



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on March 9, 2017

Illegal Border Crossings Decreased 40 Percent During Trump's First Month

Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly (shown on right) issued a statement on March 8 noting that U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has released data showing a 40-percent drop in apprehensions of illegal immigrants from January to February. The number of illegal aliens apprehended during that period fell from 31,578 to 18,762 persons.



Kelly's statement observed: "The drop in apprehensions shows a marked change in trends. Since the Administration's implementation of Executive Orders to enforce immigration laws, apprehensions and inadmissible activity is trending toward the lowest monthly total in at least the last five years."

The DHS head also directed attention to what he regards as an "especially significant" change in the trend line for illegal alien apprehensions. He noted that CBP historically sees a 10-20 percent increase in apprehensions of illegal immigrants from January to February. Therefore, this year's 40-percent decline during that period indicates a radical departure from the historic trend.

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Kelly contrasted the record for apprehensions of illegal aliens since Trump took office with the period from October 1, 2016 until Trump's inauguration. During that period, the last four months of former president Obama's administration, CBP reported 157,000 apprehensions of illegal aliens — a 35-percent increase over the previous fiscal year.

"We will remain vigilant to respond to any changes in these trends, as numbers of illegal crossings typically increase between March and May," Kelly ended his statement. "However, the early results show that enforcement matters, deterrence matters, and that comprehensive immigration enforcement can make an impact."

Fox News reported that Trump signed an executive order increasing border security and authorizing the construction of his promised border wall along the southern border during the first few days of his presidency. The president also plans to hire about 5,000 additional Border Patrol officials and 10,000 ICE agents and also seeks to fast-track deportations.

A CNN report on March 8 speculated about the reasons for the sharp decline in illegal alien apprehension in the previous month and whether or not the decline was attributable to the Trump administration's increased enforcement and the deterrent factor of Trump's strong words about securing our borders. The report started:



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It will still take months to figure out if the decrease in apprehensions is an indication of a lasting Trump effect on immigration patterns. Numbers tend to decrease seasonally in the winter and increase into the spring months.

But the sharp downtick after an uptick at the end of the Obama administration could fit the narrative that it takes tough rhetoric on immigration — backed up by policy — to get word-of-mouth warnings to undocumented immigrants making the harrowing journey to the border.

Our [article on January 25](#), just days after Trump’s inauguration, noted that Trump was wasting no time in putting his promised tough illegal immigration enforcement plan into effect. We reported that during a ceremony at the Department of Homeland Security honoring Kelly, the department’s newly confirmed secretary, Trump signed an executive order to begin construction of a wall on the U.S. border with Mexico and to improve immigration enforcement, which includes ending the “catch and release” policy practiced by the Obama administration.

On that same day, Trump also signed an executive order that would strip federal grants from “sanctuary” cities and states that do not enforce federal immigration laws.

That there has been a vast change in the illegal cross-border traffic since Trump took office can be readily observed by comparing the latest figure just released by CBP with the figures we reported in our [article last December 16](#).

In that article, we reported that statistics released by CBP on December 15 indicated that the number of illegal aliens apprehended at the border had reached the highest number since the height of the border surge in June 2014. During November, 47,214 illegal aliens were apprehended — a 44-percent increase from November 2015. Of this total, the Border Patrol apprehended more than 15,000 illegal aliens traveling together as families while crossing the southwest border during November.

In that article, we cited a report from the *Washington Times* indicating that while Obama officials blamed conditions in Central America — including prevalent poverty and violence — for forcing people to make the trip north, the head of the Border Patrol had a different explanation. Border Patrol Chief Mark Morgan told Congress that U.S. policy is inviting the surge because migrants, coached by the smugglers that they are paying, have learned to exploit the system.

A CNS News report on November 30 quoted from summarized Morgan’s testimony that day before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: “What’s happening with the UACs [unaccompanied children] and the family units, the OTMs [other than Mexicans] as we call them, from Central America ... is right now, they know that if they make it to the border, they will be released into the interior of the United States. Generally, that’s done through an NTA ... a notice to appear.”

Morgan said this weak enforcement sends a “strong message” to others back in their home countries that if you can get to the border, we will let you in.

As we reported in our January 25 article, Trump’s executive order ended the “catch and release” policy under which illegal border crossers were issued a “notice to appear” and released instead of being detained and processed for deportation.

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