



Judge Criticizes Plan to Reunite Alien Families, Saying: “The Government Can Do a Lot Better”

On July 13, U.S. District Court Judge Dana Sabraw rescinded his praise for a new plan filed by the Department of Justice to reunite more than 2,500 children of illegal aliens with their families, saying, “HHS either does not understand the court’s orders or is acting in defiance of them.” In response to Deputy Assistant HHS Secretary Chris Meekins’ comments on his court order, Sabraw said, “The government can do a lot better.”



Sabraw issued an order on June 26 stating that alien families who have already been separated must be reunited within 30 days. However, President Trump had already signed an executive order on June 20 designed to keep together alien families who had been detained at the border after crossing it illegally.

A message posted on the DHS website on June 23 said that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Health and Human Services (HHS) had established a process to ensure that family members know the location of their children and have regular communication after being separated to ensure that those adults who are subject to removal (deportation) are reunited with their children for the purposes of removal.

Sabraw said in court on July 13 that he thought the administration was acting in good faith, but hours later, in response to a statement made by Deputy Assistant Health and Human Services Secretary for Preparedness and Response Chris Meekins, apparently had second thoughts and rescinded his earlier praise.

Meekins said that while he is committed to meeting the July 26 deadline, it was his opinion that “the court’s necessary truncating of the vetting process ... materially increases the risk that HHS will reunify a child with a parent who will abuse them.”

Sabraw apparently took issue with Meekins’ statement, saying it was “nothing but cover for HHS. It is completely inconsistent with a good faith effort and the statement that three Cabinet members made [on July 12]. It portrays a very grudging reluctance to do things. And then ultimately says, we are doing a truncated procedure, and if anything goes wrong it is on the court. That’s the message, and it’s not appreciated, and the government can do a lot better.”

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