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Readout of Secretary Johnson's Visit to Guatemala

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GUATEMALA CITY— Today, Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson concluded a two-day trip to Guatemala with U.S. Southern Command Commander General John Kelly, Counselor to the Department of State Ambassador Thomas A. Shannon, and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Acting Assistant Secretary for Policy Alan Bersin where he participated in meetings with the Governments of Guatemala and Mexico to discuss issues of mutual concern, including steps to improve the regional response to the influx of adults traveling with children and unaccompanied children across the U.S. southwest border.

While in Guatemala City, Secretary Johnson met with President Otto Fernando Pérez Molina where he expressed his condolences following this week's earthquake. During the meeting, Secretary Johnson reaffirmed DHS's commitment to partnering with our Central American counterparts to stem the flow of adults with children and unaccompanied children entering the United States, to address the root causes of the influx, and to expand the capacity of these countries to receive and reintegrate repatriated migrants. Secretary Johnson also highlighted the steps the Administration is taking 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 adults with children and unaccompanied children.

Today, Secretary Johnson met trilaterally for the first time with Guatemalan Minister of Foreign Affairs Luis Fernando Carrera Castro, Guatemalan Minister of Interior Héctor Mauricio López Bonilla, and Mexican Secretary of Interior Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong. The counterparts discussed a cooperative regional strategy and ongoing efforts to secure the Mexican-Guatemalan border. Secretary Johnson reaffirmed the United States' intent to continue working together with Mexico and Guatemala to take action against networks spreading disinformation about the journey to the United States and the legal process, and to combat and dismantle human smuggling networks. During their meeting, Secretary Johnson reiterated that the long journey is not only dangerous; there are no "permisos," "permits," or free passes at the end.

As part of these efforts, today Secretary Johnson and Minister Bonilla also signed two agreements. The first Memorandum of Cooperation and Bilateral Strategic Plan provides a leadership group and framework to guide DHS and Guatemalan cooperation in areas of immigration management, border security, information sharing, and combating transnational organized crime. They also signed the Criminal History Information Sharing Memorandum of Cooperation, which allows U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations to share criminal conviction data on Guatemalans being returned.

Secretary Johnson also met with First Lady of Guatemala Rosa Leal de Pérez and representatives from Guatemalan civil society and faith-based organizations, where he praised First Lady Leal de Pérez for her continued efforts to address the humanitarian situation, most notably through the "Quédate" campaign, which warns of the dangers of illegal migration to the United States and supports health and education opportunities that will encourage adults and children to remain in Guatemala. Secretary Johnson highlighted efforts by DHS and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to re-launch the [Dangers Awareness Campaign](#) - an aggressive Spanish language outreach effort and an urgent call to action to community groups, the media, parents, and relatives in the U.S. and Central America to communicate the dangers of the journey and the reality that under current U.S. laws and policies, anyone who is apprehended crossing the border illegally is a priority for deportation, regardless of age.

As part of the ongoing U.S. government-wide response to address this humanitarian crisis, the White House yesterday [announced](#) its request for emergency supplemental funding that will assist government agencies, including DHS, in four key areas: deterrence actions, enforcement initiatives, foreign cooperation and capacity to detain, care for and transport unaccompanied children.

Over the past few months, CBP has seen a significant increase in the apprehension of unaccompanied children and adults with children


from Central America in the Rio Grande Valley area of the southwest border. While overall border apprehensions across our entire border have only slightly increased during this time period and remain at near historic lows, the rise in apprehensions and processing of children in the Rio Grande Valley presents unique operational challenges for DHS and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). CBP has provided [updated apprehension data](#) for the southwest border.

[At the direction of President Barack Obama and Secretary Johnson](#), on June 1, a Unified Coordination Group was established to leverage Federal resources to provide humanitarian relief to the ongoing situation. This includes DHS and all of its components, HHS, the Departments of Defense, Justice, State and the General Services Administration. Secretary Johnson appointed Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Craig Fugate to serve as the Federal Coordinating Official for this U.S. Government-wide effort.

For more information, please visit www.dhs.gov.

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