

JUSTICE NEWS

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, April 11, 2017

Attorney General Jeff Sessions Announces the Department of Justice's Renewed Commitment to Criminal Immigration Enforcement

Attorney General Jeff Sessions today spoke to Customs and Border Protection personnel at the United States-Mexico border in Nogales, Arizona.

In his remarks, the Attorney General announced that he has issued the attached memo to United States Attorneys that mandates the prioritization of criminal immigration enforcement. The memo directs federal prosecutors to focus on particular offenses that, if aggressively charged and prosecuted, can help prevent and deter illegal immigration.

Additionally, the Attorney General revealed that the Department of Justice will add 50 more immigration judges to the bench this year and 75 next year. He also highlighted the Department's plan to streamline its hiring of judges, reflecting the dire need to reduce the backlogs in our immigration courts.

Please find below the full remarks from Attorney General Sessions.

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Remarks Prepared for Attorney General Jeff Sessions

Meeting with Customs and Border Protection Personnel and Immigration Policy Announcement

NOGALES, ARIZONA

Good morning, everyone. Let me start by thanking the brave men and women of Customs and Border Protection, who not only served as our gracious hosts today, but who put themselves in harm's way each day to secure our borders and protect us.

Here, along our nation's southwest border, is ground zero in this fight. Here, under the Arizona sun, ranchers work the land to make an honest living, and law-abiding citizens seek to provide for their families.

But it is also here, along this border, that transnational gangs like MS-13 and international cartels flood our country with drugs and leave death and violence in their wake. And it is here that criminal aliens and the coyotes and the document-forgers seek to overthrow our system of lawful immigration.

Let's stop here for a minute. When we talk about MS-13 and the cartels, what do we mean? We mean criminal organizations that turn cities and suburbs into warzones, that rape and kill innocent citizens and who profit by smuggling poison and other human beings across our borders. Depravity and violence are their calling cards, including brutal machete attacks and beheadings.

It is here, on this sliver of land, where we first take our stand against this filth.

In this fight, I am here to tell you, the brave men and women of Customs and Border Protection: we hear you and we have your back. Under the President's leadership and through his Executive Orders, we will secure this border and bring the full weight of both the immigration courts and federal criminal enforcement to combat this attack on our national security and sovereignty.

The President has made this a priority — and already we are seeing the results. From January to February of this year, illegal crossings dropped by 40 percent, which was unprecedented. Then, last month, we saw a 72 percent drop compared to the month before the President was inaugurated. That's the lowest monthly figure for at least 17 years.

This is no accident. This is what happens when you have a President who understands the threat, who is not afraid to publically identify the threat and stand up to it, and who makes clear to law enforcement that the leadership of their country finally has their back. Together, we will drastically reduce the danger posed by criminal aliens, gang members and cartel henchmen.

To that end, the President and I want to do our best to arm you, and the prosecutors who partner with you, with more tools in your fight against criminal aliens. So today, I am pleased to stand here with you and announce new guidance regarding our commitment to criminal immigration enforcement. As we speak, I am issuing a document to all federal prosecutors that mandates the prioritization of such enforcement.

Starting today, federal prosecutors are now required to consider for prosecution all of the following offenses:

- The transportation or harboring of aliens. As you know too well, this is a booming business down here. No more. We are going to shut down and jail those who have been profiting off this lawlessness — people smuggling gang members across the border, helping convicted criminals re-enter this country and preying on those who don't know how dangerous the journey can be.
- Further, where an alien has unlawfully entered the country, which is a misdemeanor, that alien will now be charged with a felony if they unlawfully enter or attempt enter a second time and certain aggravating circumstances are present.
- Also, aliens that illegally re-enter the country after prior removal will be referred for felony prosecution — and a priority will be given to such offenses, especially where indicators of gang affiliation, a risk to public safety or criminal history are present.
- Fourth: where possible, prosecutors are directed to charge criminal aliens with document fraud and aggravated identity theft — the latter carrying a two-year mandatory minimum sentence.
- Finally, and perhaps most importantly: I have directed that all 94 U.S. Attorneys Offices make the prosecution of assault on a federal law enforcement officer — that's all of you — a top priority. If someone dares to assault one of our folks in the line of duty, they will do federal time for it.

To ensure that these priorities are implemented, starting today, each U.S. Attorney's Office, whether on the border or interior, will designate an Assistant United States Attorney as the Border Security Coordinator for their District. It will be this experienced prosecutor's job to coordinate the criminal immigration enforcement response for their respective offices.

For those that continue to seek improper and illegal entry into this country, be forewarned: This is a new era. This is the Trump era. The lawlessness, the abdication of the duty to enforce our immigration laws and the catch and release practices of old are over.

In that vein, I am also pleased to announce a series of reforms regarding immigration judges to reduce the significant backlogs in our immigration courts.

Pursuant to the President's executive order, we will now be detaining all adults who are apprehended at the border. To support this mission, we have already surged 25 immigration judges to detention centers along the border. I want to thank personally the judges who answered the call to help us with this new initiative.

In addition, we will put 50 more immigration judges on the bench this year and 75 next year. We can no longer afford to wait 18 to 24 months to get these new judges on the bench. So today, I have implemented a new, streamlined hiring plan. It requires just as much vetting as before, but reduces the timeline, reflecting the dire need to reduce the backlogs in our immigration courts.

With the President's Executive Orders on Border Security, Transnational Criminal Organizations and Public Safety as our guideposts, we will execute a strategy that once again secures the border; apprehends and prosecutes those criminal aliens that threaten our public safety; takes the fight to gangs like MS-13 and Los Zetas; and makes dismantlement and destruction of the cartels a top priority. We will deploy a multifaceted approach in these efforts: we are going to interdict your drugs on the way in, your money on the way out and investigate and prosecute your trafficking networks to the fullest extent of the law.

Why are we doing this? Because it is what the duly enacted laws of the United States require. I took an oath to protect this country from all enemies, foreign and domestic. How else can we look the parents and loved ones of Kate Steinle, Grant Ronnebeck and so many others in eye and say we are doing everything possible to prevent such tragedies from ever occurring again?

Let me finish where I started, by thanking you — the brave men and women in uniform who are at the front lines of this fight. I know we ask a tremendous amount from all of you, but know this: we have your back, and will do all we can to empower you and support you in your work.

God bless you and thank you.

Memo on Renewed Commitment to Criminal Immigration Enforcement

17-378

Office of the Attorney General

Topic:

Immigration

Updated April 11, 2017