

'Worst of the Worst' website draws scrutiny

Defense attorneys say the criminal claims are difficult to verify, and Department of Corrections officials say some are inaccurate.

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MINNEAPOLIS — The Department of Homeland Security's "Worst of the Worst" website features people arrested in Minnesota who the department says have been convicted of serious crimes.

There are 15 people listed with homicide-related crimes. Another 114 are listed with sex crimes.

But the 486 listings — representing 12% of the total people DHS says they've arrested in Minnesota for Operation Metro Surge — raise many questions.

Twin Cities criminal defense attorney Avery Appelman agrees the crimes listed are serious, but says the convictions are hard to verify.

"Cocaine-sell dangerous drugs! We don't have a crime that has that name," Appelman said.

And the Minnesota Department of Corrections' ongoing fact-check is having trouble confirming that some of the crimes listed were committed, even in other states.

"We just can't understand where they are getting some of this data from," said DOC Commissioner Paul Schnell.

Schnell has pointed out that a number of the "worst of the worst" arrests did not take place in the community during Operation Metro Surge, but actually were direct transfers from Minnesota prisons to ICE custody.

So far, they've found 110 of these "arrests" fitting that criteria.

On top of that, dozens of arrests are labeled taking place in "Sandstone" or "Waseca" — leading the DOC to believe 92 of the "worst of the worst" arrests took place within federal prisons located in Minnesota — of suspects who may have been transferred there from any state in the U.S. — meaning those suspects might never have spent any time in Minnesota outside of prison.

"The accuracy of it is in many instances questionable," Schnell said.