

Brief Remarks Prepared for ICE Acting Director Matthew T. Albence
Press Conference – Southern Border Surge
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- Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to update you about U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's efforts to address the unprecedented surge of illegal border crossings stretching from Texas to California. Without question, the situation along our southern border represents a humanitarian and national security crisis the likes of which we have never seen.
- In response, the dedicated men and women of ICE are executing the full spectrum of their authorities to address the very real public safety challenges this crisis has created at the border and within communities throughout our country.
- Beyond DHS, our work is further supported by the Department of Justice, the State Department, the Department of Defense and the Department of Health and Human Services, each carrying out essential functions in a whole-of-government approach to responding to this national emergency.
- Our shared mission to strengthen national security and uphold public safety is being put to the test by this unprecedented increase in illegal border crossings, and in particular, the marked change in who is making this dangerous journey north to the United States.

- A population once predominantly made up of adult males who could be promptly removed, has been largely replaced by families and young children. This demographic shift—combined with the record numbers of individuals seeking to enter the country—is straining our limited resources and has pushed the system to its breaking point.
- As has become even more evident over the past months, congress must act to pass laws to allow DHS to secure our borders and enable ICE to effectively enforce our nation’s immigration laws against those who flout them, whether through illegally entering the country, making a spurious asylum claim, or the exploitation of children who are being used as pawns in fraudulent family units.
- In response to this crisis, ICE is deploying all available resources. For example, Homeland Security Investigations is addressing this threat along several lines of effort, one of which is deploying teams of special agents and forensic interviewers skilled in human trafficking investigations to Border Patrol stations and ICE detention centers.
- These outstanding professionals assist CBP officers in interviewing purported family members and examining identity materials to help assess the veracity of their claims and the legitimacy of their documentation. The ability to apply expert forensic analysis in the field is essential to reducing the scourge of human smuggling and continued victimization of the most vulnerable among us.

- Additionally, HSI criminal analysts scours intelligence and information gleaned from these interviews for referral to HSI field offices where criminal investigations of the transnational criminal organizations responsible for these heinous crimes will be aggressively pursued.
- Within ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations, hundreds of personnel, from across the country, have been reassigned to support efforts aimed at reducing the humanitarian crisis along the Southwest border.
- This includes personnel in areas throughout the country where ICE's detained population has significantly expanded because of the explosion of illegal border crossings.
- This reallocation of resources comes at a significant cost to ERO's public safety and interior enforcement missions. This crisis has devastated ERO's enforcement efforts, which prioritize arresting and apprehending convicted criminals, national security threats, human rights violators, gang members, and immigration fugitives—individuals who have availed themselves of all due process, have been ordered removed by an Immigration Judge, and have failed to comply with this order—over 560,000 of which remain at large within this country—many of whom are convicted criminals.
- To illustrate, thus far in FY2019, interior enforcement efforts are down in the following areas, relative to the same period in FY2018;
 - Convicted criminal arrests are down more than 14%
 - Overall ERO administrative arrests are down nearly 10%, and

- ICE interior removals are down more than 10%
- These decreases have a direct impact not only on border communities, but in communities throughout the country, where criminal aliens, gang members, and public safety threats remain at-large because the ERO officers needed to locate and apprehend them have been redirected to process family units and manage the ever-increasing immigration court dockets.
- ICE has worked closely with our partners at DOJ to create accelerated dockets to give family units faster access to the asylum process. Unfortunately, we have seen that up to 90 percent of the people afforded this opportunity did not show up to their first hearing. This provides further evidence that the vast majority of the aliens currently being apprehended at the border are not legitimate asylum claimants.
- Now it is my distinct honor and pleasure to introduce and welcome Acting Secretary for the Department of Homeland Security Kevin McAleenan. With more than 20 years of experience along the border, Acting Secretary McAleenan most recently served as U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner. I have worked closely with Acting Secretary McAleenan for several years now, and have witnessed firsthand the extent of his knowledge, skill, and commitment to not only this country, but to the outstanding men and women of DHS. His dedication, experience, and steadfast resolve is precisely what our nation needs at this critical juncture.

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