

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

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FACT SHEET: Unaccompanied Children from Central America

The Administration remains greatly concerned by the rise in unaccompanied children from Central America who are crossing into the United States. These children are some of the most vulnerable, and many become victims of violent crime or sexual abuse along the dangerous journey. There has also been a rise in the number of very young children, female children, and adults with their children that are making the journey. The vast majority of these individuals rely on dangerous human smuggling networks to transport them up through Central America and Mexico.

To address the situation, the President directed the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency to coordinate a government-wide response to this urgent situation. Our first priority is to manage the urgent humanitarian situation by making sure these children are housed, fed, and receive any necessary medical treatment. We also are taking steps to improve enforcement and partnering with our Central American counterparts in three key areas: combating gang violence and strengthening citizen security, spurring economic development, and improving capacity to receive and reintegrate returned families and children.

In Guatemala, the Vice President is meeting with regional leaders to address the rise in the flow of unaccompanied children and adults with their children to the United States, to discuss our work together with the countries of Central America, and to discuss our efforts to help address the underlying security and economic issues that cause migration.

Partnering with Central America and Mexico

New Programs

- The U.S. Government will be providing \$9.6 million in additional support for Central American governments to receive and reintegrate their repatriated citizens. This funding will enable El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to make substantial investments in their existing repatriation centers, provide training to immigration officials on migrant care, and increase the capacity of these governments and non-governmental organizations to provide expanded services to returned migrants.
- In Guatemala, we are launching a new \$40-million U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) program over 5 years to improve citizen security. This program will work in some of the most violent communities to reduce the risk factors for youth involvement in gangs and address factors driving migration to the United States.
- In El Salvador, we are initiating a new \$25-million Crime and Violence Prevention USAID program over 5 years that will establish 77 youth outreach centers in addition to

the 30 already in existence. These will continue to offer services to at-risk youth who are susceptible to gang recruitment and potential migration.

- In Honduras, under the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), we will provide \$18.5 million to support community policing and law enforcement efforts to confront gangs and other sources of crime. In addition, USAID will build on an existing initiative to support 40 youth outreach centers by soon announcing a substantial new Crime and Violence Prevention program to further address root causes.

- USAID is calling for proposals to support new public-private partnerships through the Global Development Alliance to increase economic and educational opportunities for at risk youth in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

- The United States also plans to provide \$161.5 million this year for CARSI programs that are critical to enabling Central American countries to respond to the region's most pressing security and governance challenges. Our assistance will help stem migration flows as well as address root cause of the migration. This assistance will include:

- Approximately \$65 million for Rule of Law, Human Rights and Transparency programs, including activities to prevent at-risk youth from joining gangs and encourage their involvement in community crime prevention efforts and programs to expand education and job training.

- Another approximately \$96.5 million will go toward peace, security, stabilization, and other related rule of law programs to strengthen immigration, law enforcement, and judicial authorities and promote anti-gang and human rights programs.

Ongoing Programs

- The United States is providing almost \$130 million in ongoing bilateral assistance to El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala for a variety of programs related to health, education, climate change, economic growth, military cooperation, and democracy assistance.

- We are collaborating on campaigns to help potential migrants understand the significant danger of relying on human smuggling networks and to reinforce that recently arriving children and individuals are not eligible for programs like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, commonly called DACA, and earned citizenship provisions in comprehensive immigration reform currently under consideration in the Congress.

Increased Enforcement

- The Department of Justice and DHS are taking additional steps to enhance enforcement and removal proceedings. We are surging government enforcement resources to increase our capacity to detain individuals and adults who bring their children with them and to handle immigration court hearings – in cases where hearings are necessary – as quickly and efficiently as possible while also protecting those who are

seeking asylum. That will allow ICE to return unlawful migrants from Central America to their home countries more quickly.

- These new measures build on a strong existing record of enforcement and removal of Central Americans entering the country unlawfully. In FY 2013, ICE removed 47,769 individuals from Guatemala, 37,049 from Honduras, and 21,602 from El Salvador. This represents approximately 29% of all ICE removals.

- The Vice President will reiterate that unaccompanied children and adults arriving with their children are not eligible to benefit from the passage of immigration reform legislation or from the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) process.

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