

THE HOMELAND SECURITY *NEWS CLIPS*

PREPARED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY BY BULLETIN INTELLIGENCE WWW.BULLETININTELLIGENCE.COM/DHS

TO: THE SECRETARY AND SENIOR STAFF

DATE: MONDAY, JULY 14, 2014 5:00 AM EDT

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LEADING DHS NEWS

Homeland Secretary Visits Immigrant Holding Center

[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

ARTESIA, N.M. (AP) — U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson visited a New Mexico detention facility housing 400 Central American women and children Friday and warned immigrants that “we will send you back” if they try entering the country illegally.

Johnson said the agency is working rapidly to open new detention facilities to house and more quickly deport the influx of immigrants fleeing violence, poverty and extortion in Central America.

On a tour Friday of a temporary center at a border patrol training facility in southeastern New Mexico, Johnson said more housing is needed so the administration can send a strong message back to Central America, where he said smugglers are telling families that if they make it to the United States they will get a free pass.

“Our border is not open to illegal immigration,” he said. “Our message to those who come illegally is we will send you back.”

After touring the recently opened center, he said staff told him that some of the immigrants told them they were surprised to be detained.

“This facility ... represents proof that indeed we will send people back.”

But without more beds, the department says immigrants caught entering the country illegally will continue to be released while awaiting their deportation and asylum hearings. Right now, they are detained only if there is a place to house them.

The administration has requested emergency spending of \$3.7 billion to open more detention centers, hire more immigration judges and take other steps to deal with the border crisis. But House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers, a Kentucky Republican, said Friday that the House won't approve it.

U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., accompanied Johnson on the tour. On a call with reporters Friday afternoon, Heinrich said that in addition to opening more centers, the administration needs to engage with the Central American countries the immigrants are fleeing and crackdown on the smugglers who are persuading families to pay thousands of dollars to send their children here, then “leaving them in unsafe conditions.”

“We need to make sure we go after the people who are misleading families,” he said.

Johnson was also scheduled to meet Friday with officials in Weslaco, Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley, which has seen the biggest surge in illegal crossings.

More than 57,000 unaccompanied children and tens of thousands more Central Americans traveling as families have crossed the border since October, overwhelming Border Patrol facilities in South Texas.

The Artesia Center was opened in barracks of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. It now holds about 400 people but eventually will hold about 700 women and children, Johnson said.

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Homeland Security Secretary To Immigrants: ‘We Will Send You Back’

[KFOX-TV El Paso \(TX\)](#), July 14, 2014

A new U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility is opening in Artesia, and it is housing close to 200 immigrants and their families who are in the country illegally.

On Friday, Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson visited the center and said many of the people detained there will soon be deported.

The federal law enforcement training center is a large and highly secure facility that started taking in immigrants that came across the southwest border illegally.

ICE agents took KFOX14 and other media outlets on a tour of the housing areas. Agents told reporters that audio was not allowed to be recorded and their voices needed to be kept down because the detainees were sleeping.

Each room inside the detention center has a bed for each person, a table, closet and a TV.

Federal officials told KFOX14 a children's play center that had toys available would soon receiving an Xbox gaming device, as well.

ICE released pictures showing children and adult detainees being housed there, but the detainees were not shown to the media.

Johnson said deportation of the housed immigrants would start as early as next week.

“Our border is not open to illegal migration, and our message to those who are coming here illegally, who are contemplating come here illegally into south Texas is: ‘We will send you back,’” Johnson said.

Tonight on KFOX14 News at Nine, see how the facility is using teachers from public schools to educate detained children on-site.

Detention Center Puts Immigration Spotlight On New Mexico Town

By Milan Simonich

[Santa Fe New Mexican](#), July 14, 2014

ARTESIA — Oil, farming and high school football are usually the hottest topics in this dusty town of 11,300 people.

But now Artesia finds itself in the middle of the national debate on immigration policy.

Between 400 and 500 immigrants accused of illegally entering the United States were being held last week in a government compound here that, ironically enough, trains every U.S. Border Patrol agent. All of the immigrants being detained in Artesia are mothers and their children, a total of 191 families as of Friday.

Artesia Mayor Phillip Burch says many of those in custody at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center paid thousands of dollars to immigrant smugglers who assured them that they would be accepted in the United States if only they made it to the border in South Texas.

