Statement by Secretary Jeh C. Johnson on Southwest Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Priorities

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In connection with the latest monthly release of numbers of apprehensions on the southwest border, Secretary Johnson made the following statement:

"In June 2016, apprehensions by the Border Patrol on our southwest border – an indicator of total attempts to cross the border illegally – decreased from the levels we saw in May and April. Year to date, apprehensions are somewhat higher than in FY 2015, but significantly

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lower than FY 2014 and FY 2013:

Apprehensions by the Border Patrol

Month	UAC	Family Members	All
January 2016	3,091	3,145	23,759
February 2016	3,095	3,051	26,077
March 2016	4,214	4,451	33,319
April 2016	5,173	5,620	38,088
May 2016	5,617	6,782	40,349
June 2016	4,809	6,633	34,463

We must enforce our immigration laws, and we are doing so consistent with our enforcement priorities. Those priorities, revised as part of the President's executive actions in November 2014, more sharply focus our limited enforcement resources on public safety and border security. And, those priorities are reflected in actual results. Today, over 99% of those in immigration detention fit within one of these enforcement priorities; and around 85% are within the top priority for removal. In 2009 just 35% of those deported by ICE were convicted criminals; today that percentage is 60%.

We also continue to crack down on the transnational criminal organizations involved in the smuggling and exploitation of migrants. Last week, 41 individuals

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linked to transnational criminal organizations responsible for smuggling hundreds of migrants through South and Central America into the United States were arrested, with our support, by foreign partners in two separate multinational operations. These arrests were part of the ongoing "Operation Citadel" – a multi-country effort, supported by DHS Joint Task Force-Investigations. Likewise, DHS recently launched "Operation All In," coordinated by our Joint Task Force-West, which targets individuals involved in smuggling along our southwest border. In the first 10 days of this operation, conducted last month, we made 30 criminal arrests and 19 administrative arrests of smugglers for immigration violations.

In May, I visited Central America for the third time in two years. We are cognizant that conditions in Central America push many to flee the region in search of a better life in the United States. We recognize the need to provide a safe alternative path to our country, and that many from the region should be regarded as refugees. Through our Central American Minors program, the U.S. Government continues to offer in-country processing in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala for the protection of minors with a parent lawfully present in the United States. To date, we have accepted applications from 9,216 individuals and have approved 2,297 of these applications for refugee resettlement or parole. We are expanding other alternative paths to the United States for those who qualify for protection under our immigration laws.

We also recognize that the ultimate solution is a long-term investment in Central America, to address underlying conditions there. We are pleased with the $750 million in support Congress provided this year in aid to Central America, and generally are encouraged

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by the more recent proposals by some in Congress to take additional steps to address the humanitarian crisis in the region."

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