

[Home](#) » [Briefing Room](#) » [Justice News](#)

JUSTICE NEWS

**Deputy Attorney General James M. Cole Delivers Remarks at
Department of Homeland Security Press Conference on Human
Smuggling Along the Southwest Border**

~ Tuesday, July 22, 2014

Thank you, Secretary Johnson, and thank you all for being here. I am pleased to join the Secretary to discuss the joint law enforcement efforts of the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security to address the challenges created by the recent surge in undocumented immigrants' crossing illegally into the United States.

As the Secretary has so poignantly described, the conditions for these migrants en route to the United States are horrible. Human smuggling ventures lead to extremely dangerous circumstances that pose a threat to public safety and are serious humanitarian concerns. We have encountered smuggled aliens that have been, kidnapped, taken hostage, beaten, sexually assaulted, threatened with murder or have died as a result of dangerous conditions.

The Department of Justice has a long history of working with DHS to investigate and prosecute human smugglers. In fiscal year 2013, our U.S. Attorney's Offices charged almost 3,000 defendants with the crime of bringing in and harboring certain aliens. In the four fiscal years from 2009 to 2013, U.S. Attorneys filed charges against over 15,000 individuals for these crimes. As of June 30, 2014, the Department has filed alien smuggling charges against more than 2,000 defendants in federal district court in this fiscal year alone.

These statistics are emblematic of the work of federal prosecutors and law enforcement agents who enforce our nation's immigration laws. The Department of Justice continues to work collaboratively with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to facilitate investigations like the ones Secretary Johnson described that may lead to prosecutions of those responsible for the illegal entry of individuals, including minors, into the United States. Just two weeks ago, I met with the U.S. Attorneys who represent the southwest border districts to discuss additional ways to disrupt and dismantle criminal organizations that are facilitating the transportation of unaccompanied minors and others into this country.

In addition, we are working with our foreign counterparts to encourage them to target facilitators operating in their countries. We are redoubling our efforts to work with the government of Mexico, to identify, apprehend, and prosecute smugglers who are aiding unaccompanied children in crossing the U.S. border.

But arresting and prosecuting the smugglers, without more, will not solve the problem. We also need to build the capacity of our counterparts in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador to address the violence—particularly the gang violence—that encourages migration to the United States. This violence remains endemic, even in countries—such as El Salvador—where truces have been brokered between gangs, such as MS-13 and the 18th Street gang.

This violence can be addressed only by a sustained commitment to the rule of law and law enforcement reform by the Central American countries from which these minors are fleeing. Where a country makes this commitment, the Department of Justice has demonstrated its willingness to assist through exchanges of expertise. This is not theoretical. We have done this successfully in Columbia. The Justice Department works through our four law enforcement agencies—the FBI, DEA, USMS, and ATF—and two offices within the Department solely dedicated to overseas security sector work: the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) and the Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training

(OPDAT). With funding from Congress, both OPDAT and ICITAP can place federal prosecutors, and senior law enforcement officers, as long-term resident advisors in countries seeking to reform their laws as well as their investigative, prosecutorial, and correctional services. We are hopeful that Congress will fully fund these capacity building programs in Central America and Mexico and that, as a result, we will be able to highlight even more successes in the months to come.

The Department of Justice will continue to prioritize cases involving smuggling or transporting of undocumented individuals, including minors, into the United States. We appreciate our longstanding partnership with ICE and DHS and look forward to continuing our work together on this important law enforcement initiative.