When these mothers with children in tow reached what they thought was a safe haven, a new world full of bright promise, many walked right up to a Border Patrol agent to announce that they were immigrating to America, Burch said. Instead, they landed in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which is overseeing immigrant detention centers in Artesia and other U.S. cities.

Now this arid, church-going and largely Republican town 1,800 miles and a world away from Washington, D.C., finds itself torn between compassion for the immigrant mothers and children and questions over how quickly they will be returned to their own countries.

The training center, where the immigrants are being held, is a secure government compound. ICE says it was selected as a temporary detention center "because it offers a more appropriate environment for the care and custody of adults with children and is cost-effective."

Nonetheless, word that people accused of violating immigration laws were being held in Artesia sent nerves jangling.

To explain Artesia's role in helping with federal immigration enforcement, Burch held a town meeting that drew 400 people — a crowd so large the city had to hold the meeting in the recreation center to accommodate everyone.

Burch said the meeting quelled some of the raw emotion, but tempers could flare if deportation hearings stall or the town continues to regularly receive immigrants accused of illegal entry. The compound has enough beds for about 700 immigrants.

Artesia, part of the oil-rich Permian Basin, is a smaller version of Odessa, Texas. Odessa became famous because of Buzz Bissinger's book *Friday Night Lights*, about the allure of high school football in a town where oil is king and roughnecks who man the rigs are integral to the economy.

"I sure wish September would hurry up," Burch said one recent day, eager for the start of football season for the Artesia High School Bulldogs, a perennial powerhouse in New Mexico athletics. "That would take people's minds off this."

Artesia, like America itself, has a wealth of opinions about how the federal government should handle immigration policy.

"I would like to see our borders closed and our patrol people better protected," Nancy Husselman said as she stood in front of the Chamber of Commerce building, situated near the vast Navajo Refinery. Husselman is the manager of Artesia's Drug and Crime Coalition, whose mission is to make the town safer.

James Bly, a U.S. military veteran who lives a few miles south of town, said he was not alarmed by Artesia having a role as a detention center for immigrants.

"I don't care. They're just people looking for a way out," he said outside the downtown post office in Artesia.

Many townspeople and others from Carlsbad, Roswell, Clovis, Alamogordo and Las Cruces donated books, toys, clothing and shoes for children being held at the center.

The gifts filled a wide section of the Artesia Chamber of Commerce until ICE agents picked them last week and delivered them to the immigrant children. An ICE spokeswoman said the donations were evidence that enforcing immigration laws is marked by a humanitarian spirit in Artesia.

Even so, Jeh Johnson, secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, talked tough when he visited the Artesia detention center on Friday. He said his aim was by-the-book enforcement of laws in dealing with immigrant families, and that would lead to rapid deportations.

"At the end of the day, our border is not open to illegal migration," Johnson told reporters assembled at the compound.

An ICE spokeswoman asked the media not to photograph the faces of immigrants, calling them "our residents." But during a tour on Friday, officials carefully steered reporters to empty portions of the compound. Not one immigrant was seen.

The ICE spokeswoman said the immigrants receive a tutorial on their due-process rights when they are bused to Artesia. Some may seek asylum because they fear for their safety in their home country, but most will be deported after getting their day in immigration court, she said.

Each case is different, so there is not just one answer to how long the process will take, but Johnson said Homeland Security wants expedited removal of the immigrants.

"The goal is a couple of days," he said.

Mayor Burch has been meeting weekly with federal employees at the training center, keeping tabs on the immigrant population. It doubled overnight Thursday, going from 217 to more than 400.

Burch said he has been told more than 90 percent will be deported. The ICE spokeswoman pegged the figure even higher, at 95 percent.

Burch said many being held in Artesia were from Honduras and El Salvador. He knew of one mother with child from Nicaragua.

Burch, an affable man of 70 who spent a long career in human resource jobs around the country before returning home to Artesia, said one boy held at the compound made an enormous impression on him.

A wisp with heart but not much coordination, the boy entertained himself by trying to kick a soccer ball. He often whiffed and fell on his backside. The boy laughed each time he crash-landed.

"You can't laugh in Spanish," the mayor said, adding that all who watched realized the little boy was like the ones growing up in the Permian Basin.

Schooling and medical problems of immigrants, if any, will be handled inside the complex by ICE.

