



## **BACKGROUNDER: Surge of Minors at U.S.-Mexico Border**

**Background:** Recently, there has been a surge of children, teenagers, and families arriving at ports of entry along the U.S.-Mexico border. In fact, illegal migration of minors is estimated by Homeland Security's Office of Immigration Statistics to grow from 6,000 last year to an estimated 142,000 in 2015. As of June 16, 2014, DHS has seen about 50,000 minors attempting to cross into the United States and over 40,000 family members for FY 2014—and there are no signs of it stopping. To address the influx of minors and family members arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border, the Obama Administration recently announced the creation of an inter-agency Unified Coordination Group led by FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate to coordinate the federal response effort. Additionally, the Justice Department announced it would provide taxpayer-funded legal support to these unlawful immigrants. The House Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing on this issue next Wednesday, June 25, 2014.

**Surge is an Obama Administration-Made Disaster:** President Obama and other administration officials are quick to say that the sudden surge of unlawful immigrants at the border is due to violence in Central America. However, many of the Obama Administration's policies, such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and the virtual rubberstamping of "credible fear" claims at the border, have contributed to the surge of minors arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border. Additionally, in December 2013, federal district court Judge Andrew S. Hanen of Brownsville, Texas issued a searing condemnation of the Obama Administration's immigration policies regarding "unaccompanied alien children." In his order in *U.S. v. Nava-Martinez*, he accuses the federal government of facilitating human smuggling by transporting unaccompanied alien children to their parents in the U.S. who had paid smugglers to bring them here in the first place.

**Word Has Gotten Out About the United States' Lax Immigration Enforcement:** Word has gotten out around the world about President Obama's lax immigration enforcement policies and it has encouraged more individuals to come to the United States illegally, many of whom are children from Central America. Even leaders in Central America and reporters acknowledge this factor:

- **Guatemalan ambassador to U.S. states that violence is not the cause of the children's exodus—economics is the root cause.** There has been violence in the past in Central America, such as civil wars, and we have not seen these types of large numbers of people arriving at the border. Disputing the notion that violence is a major reason for the recent surge in the exodus of Guatemalan children to the U.S. border, the Guatemalan ambassador to the United States cited three factors on Univision that draw them northward: a desire to be with their parents, a lack of opportunities at home, and the aggressive recruitment of smugglers who guarantee parents that they will receive their children.
- **Honduran President says that kids come to the U.S. because of they hope to get legal status.** Speaking to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez stated that the unprecedented rise in Honduran children fleeing to the U.S. is due to misinformation about American immigration laws. He stated that "they might think they can gain legal status through this."
- **Unlawful immigrants say news reports in Central America encourage trek to United States.** A recent [article](#) from a TV station in Texas included statements from Central Americans stating that news reports in their home countries are encouraging them to make the journey north to the United States. A mother and child told the reporters that the message being disseminated in their country is, "go to America with your child, you won't be turned away."
- **New York Times reports that "shift in the way the United States treats minors" has encouraged the sudden uptick in illegal immigration.** Recently, the NY Times [reported](#) that "children, parents, immigration officials, and activists interviewed say that there has been a subtle shift in the way the United States treats minors." As a result, the article states that this perception has inspired parents to hire coyotes to bring their children, and sometimes themselves, illegally to the United States, knowing that once they arrive they will likely not face immigration enforcement. DHS acknowledges that smugglers facilitate almost all of the Central American children seeking to illegally enter the U.S. and the children often die or are maimed during their journeys.