



Some Progress on the Illegal Immigration Front

Item: *Federal officials, reported the New York Times on August 27, “revised upward to 595 the number of suspected illegal immigrants arrested this week in a raid on a Laurel, Miss., factory, making it the largest immigration crackdown on a United States workplace in recent years.”*



Item: *The AP, in an article headlined “Fear grips immigrants after Miss. plant raid,” cited a youth pastor at Iglesia Cristiana Peniel, where up to 40 percent of the parishioners “were caught in the raid” at the factory in southern Mississippi. The youth pastor was quoted saying: “We have kids without dads and pregnant mothers who got their husbands taken away. It was like a horror story. They got handled like they were criminals.”*

Correction: If you don’t break the law, you have no reason to be afraid of immigration agents. Does the fear-mongering Michelle Obama really think that all American citizens with a Hispanic background are permanently terror-riven, unnerved that they will be rounded up and deported? Of course not. However, seeking more votes from those who support illegal aliens, she pretends that is the case.

Meanwhile, the above youth pastor — as well as the headline writer who typically left off the meaningful word “illegal” in front of “immigrants” — conveniently omitted the most pertinent fact: lawbreakers *are* criminals.

Moreover, about 100 of those detained were quickly released, according to the Justice Department. Many of these were mothers who were fitted with electronic monitoring devices and permitted to return home to their children. There’s no doubt that having a parent arrested isn’t the best thing to happen to a family, but law enforcement is bound to inconvenience those who flout the laws, whether those statutes have to do with stealing from a gas station or stealing someone’s identity.

It is misleading to focus only on such people. Some of those arrested at the electronics-manufacturing company, as noted in *IT World*, “are being held on identity theft-related charges, the DOJ said. Investigators are looking into other charges, including the fraudulent use of Social Security numbers.... ‘Identity theft is a growing problem in the United States, and the Department of Justice has prioritized bringing perpetrators of these crimes to justice and protecting the interests of innocent victims,’ Stan Harris, first assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Mississippi, said in a statement.” The Justice Department also noted that those arrested came from a number of foreign countries, including Germany, Peru, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Honduras, and Brazil.

The Bush administration for years has been remarkably soft in enforcing the nation’s immigration laws. Recently, there seemed to be a bit of a shift, though it’s hard not to be skeptical about ulterior



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motives. And the most recent administration enforcement program, dubbed Operation Scheduled Departure, seemed to be created for the express purpose of failing. The *New York Times*, for example, editorially mocked this strategy, which asked illegals to turn themselves in to the government.

The *San Antonio Express-News* described the results as follows:

With eight down and 456,992 to go, immigration agents called it quits.

The Department of Homeland Security on Friday scrapped Operation Scheduled Departure, a program to encourage immigrants with deportation orders and no criminal records to come out of the shadows and self-deport.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the DHS agency managing the program, confirmed that eight people signed up in the 2 1/2 weeks since it was rolled out Aug. 5 — out of 457,000 eligible candidates across the country and nearly 30,000 in five test cities.

Those in the country illegally do pay attention to events in Washington that could affect them. When the Bush administration's amnesty program failed to make it through Congress earlier this year, many illegals took notice and acted accordingly, including some who bought tickets to return to their native countries. Whether it was the intention of the administration or not, a certain amount of "attrition through enforcement" has been taking place, and the estimated total number of illegal aliens in the United States appears to have started down.

Enforcing the law against hiring illegals, even though it happens very sporadically, does attract attention. A voluntary identity program called E-Verify is also currently available to employers. In short, there are ways to improve the situation without pretending that the only alternatives are deporting every illegal or legalizing all of them (the latter being, essentially, the position of both Barack Obama and John McCain).

As it happens, Mexico is now getting a small taste of what has been happening in the United States for years. Mexicans are returning to Mexico, reports Fox News, "in numbers not seen for decades — and the Mexican government may have to deal with a crush on its social services and lower wages once the immigrants arrive." Large numbers of Mexican nationals are finding their way to the Mexican Consulate's office in Dallas to find out "what documentation they'll need to enroll their children in Mexican schools. 'Those numbers have increased percentage-wise tremendously,' said Enrique Hubbard, the Mexican consul general in Dallas. 'In fact, it's almost 100 percent more this year than it was the previous two years.'"

Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, is concerned that the next U.S. administration will toss overboard even limited enforcement efforts concerning illegal immigration. Writes Krikorian:

Now there is research showing that attrition through enforcement works. A new report from the Center for Immigration Studies ... used Census Bureau surveys to estimate that the illegal-immigrant population has fallen from a peak of 12.5 million in August of last year down to 11.2 million this past May, a drop of 1.3 million or 11 percent. This decline is at least seven times larger than the number of people removed from the country by the immigration authorities during that period, meaning that most of the drop was due to illegal immigrants deporting themselves. If that rate of decrease were to continue, the illegal population would be cut in half in five years.

So far, so good. But did enforcement contribute to the decline or was it driven just by the



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weakening economy? Though the slowdown in construction and other industries no doubt contributed to the decline, there are several reasons to think that enforcement was a major factor in the decision of illegal immigrants to leave. First of all, the decline in the number of illegal immigrants started before their unemployment rate increased; in the past, much smaller dips had been seen in the illegal population, but only after their unemployment rate increased — which stands to reason, of course. What's more, only the illegal population declined; the number of legal immigrants continued to grow.

Trends can be reversed quickly, in either direction. Illegal aliens respond to sanctions, both positive and negative, just as other people do. Should the borders be thrown open even further, millions more would also pour into the country.

This is costing legal American taxpayers a huge amount of money, not to mention rending the nation's fabric. Up to \$22 billion is being spent annually on the families of illegal immigrants by the various state governments, writes Jim Camp for Family Security Matters.

This includes \$2.2 billion a year on assistance programs such as Food Stamps and free school lunches. An estimated \$2.5 billion annually goes to Medicaid, says Camp. "The demands on some American hospitals have forced some to close emergency rooms as illegal immigrants crowd them and the law requires their care despite their inability to pay for it. Approximately \$12 billion is spent on primary and secondary school education for children that are here illegally, many of whom cannot speak English." Then there is the \$3 million daily "to incarcerate illegal aliens and 30% of all federal prison inmates are illegal immigrants. The crime rates of illegal immigrants are estimated to be two-and-a-half times higher than native-born Americans for crimes that include illicit drugs, rape and murder."

The major candidates for president, sadly, are ignoring these facts. This does make the job harder. But can we Americans actually control our own borders? ¡Sí, se puede!



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