



Trump Picks Retired Marine Gen. John Kelly to Head DHS

President-elect Donald Trump has chosen retired Marine General John Kelly (shown) to be the next secretary of Homeland Security, Trump's transition team told members of the media on December 7 on condition of anonymity, because they weren't authorized to speak publicly before any official announcement.



Since border security and illegal immigration were a major part of Trump's presidential campaign, Kelly, who has extensive experience securing our southern border, is seen as a natural fit to head DHS, which oversees several agencies responsible for enforcing border-security activities. These include U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

A report in *The Hill* noted that Kelly has described the drug flow and undocumented immigrants crossing the border as "existential" threats to national security, and has repeatedly told Congress that the United States has severely underestimated threats in the region.

The Hill reported that immigration "hardliners" praise Kelly for his military expertise and trust he'll build a powerful barrier along the southern border. A key plank in Trump's campaign was to build a wall along our border with Mexico. But some who favor strong immigration enforcement worry that Kelly may not crack down hard enough on alien workers who are here illegally.

"He's clearly committed to protecting the physical security of Americans; we still don't know how committed he'll be to protecting their economic security," Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, said in an e-mail to *The Hill*.

However, Krikorian said he was optimistic that Kelly would be "fully committed" to Trump's anti-illegal immigration agenda.

Kelly is the former head of U.S. Southern Command, which is responsible for providing contingency planning, operations, and security cooperation for U.S. military interests in Central and South America and the Caribbean regions.

On February 26, 2014, in his capacity as SouthCom commander, Kelly testified before the House Armed Services Committee. In more than 30 pages of testimony, the general provided an overview of regional security issues, that include such topics as "Transnational Organized Crime" (primarily drug smuggling), "Destabilizing Effects in the Region" (again, areas of Central America being "under the direct influence of drug trafficking organizations"), "Illicit [drug] Trafficking to the United States," "Crime-Terror Convergence" (smuggling not only drugs, but people), and "External Actors: Iran and



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Islamic Extremist Groups (“As a state-sponsor of terrorism, Iran’s involvement in the Western Hemisphere is a matter for concern.”)

In the section related to crime-terror convergence, Kelly spoke of how criminal smuggling operations could be used to smuggle terrorists into the United States:

Clearly, criminal networks can move just about anything on these smuggling pipelines. My concern, Mr. Chairman, is that many of these pipelines lead directly into the United States, representing a potential vulnerability that could be exploited by terrorist groups seeking to do us harm.

Supporters and sympathizers of Lebanese Hezbollah are involved in both licit and illicit activities in the region, including drug trafficking.

Roy Beck, the head of NumbersUSA — a group that wants to reduce legal immigration as well as deport illegal immigrants — told *The Hill* he’s worried that Kelly will focus his efforts solely on terrorism and neglect the issue of illegal alien workers.

Beck would like Trump to install senior officials at the Department of Homeland Security, ideally Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, who will push for more raids and thorough audits of workplaces to boot out illegal workers.

“[Kelly’s] interest is going to be terrorism and national security,” Beck said. “That’s where his experience is.”

“He will deal with immigration as it relates to terrorism, but in terms of the economic part of immigration,” Beck says he’s “very nervous about [Kelly’s ability to focus on that aspect].”

A report from Yahoo News quoted another leader at NumbersUSA, Rosemary Jenks, the group’s director of government relations, who also voiced concern that Kelly may not go far enough in enforcing immigration laws related to the employment of illegal aliens.

“Donald Trump didn’t just campaign on building the wall — he also campaigned on protecting American workers by reducing immigration,” Jenks said. “We have no idea what Gen. Kelly’s views on immigration are or what his experience is. That’s a problem.”

Jenks released a statement praising Kelly for being committed to protecting Americans, but said he had yet to show his commitment to enforcing immigration laws.

“Gen. Kelly’s background provides assurance that he would be fully committed and experienced to protect the physical security of the American people,” she said. “We will be looking for immediate signs that he will show the same commitment to enforcing immigration laws to protect the economic security of American workers and their families.”

Such statements from Beck and Jenks are, of course, purely speculative, because in his capacity as a military commander, Kelly was not responsible for enforcing our nation’s immigration laws, but for defending our nation against external enemies. Since he will be reporting directly to Trump, there is no reason to believe that his priorities will be any different from the president’s.

Considering the new chain of command, we can expect Kelly to perform in a manner that is diametrically opposite to his predecessor, Jeh Johnson. As we noted in [an article last month](#), in his role as DHS secretary, Johnson was the Obama administration’s principal point man to issue orders granting amnesty from deportation to large numbers of illegal aliens, especially under the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) program. Johnson described DAPA in his November 20, 2014 memorandum that expanded DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), which



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was initiated in 2012 by a policy memorandum sent from former DHS Secretary Janet Reno.

Johnson's memorandum removed DACA's age cap and also extended work authorization for some illegal aliens who have been granted legal status to three years.

Since it is impossible to imagine Trump — who was highly critical of the Obama administration's immigration-related memoranda, including the one on DACA — to pull his punches on strictly enforcing our laws dealing with the employment of illegal aliens, it would seem that those who worry about Kelly (who would report to Trump) being weak on such enforcement are worrying needlessly.

However, there is another component to the illegal-immigration problem that is often overlooked. And that is, if the incentives for migrants to enter our country illegally were removed, then the flood of illegal migration would cease. Indeed, if the many financial incentives (including employment, education, housing, and healthcare benefits) provided to illegal aliens were to dry up, many of these aliens would effectively “self-deport.”

With those aliens motivated by economic incentives removed from the equation, the numbers of illegal aliens would be reduced to a trickle. Then Kelly could focus his attention on stopping the terrorists and other border crossers who are a threat to our national security.



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