



CBP Data Shows “Rising Flow” of Unaccompanied Immigrant Children

A report posted recently on the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) website states: “CBP has seen an overall increase in the apprehension of Unaccompanied Alien Children from Central America at the Southwest Border, specifically in the Rio Grande Valley.”

The report compared year-end figures for Fiscal Year 2015 (October 1, 2014–December 31, 2014) to the same time period for Fiscal Year 2014.



The report notes:

While overall border apprehensions have only slightly increased during this time period, and remain at historic lows, the apprehension and processing of these children present unique operational challenges for CBP and HHS. Addressing the *rising flow* of unaccompanied alien children crossing our southwest border is an important priority of this Administration and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)... [Emphasis added]

As we reported several times last summer, thousands of illegal immigrants were flooding across the border into Texas and other border states every day, but two things distinguished this wave from earlier illegal immigration onslaughts.

First, Hondurans, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans made up about 75 percent of illegals caught in South Texas, whereas previously most people who crossed the border illegally originated in Mexico. Second, large numbers of these illegal migrants are unaccompanied children.

The *Washington Post* reported last June that the sharp increase in the number of illegal migrants coming over the border during the prior three months — especially the number of children traveling without their parents — had overwhelmed the Border Patrol’s detention centers in South Texas. As a result, officials shipped the children to converted warehouses and military bases as far away as California. The *Post* noted that during the eight months prior to June, Customs and Border Protection had detained 47,000 unaccompanied minors, an increase of 92 percent from the same period during the previous fiscal year.

“We’re fighting a losing battle right now,” the *Post* quoted Chris Cabrera, the Border Patrol’s union representative in McAllen, Texas. “We don’t have anywhere to hold them.”

However, the problem was caused not so much by a failure to secure the border as a failure to process and deport those who have entered our country illegally. Knowing that they would not be immediately deported, many of the migrants — especially women and children — did not even try to sneak into the country but crossed the border in plain sight of Border Patrol agents. While illegal immigrants from Mexico can fairly quickly be processed and sent back across the border, the situation for illegals from Central America is more complicated. The government must first clear their return with consular



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officials from their native country, and then charter planes to fly them home. If the immigrants request asylum in the United States, on the grounds that they fear persecution in their home countries, they must establish that their fears are credible.

Whether or not asylum is ultimately granted, the claim serves as a delaying tactic, often allowing the person to remain in the United States long enough to blend in among the large numbers of “undocumented aliens.”

We reported in late September that though the number of unaccompanied youths illegally entering our country had declined since the peak months, Carl Meacham, the director of the Americas Program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), predicted that the decline “won’t last long.” A CBS News report last August cited Department of Homeland Security figures released that day showing that about 5,500 unaccompanied children were arrested in July, about half the number apprehended in May and June and the lowest monthly figure since February. However, the decline might have been at least partially attributable to the intense heat in Mexico during the summer months, which made the long journey unbearable.

The CBP report gave Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Jeh Johnson (CBP is part of DHS) a pat on the back, claiming he “has already taken a number of steps to address this situation.” As evidence of the steps taken by Johnson, the article linked to a June 2, 2014 press statement “addressing the rising flow of unaccompanied children crossing our southwest border” that said, in part:

On the recommendation of myself and others, the President has today directed an inter-agency Unified Coordination Group to address the situation.... I am appointing Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Administrator Craig Fugate as the Federal Coordinating Official.... Fugate will ... lead and coordinate Federal response efforts to ensure that Federal agencies are unified in providing relief to the affected children. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will maintain primary responsibility for border security operations at and between ports of entry and, working with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), provide for the proper care of unaccompanied children when they are temporarily in DHS custody....

... U.S. Border Patrol Deputy Chief Vitiello ... will continue to lead DHS personnel reassigned to assist in processing and caring for unaccompanied children. We will also continue to work closely with the governments of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador to counter this recent surge in migrant children.

The Obama administration’s above-noted response to the flood of unaccompanied minors illegally crossing our borders reflected the sentiments of former Senate Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.), who said in an interview quoted by Reuters: “This is a humanitarian crisis and it requires a humanitarian response.”

Few would question the humanitarian nature of the crisis. Senator Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) the ranking member on the Appropriations Committee at the time, said, “The need is there, you know the humanitarian aspect of it, but we’re challenged on money.”

However, charging CBP and ICE with providing for the proper care of unaccompanied children in DHS custody *after the fact* treats a symptom and ignores those government policies responsible for luring these thousands of children into making a dangerous trek through Mexico — under the assumption that they could obtain legal status once they crossed our border.

Senator Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) touched on this problem in a statement posted on his Senate webpage last



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June 3, in which he stated:

The rising crisis at the border is the direct and predictable result of actions taken by President Obama. He and his Administration have announced to the world that they will not enforce America's immigration laws, and have emphasized in particular that foreign youth will be exempted from these laws.... President Obama is responsible for this calamity, and only by declaring to the world that our border is no longer open — and that the law will be restored — can this emergency be stopped.

The predictions made by Carl Meacham and Senator Sessions are proving to be accurate. Instead of enforcing our immigration laws and removing the incentive for entering our nation illegally, Obama has used executive actions to grant amnesty to millions of illegal immigrants. In the past, whenever our government has granted such amnesty, illegal immigration only increased.

Jessica Vaughan, policy director at the Center for Immigration Studies, stated the continued inflow of family migrants suggests there will be another border surge starting as early as March, reported the *Daily Caller*.

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