



Illegal Immigrant “Children” Include MS-13 Gang Members

An internal summary of Border Patrol operations at the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Nogales (Arizona) Placement Center stated that 16 unaccompanied immigrant children being held at the facility are members of Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) transnational criminal gang.



The summary, which was obtained by the Townhall online magazine, noted that Border Patrol officials at Nogales were alerted to the MS-13 presence among the detainees when they discovered gang-related graffiti in the walls of the processing center. It stated:

Border Patrol Agents (BPAs) and Customs and Border Protection Officers (CBPOs), assigned to The Nogales Placement Center (NPC), discovered that 16 unaccompanied alien children (13 El Salvadoran males, two Guatemalan males and one Honduran male) currently being held at the NPC are members of Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13). The MS-13 gang members admitted to their gang associations following a discovery of graffiti at the NPC. Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO), and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) were notified.

This latest report from Border Patrol officials confirms what has been known for some time. On June 12, Arizona Governor Jan Brewer sent a letter to House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), in which she expressed serious concerns about a gang presence among the illegal immigrants from Central America crossing our borders:

By the Obama administration’s own estimation, 230,000 unaccompanied alien minors are expected to cross through the Rio Grande Sector by the end of next year.... If Border Patrol is overwhelmed, what consideration is being given — and what is being done — to determine if any of these illegal aliens have criminal histories or gang affiliations? For example, we know that MS-13, one of the world’s most notorious international gangs, has strong ties to several of the Central American countries from which these aliens are arriving. The administration’s refusal to properly verify that violent criminals are not among those entering the United States shows an alarming lack of concern for our homeland’s security. As a nation, we cannot sit back and allow this policy to continue.

As we noted in our article posted on June 16, Chris Cabrera, the vice president of the National Border Patrol Council Local 3307 in the Rio Grande Valley, offered more substantive details that validated Brewer’s concerns.

Cabrera told *National Review* that Border Patrol agents have reunited identified gang members with their families in the United States. An officer had recently told Cabrera about a known teen member of



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on July 9, 2014

MS-13 whom he was powerless to stop entering the country. Cabrera asked, in frustration: "If he's a confirmed gang member in his own country, why are we letting him in here?"

"I've heard people come in and say, 'You're going to let me go, just like you let my mother go, just like you let my sister go. You're going to let me go as well, and the government's going to take care of us,'" Cabrera said. "Until we start mandatory detentions, mandatory removals, I don't think anything is going to change. As a matter of fact, I think it's going to get worse."

As far back as January 2009, Judicial Watch ran an article that cited a then-current report from the published by the Justice Department's National Gang Intelligence Center (NGIC), an FBI task force created in 2005 to address the increased threat of violent gangs in the United States. Among the report's findings was that that up to 80 percent of crime in the United States is committed by gangs and that gang membership in this country had grown to one million, an increase of 200,000 during the previous few years.

Furthermore, the report noted a high-ranking FBI official's statement that gangs had followed the migration paths of illegal immigrant laborers to avoid big-city police departments that had cracked down on their activities. The official gave as an example Mara Salvatrucha or MS-13, which had spread throughout the United States and continues expanding.

USA Today, in an article that same month, quoted a statement from Michael Sullivan, the outgoing director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, who said that MS-13's use of extreme violence to advance extortion, prostitution, and other criminal enterprises had frustrated attempts to infiltrate and disrupt the gang's activities. "MS-13's foothold in the U.S. is expanding," said Sullivan.

Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) was established in Los Angeles in the 1980s among immigrants from El Salvador. Many gang members were deported after being arrested, with one high-ranking member, Jose Abrego, being deported four times, indicating how loose our immigration screening procedures are. Because of the deportations, MS-13 leaders turned to recruiting more members back in Central America, members who have, in turn, illegally entered the United States.

In a statement made to National Review Online on June 13, Art Del Cueto, president of the National Border Patrol Council Local 2544 in Tucson, said that official policy calls for Border Patrol agents who recognize the gang-affiliated tattoos on the bodies of young males crossing the border to ignore that evidence pointing to gang membership. "It's upsetting that a lot of them are 16 or 17 years old and a lot of them are not going to face deportation," Cueto said.

Adding to the problem of gang members being found among young illegal immigrants is that fact that even those who are somehow deported simply return again and again. On the July 8 Fox News Channel program, *Your World with Neil Cavuto*, Sheriff Paul Babeu of Pinal County, Arizona, reported that the federal government has released criminal illegal immigrants into his county. Amazingly, Babeu's deputies have arrested individuals who have already been deported 10 or 15 times!

Babeu said, "[The federal government] has released dangerous violent criminals right in my county and they refuse to give me the names of these criminals, and that there are cartel scouts ... ushering the drugs through all the way up to Phoenix.... We have a guy just yesterday we arrested and everyday 10 times deported, 15 times deported, because there are no consequences for breaking the law."

Which goes to the heart of our national immigration problem. We have increasing numbers of illegal immigrants crossing our border because there are no consequences for breaking the law. Rather than



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“immigration reform,” as President Obama and many members of Congress (particularly in the Senate) have called for, there is a simpler solution: There must be consequences for breaking the law.

Photo of MS-13 graffiti on a brick wall from 2012



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