



# Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen Statement on Border Emergency

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen M. Nielsen made the following statement today on the situation at the U.S. southern border and how the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is responding:

“Today I report to the American people that we face a cascading crisis at our southern border. The system is in freefall. DHS is doing everything possible to respond to a growing humanitarian catastrophe while also securing our borders, but we have reached peak capacity and are now forced to pull from other missions to respond to the emergency.”

“Let me be clear: the volume of ‘vulnerable populations’ arriving is without precedent. This makes it far more difficult to care for them and to prioritize individuals legitimately fleeing persecution. In the past, the majority of migration flows were single adults who could move through our immigration system quickly and be returned to their home countries if they had no legal right to stay. Now we are seeing a flood of families and unaccompanied children, who—because of outdated laws and misguided court decisions—cannot receive efficient adjudication and, in most cases, will never be removed from the United States even if they are here unlawfully. The result is a massive ‘pull factor’ to our country.”

“My gravest concern is for children. They are arriving sicker than ever before and are exploited along the treacherous trek. Smugglers and traffickers know that our laws make it easier to enter and stay if you show up as a family. So they are using children as a ‘free ticket’ into America, and have in some cases even used kids multiple times—recycling them—to help more aliens get into the United States. Our border stations were not designed to hold young people for extended periods, yet this influx has forced thousands of them into facilities that are getting crowded and overwhelmed. This goes well beyond politics. We must come together to find a way to tackle the crisis and reduce the flows so children are not put at risk. Any system that encourages a parent to send their child alone on this terrible journey—where they are exploited, pawned, and recycled—is completely broken.”

“Moreover, our agents and officers at the border cannot fulfill their critical national security responsibilities while also attending to the influx of vulnerable populations. That is why, effective immediately, I am redirecting additional personnel and resources from across the Department to assist with the response, I have put out a call Department-wide for volunteers to provide support to our frontline agencies, and I am appealing to interagency partners for further assistance. But it will not be enough, so this week I notified Congress that DHS will need emergency legislative action to restore order, achieve operational control of our border, and ensure we can fulfill our humanitarian responsibilities effectively.”

“Make no mistake: Americans may feel effects from this emergency. As personnel are reallocated to join the crisis-response effort, there may be commercial delays, higher vehicle wait times at the border, and longer pedestrian lines. Despite these impacts, we cannot shirk our responsibility to the American people to do everything possible to secure our country while also upholding our humanitarian values.”

Secretary Nielsen [sent a letter yesterday to Congress](http://links.govdelivery.com:80/track?type=click&enid=ZWFWzPTEmbXNpZD0mYXVpZD0mbWFpbGluZzIkPTIwMTkwMzI5LjM5NzE1NTEmbWVzc2FnZWlkPU1EOi10UkQtQlVMLTlwMTkwMzI5LjM5NzE1NTEmZGF0YWJhc2VpZD0xMDAxJnNlcmhbD0) highlighting the severity of the crisis, especially the danger posed to children by the journey to U.S. borders and the realities of a system reaching peak capacity. This week, after many months of diplomatic negotiations, Secretary Nielsen [signed a historic regional compact this week](http://links.govdelivery.com:80/track?type=click&enid=ZWFWzPTEmbXNpZD0mYXVpZD0mbWFpbGluZzIkPTIwMTkwMzI5LjM5NzE1NTEmbWVzc2FnZWlkPU1EOi10UkQtQlVMLTlwMTkwMzI5LjM5NzE1NTEmZGF0YWJhc2VpZD0xMDAxJnNlcmhbD0) with representatives of the Northern Triangle—El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras—to confront the crisis at the source. The countries agreed to work with the United States to combat human smuggling and trafficking, crack down on transnational criminals fueling the crisis, and strengthen border security to prevent irregular migration. The Secretary also [met with senior officials from the Government of Mexico](http://links.govdelivery.com:80/track?type=click&enid=ZWFWzPTEmbXNpZD0mYXVpZD0mbWFpbGluZzIkPTIwMTkwMzI5LjM5NzE1NTEmbWVzc2FnZWlkPU1EOi10UkQtQlVMLTlwMTkwMzI5LjM5NzE1NTEmZGF0YWJhc2VpZD0xMDAxJnNlcmhbD0) to discuss ways to quickly address the crisis and stem historic migration flows through Mexican territory, while ensuring all individuals legitimately fleeing persecution receive appropriate humanitarian protection.

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