



Statement by Deputy Press Secretary Matt Chandler on Pew Hispanic Center Report on Unauthorized Immigration Flows

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“This Administration’s unprecedented commitment of manpower, technology and infrastructure to the Southwest border has been a major factor in this dramatic drop in illegal crossings. We are cracking down on employers who hire illegal labor, seizures of illicit goods are up across the board, criminal alien removals are at an all-time high, the Border Patrol is better staffed than at any time in its 85-year history, and the southwest border is more secure than ever before.

In addition to efforts already undertaken, the President has authorized the deployment of an additional 1,200 National Guard troops to the border to provide intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance, and immediate support to counternarcotics enforcement while Customs and Border Protection recruits and trains additional officers and agents to serve on the border. The Administration is dedicating \$600 million in new funding to enhance security technology at the border, share information and support with state, local, and tribal law enforcement, and increase federal law enforcement activities at the border. That effort will include the deployment of more agents, investigators, and prosecutors as part of a coordinated effort with states and cities to target illicit networks trafficking in people, drugs, illegal weapons, and money. We continue to work with Congress to pass a bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bill that would provide lasting resources for border security while restoring responsibility and accountability to our broken immigration system.”

Among the progress achieved to date:

1 – Expand Unmanned Aircraft Systems operations to cover the entire Southwest Border.

Results: On Sept. 1st, CBP will expand Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) flight operations, covering all Southwest border states and providing critical aerial surveillance assistance to personnel on the ground.

2 – Dedicate historic levels of personnel to the Southwest border.

Results: The Border Patrol is better staffed than at any time in its 86-year history, having nearly doubled the number of agents from approximately 10,000 in 2004 to more than 20,000 today – including more “boots on the ground” in Arizona than ever before. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has also deployed a record number of agents to the Southwest border with more than a quarter of its personnel deployed in this region, doubling the number of agents assigned to Border Enforcement Security Task Forces and tripling the number of ICE intelligence analysts working along the U.S.-Mexico border. Further, President Obama has ordered the deployment of 1,200 National Guard troops to the Southwest border to contribute additional capabilities and capacity to assist law enforcement agencies.

3 – Deploy additional technology and complete fencing construction along the Southwest border.

Results: Over the past 17 months, CBP has deployed additional Z-Backscatter Van Units, Mobile Surveillance Systems, Remote Video Surveillance Systems, thermal imaging systems, radiation portal monitors, and license plate readers to the Southwest border. DHS has also completed 646.5 miles of fencing out of nearly 652 miles mandated by Congress, including 298.5 miles of vehicle barriers and 348 miles of pedestrian fence, with the remaining construction scheduled to be complete by the end of 2010.

4 – Increase outbound inspections to interdict illegal weapons, drugs, and cash leaving the United States.

Results: In addition to placing an increased emphasis on screening southbound vehicle traffic, CBP began screening 100 percent of southbound rail shipments for illegal weapons, drugs, and cash – for the first time ever. These enhanced outbound inspections have yielded more than \$39.2 million in southbound illegal currency – an increase of more than \$29.4 million compared to 2008.

5 – Increase seizures of drugs, weapons, and currency to disrupt the operations of transnational criminal organizations.

Results: In 2009, DHS seized more than \$103 million in illegal currency, more than 1.7 million kilograms of drugs and more than 1,400 firearms – increases of more than \$47 million, more than 450,000 kilograms of drugs and more than 300 firearms compared to 2008.

6 – Deter illegal immigration through unprecedented investments in border security.

Results: Illegal border crossings have been significantly reduced, as apprehensions of illegal aliens decreased from 723,825 in FY2008 to 556,041 in FY2009, a 23 percent reduction, in part as the result of increased security along the southwest border.

7 – Increase employer audits to deter violations of employment verification laws and protect American workers.

Results: Since Jan. 2009, DHS has audited more than 2,785 employers suspected of hiring illegal labor, debarred more than 100 companies and 80 individuals, and issued more than \$6.4 million in fines—more than the total amount of audits and fines issued in the entire previous administration.

8 – Deploy Secure Communities technology to all southwest border communities.

Results: The Obama Administration has expanded the Secure Communities initiative—which uses biometric information to identify criminal aliens in state prisons and local jails to expedite removal proceedings—from 14 to 567 locations, including all jurisdictions along the Southwest border. DHS expects to expand this program nationwide by 2013. As of July 31, 2010, this program had identified more than 287,500 aliens in jails and prisons who have been charged with or convicted of criminal offenses, including more than 43,000 charged with or convicted of major violent or drug offenses (level 1 offenses). Through Secure Communities, over 37,900 convicted criminal aliens have been removed from the United States, including more than 10,800 convicted of major violent or drug offenses (level 1 offenses).

9 – Target criminal aliens who pose a threat to public safety.

Results: The Obama Administration has fundamentally reformed immigration enforcement, focusing on identifying and removing criminal aliens who pose a threat to public safety. Overall, criminal removals/returns increased by almost 22,000 between FY 2008 and FY 2009, a 19 percent increase. So far this fiscal year, ICE has removed a record 170,000 criminals from the U.S. DHS will continue to increase focus on removing those convicted of crimes who pose a threat to the safety of communities.

10 – Boost funding for Southwest border infrastructure, technology, and law enforcement.

Results: The recent passage and signing of Southwest border security supplemental legislation will provide critical additional capabilities to secure the Southwest border at and between our ports of entry and reduce the illicit trafficking of people, drugs, currency and weapons. This law provides \$14 million for improved tactical communications systems along the Southwest border and \$32 million for two additional CBP unmanned aircraft systems – in addition to \$176 million for an additional 1,000 Border Patrol agents to be deployed between ports of entry; \$68 million to hire 250 new Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at ports of entry and to maintain 270 officers currently deployed to ports of entry; and \$6 million to construct two forward operating bases along the Southwest Border to improve coordination of border security activities.

DHS and the General Services Administration (GSA) are also directing more than \$400 million in Recovery Act funding to the Southwest border, including funds for:

- Port and other infrastructure projects in Otay Mesa, California; Antelope Wells, New Mexico; Los Ebanos, Amistad Dam, Falcon Dam and Corpus Christi, Texas; and Nogales, Arizona.
- Non-Intrusive Inspection Equipment at Southwest border ports of entry, including both low energy and large-scale systems;
- Modernized tactical communications equipment for the El Paso and Rio Grande Valley Sectors; and
- Tested, commercially available security technology including thermal imaging devices, ultra-light detection, backscatter units, mobile radios, cameras and laptops for pursuit vehicles, and Remote Video Surveillance System enhancements.

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Further, DHS has increased the funds state and local law enforcement can use to combat border-related crime through Operation Stonegarden—a DHS grant program designed to support state, local, and tribal law enforcement efforts along our nation’s borders. Based on risk, cross-border traffic and border-related threat intelligence, nearly 83 percent of 2009 and 2010 Operation Stonegarden funds – more than 124 million dollars – went to Southwest border states, up from 59 percent in 2008.

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