife finished digging for clams around 8 p.m., and decided to go back to their vehicle. He saw her walk toward the vehicle, which was parked east of the shoreline. When he got back to the vehicle about five minutes later, his wife wasn't there.

Dispatchers learned of Leseman's disappearance from the beach in North Cove when her husband, Edward Leseman, called 911 around

10 p.m. At the scene, the Grayland resident told a deputy his wife finished clamming near Warrenton Cannery Road around 6:45 p.m.

Like Reinke, she planned to go back to their vehicle to wait. She gave her lantern to her husband and headed

toward their vehicle while he finished clamming. When he got back, she wasn't there. He went to their home to see if she had gotten a ride from someone else, then returned to the beach to search for her. He called 911 about an hour after she went missing.

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