

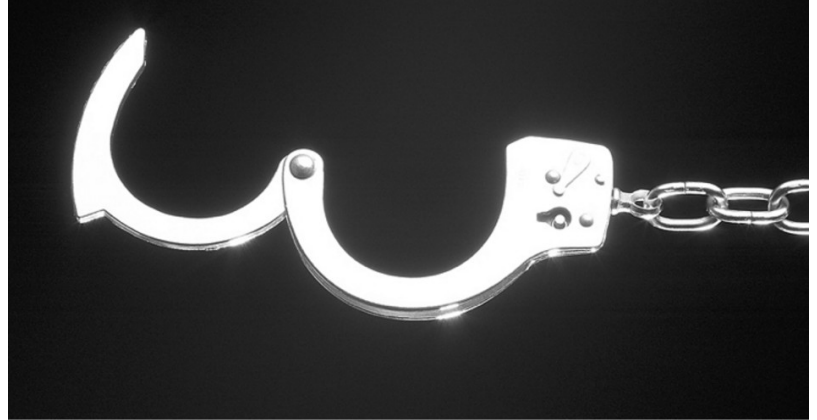


Written by [Warren Mass](#) on July 7, 2015

Congressman Criticizes Obama Administration for Releasing Illegal Alien Criminals

Representative Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, recently criticized the Obama administration for releasing illegal aliens with criminal records back onto the streets.

During an interview on ABC's *This Week* program on July 5, host George Stephanopoulos asked Goodlatte "what went wrong" when a woman was shot and killed by an illegal alien in San Francisco on July 1 — "what should be done about it?"



Goodlatte replied, in part:

Well, both ... the federal government and San Francisco are wrong here, and George, let me say at the outset, what a tragedy for this family. My heart goes out to them. But quite frankly, the federal government, I.C.E. knows about San Francisco's sanctuary policy. It's a bad policy but they know about it. Why did they turn him over to them when they could have deported him again or prosecuted him for illegally re-entering the country four times?

The victim of the tragic shooting, Kathryn Steinle, was shot while walking with her father and a family friend along San Francisco's Pier 14, a popular tourist attraction. Her accused assailant, Juan Francisco Sanchez, who told San Francisco's KGO-TV that the shooting was an accident, has seven prior felony convictions and has been deported five times.

Britain's *Daily Mail* and AP reported the incredible explanation Sanchez gave for the shooting: He claimed that he was walking on Pier 14 after taking sleeping pills that he found in a dumpster and then found the gun wrapped in a T-shirt while sitting on a bench at the pier.

"So I picked it up and ... it started to fire on its own," Sanchez told KGO-TV. "Then suddenly I heard that boom boom, three times." He claimed he only realized he had shot someone when he was arrested by police hours later, after discarding the gun in San Francisco Bay.

Explanations for why Sanchez was freely walking about instead of being in custody depended on who was stating them, with officials quick to transfer blame to government agencies other than their own.

AP reported that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) turned Sanchez over to authorities in San Francisco on March 26 on an outstanding drug warrant.

ICE spokeswoman Virginia Kice told the AP that ICE had issued a detainer for Sanchez, requesting notification of his release and requesting that he be held in custody until immigration authorities could pick him up. But the detainer was not honored, Kice said.

The sheriff's department released Sanchez on April 15 after the San Francisco district attorney's office declined to prosecute him for the 10-year-old marijuana possession case.

CNS News cited a statement from Freya Horne, counsel for the San Francisco Sheriff's Department,



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who said on July 3 that federal detention requests do not constitute sufficient reason to detain someone. Under San Francisco's sanctuary ordinance, aliens in the country illegally are not handed over to immigration officials unless there is a warrant for their arrest. "It's not legal to hold someone on a request to detain," Horne was quoted as saying by Fox News. "This is not just us. This is a widely adopted position."

When Stephanopoulos asked Goodlatte if federal law should require sanctuary cities such as San Francisco to turn over aliens who have been deported in the past or charged with crimes, the congressman replied:

The policy regarding detainees, which is the law of the United States, was enforced by the Bush administration as being mandatory. The Obama administration has converted that into something voluntary. And in doing so, they have eliminated a program that was working called Secure Communities, where individuals like this would be detained and would be turned over to the immigration service.

Now, in addition to that, this administration is releasing criminals back onto the streets themselves. So there's fault to be borne by both.

Goodlatte also questioned ICE's lack of wisdom in releasing Sanchez to San Francisco officials, noting that federal officials knew that it was one of roughly 140 Sanctuary Cities across the country that prohibit spending funds to cooperate with federal immigration law. "Why did they ever turn him over to [San Francisco] when they could have deported him?" Goodlatte asked.

AP reported that San Francisco Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi defended his office's release of Sanchez and focused responsibility for the tragic shooting on U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Mirkarimi asserted that ICE should have issued an arrest warrant for Sanchez. "ICE knew that he had been deported five times," Mirkarimi said. "You would have thought he met a threshold that he required a court order or a warrant. They did not do that."

But Jessica Vaughan, director of policy studies at the Washington-based Center for Immigration Studies, a group that has long advocated stricter enforcement of our nation's immigration laws, sees things differently. "Most of the blame should fall squarely on the shoulders of the San Francisco sheriff, because his department had custody of him and made the choice to let him go without notifying ICE," said Vaughan.

The *Washington Times* reported that the San Francisco board of supervisors approved an ordinance in September 2013 that prohibited local law enforcement from complying with ICE detainees unless the person in custody has a conviction for a violent crime such as murder, sexual assault, trafficking, or assault with a deadly weapon.

Even the ACLU of Northern California, an organization that normally supports very liberal policies toward illegal aliens, questioned the San Francisco Sheriff's Department decision to release Sanchez, calling it a "tragic anomaly." "It is still unclear why the federal government turned over someone who is known to be deportable to the city of San Francisco, knowing that San Francisco is one of the oldest sanctuary cities in the country," the ACLU-NC said.

While the tragic killing of Kathryn Steinle has received international attention, it is by no means unique. The conditions that led to it are indicative of the Obama Immigration's continued loose immigration enforcement policies.



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We noted in an [article last month](#) that the Obama administration, under ICE's Intensive Supervision Appearance Program, (ISAP) has released many aliens — some of whom are at risk of committing criminal acts — from detention into U.S. communities.

In that article, we quoted from a statement Goodlatte directed at ICE Director Sarah Saladña during an oversight hearing on U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement conducted by his committee on April 14. He noted during that hearing:

We just learned that in addition to releasing over 36,000 convicted criminal aliens in FY 2013, ICE released 30,558 convicted criminal aliens in FY 2014 pursuant to its so-called "priorities."

Director, ICE's first duty and highest obligation is public safety. The nonsensical actions of this Administration demonstrate its lack of desire to enforce the law even against unlawful aliens convicted of serious crimes.

We observed in an earlier [article last October](#) that there were nearly 167,000 convicted criminal aliens with final orders of removal who are still in the United States and "currently at large" and that under the Obama administration's lax deportation policy deportations from the interior of the United States were 34 percent lower than the previous year.

When senseless tragedies such as the killing of Kathryn Steinle occur, there is a lot of finger pointing, and it may be natural for officials to blame agencies other than their own. And there is certainly sufficient blame to go around. However, the Obama administration's policy of releasing thousands of illegal aliens with criminal records into our population certainly constitutes a major contributing factor in such crimes.

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