



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on January 28, 2019

Border Agencies Short of Personnel, and Face a New Problem: Illegal-Alien Families

Building a border wall is only one of President Trump's problems.

The administration, the [Los Angeles Times reported](#), is nowhere near hiring the thousands of new border and immigration officers it needs to contain the flood of illegal aliens.

The *Times*, citing official data, reported that vacancies in the nation's key immigration agencies, Customs and Border Control and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, have increased since Trump took office.



That's a worrisome fact given that 2,000 illegal and inadmissible aliens hit U.S. borders every day. And that is just the basic datum offered in the administration's fact sheet that explains its Migrant Protection Plan.

Delving into the CBP's data on border apprehensions divulges a more terrifying picture, and why the number of vacancies immigration agencies are trying to fill is so alarming.

The *Times* Report

"Two years after President Trump signed orders to hire 15,000 new border agents and immigration officers, the administration has spent tens of millions of dollars in the effort — but has thousands more vacancies than when it began," the [Times reported](#).

And even though CBP has "allocated \$60.7 million to Accenture Federal Services, a management consulting firm, as part of a \$297-million contract to recruit, vet and hire 7,500 border officers over five years ... the company has produced only 33 new hires so far."

"The Border Patrol gained a total of 120 agents in 2018, the first net gain in five years," the newspaper reported, but that isn't near what the agency needs to add every year for the agency to do its job. [That figure is 2,729](#) through the next five years to hit a target of 26,370 agents by 2022.

The inspector general for the Department of Homeland Security [reported that](#) the administration's anticipated "hiring surge has not begun," and DHS officials told the newspaper the agency has faced "ongoing difficulties with regards to hiring levels to meet our operational needs."

Consider the numbers. Though Trump ordered the hiring of 15,000 more Border Patrol and ICE officers, CPB still has 3,000 vacancies, which is 2,000 more, the newspaper reported, than when Trump signed the order.

Even worse, "Border Patrol staffing remains below the 21,360 agents mandated by Congress in 2016, which is itself 5,000 less than Trump's order."

One of the problems, the [newspaper reported](#), is Congress, which has not given the administration what it requested to expand the agencies and carry out the monumental task it faces:



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After Trump signed his executive orders in 2017, ICE requested \$830 million to hire about 3,000 new officers and build capacity to ultimately bring on 10,000, according to a [Government and Accountability Office report](#).

Instead, Congress last year gave ICE \$15.7 million for 65 new agents plus 70 attorneys and support staff....

For its part, CBP requested \$330 million to hire 1,250 Border Patrol agents and build capacity to ultimately hire 5,000, according to the GAO report.

Congress gave CBP about \$65 million in 2017 to improve hiring practices and to offer incentives for agents to transfer to understaffed sites. In 2018, it provided \$20 million more than the agency sought for recruitment and retention.

So funding for the border wall aside, the administration can't get the money it wants to fully staff the agencies that protect the country's border.

Why More Agents Are Needed

Quoting another DHS source, the newspaper pointed to an unpleasant reality at the border that explain the need for far more personnel. The immigration system was designed to handle single, adult Mexican men, not entire families coming across the border in the tens of thousands per month.

"The number of families and children we are apprehending at the border is at record-breaking levels," the [DHS official told](#) the newspaper.

As the administration's [Migrant Protection Plan released](#) last week noted, "historically, illegal aliens to the U.S. were predominantly single adult males from Mexico who were generally removed within 48 hours if they had no legal right to stay; now over 60% are family units and unaccompanied children and 60% are non-Mexican. In FY17, CBP apprehended 94,285 family units from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador (Northern Triangle) at the Southern border. Of those, 99% remain in the country today."

As individual illegal aliens go, again, [CPB faced 2,000](#) illegal and inadmissible aliens a day at the southern border. That's 180,000 people in three short months.

But families are the problem. [CPB dealt](#) with an average 31,188 families and unaccompanied children per month so far this fiscal year, a 136 percent increase from fiscal 2017.

Meanwhile, apprehensions of family units between ports of entry in the first quarter of fiscal 2019 — 75,794 — are up 280 percent.

Border agents are overwhelmed.

Photo: [CBP.gov](#)



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