

Obama seeks \$2 billion to speed up deportation of child immigrants

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The Obama administration will go to Congress Monday seeking an emergency \$2 billion appropriation for stepped-up jailing and deportation of immigrants, particularly the wave of child migrants in south Texas, White House officials have revealed.

The unnamed officials told the *New York Times* Saturday that Obama would send a letter to Congress Monday about the new enforcement actions against immigrants, to be followed by a detailed request for funds a week later.

Obama will seek stronger enforcement powers, proposing new authority for the Department of Homeland Security to speed up the screening and deportation of child migrants from Central America.

The DHS currently has authority to return child migrants from Mexico as soon as they are apprehended, simply dumping them across the border. But under legislation passed in 2008 under the Bush administration, child migrants from other countries, including Central America, must be processed by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and appear at hearings where they can be represented by attorneys.

An administration official told the *Washington Post*, “We will inform Congress that we will be asking them to work with us to ensure that we have the legal authorities to maximize the impact of our efforts.”

The DHS has already announced plans for more immigration judges and prisons in south Texas in anticipation of a swelling tide of immigrants from Central America. This has been described as a “sustained border security surge,” military language chosen deliberately to echo the Bush “surge” of troops to Iraq and Obama’s “surge” of troops to Afghanistan.

An estimated 52,000 unaccompanied child migrants have been detained since last October, as well as

39,000 mothers with children. Of these, only about one quarter are from Mexico, with the vast majority coming from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. These countries have been wracked by poverty and violence and targeted for US political intervention—including the 2009 US-backed coup in Honduras.

The \$2 billion comes on top of the \$255 million in aid to the three Central American countries announced in conjunction with the visit there by Vice President Joseph Biden earlier this month. That money is to pay for increased policing, repatriation of deportees and a propaganda campaign warning potential migrants about the increased security at the US-Mexico border.

The repressive measures announced by the White House will include “tougher penalties for smugglers,” according to the *Times*, although in many cases these are relatives and friends of the children helping them reunite with their parents, who have already reached the United States.

After posturing during his 2012 reelection campaign as the advocate of immigrants, the Obama administration deported more than 2 million immigrants in just over five years, the largest number in US history, and more than the Bush administration deported in eight years.

In an interview with ABC News Thursday, Obama spoke directly to the parents of immigrant children, declaring, “Do not send your children to the borders. If they do make it, they’ll get sent back. More importantly, they may not make it.”

This heavy-handed warning—effectively a death threat—is an attempt to whip up anti-immigrant sentiment, portraying the parents as neglecting their children by sending them north across the border. But the *Los Angeles Times* reported a study finding that 90 percent of children detained at the border are eventually

placed with relatives within the US, including 55 percent with their parents. In other words, the children are coming north, not to leave their parents, but to be reunited with them.

As for Obama's pretended interest in keeping families together, reports from the ICE to the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Senate Judiciary Committee, obtained by the *Huffington Post* web site, reveal that ICE deported more than 72,000 parents of US-born children last year, and a total of 200,000 more in the years 2010-2012. According to one estimate, 4.5 million US citizen children have at least one parent who is undocumented, and thus threatened with deportation if apprehended by ICE.

Obama's move towards a crackdown on child migrants follows criticism from congressional Republicans demanding a harder line on border security. House Speaker John Boehner called on the White House to dispatch the National Guard to the border region. At a House Homeland Security Committee hearing last week, there were calls for a cutoff of all US economic aid to Mexico until the border is "secure," and the building of hundreds of miles of additional fencing along the border.



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