"It's not causing the city to expend money," Burch said of the detention program.

For his constituents, the immigrants are out of sight, though not out of mind. "The truth is, you don't see them," Burch said.

Questions about the health and backgrounds of the immigrants have lessened, Burch said, but some in town say they still have concerns.

A woman working the front desk of a hotel said one of the frequent topics in Artesia these days is whether immigrants have been vaccinated against infectious diseases.

Dr. Jon Krohmer, of the ICE Health Service Corps, said no significant health problems had been found in the immigrants in Artesia.

One child had lice. Another suspected case of lice turned out to be nothing. Overall, Krohmer said, the immigrant children were no different health-wise from kids at any day care center.

Clinical social workers, along with medical personnel, are on site. No clinics, hospitals or medical offices in Artesia will be called on to provide health care for immigrant detainees, an ICE spokeswoman said.

For now, there is no school for the children. The spokeswoman said the detention center's plan is to mirror the American school year. Because it's summer, no teachers are being brought into the complex.

If children remain when the regular school year begins, ICE will provide teachers inside the compound. None of the kids would go to Artesia schools.

Still, tax dollars are being spent in the detention program, a sore point for many in the region.

Max Flores, who lives in nearby Dexter, was among those concerned about the cost of housing immigrants who crossed illegally into the United States.

"We don't agree with that," Flores said as he left the post office in Artesia. "Now we're going to have to spend money to send them back."

Congress' decision to increase spending for border security has contributed mightily to the economic boom in Artesia.

Since the 2001 terrorist attacks, the U.S. Border Patrol has expanded from 6,000 agents to 21,300. Because the training academy for all of them is in Artesia, the town has benefited economically from heightened border security, Burch said.

He estimates that the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center means 1,800 to 2,000 jobs for Artesia.

These gains have augmented the boom in oil, Artesia's main industry. The mammoth Navajo Refinery, abutting the downtown business district, provides the town with its skyline.

A few miles away from the refinery, immigrants under federal detention are housed in rooms with eight bunks and a television set. They will never see the town, only the inside of the compound that will serve as a makeshift home until immigration judges hear their cases.

Secretary Johnson said he wants to send a message loud and clear that unlawful immigration will not be tolerated.

His hope, he said, is to control the border and stop the con artists who exploit Central American citizens desperate to enter the United States.

President Barack Obama proposes to spend another \$3.7 billion to hire more immigration judges and open more detention centers for immigrants accused of unlawfully entering the United States.

Husselman, the woman who wants closed borders, calls Artesia "a compassionate and loving community" that without warning became a flash point for a national controversy.

"None of us like the fact that this has happened to immigrants," she said. "As far as the bigger issues [on immigration policy], we're all a little frustrated."

Obama's "Blank Check" Rejected As Border Solution

By Ben Wolfgang

[Washington Times](#), July 14, 2014

Not even a week after it was offered, President Obama's \$3.7 billion plan to deal with the growing crisis along the U.S.-Mexico border appears all but dead, with Republican lawmakers Sunday decrying the administration's "blank check" proposal and instead calling for a more targeted response centered on greater border security.

Even Texas Gov. Rick Perry, personally recruited by the president to persuade Republicans to support the measure, threw cold water on the idea. He said the president

doesn't need that much money and instead should send National Guard troops to secure the border.

The apparent defeat caps a whirlwind several days for the White House, which responded to increasing calls for action — and criticism of Mr. Obama for his decision not to visit the border while fundraising in Texas last week — by seeking more spending.

Republican leaders such as Mr. Perry also have put the request into a larger context, noting that Mr. Obama allowed the problem to worsen over the past five years, then responded to public pressure by demanding that Congress pass his supplemental spending plan immediately.

"It is a very large amount of money, and as you analyze it, very little of it is for border security. And I think until he gets realistic about the problem and how you deal with the problem — and it is a border security issue. And we've got a track record now of five-plus years of him disregarding what's going on on the border," Mr. Perry said on "Fox News Sunday."

"So here's his opportunity to truly lead. Don't blame this on anyone. Be a leader. Lay out a plan. And I will suggest to you, actually, the president doesn't have to have this big amount of money," the Texan said.

After meeting with Mr. Perry last week, the president personally pitched the \$3.7 billion plan during a hastily arranged press conference in Dallas.

The money would be used for detaining and deporting illegal immigrant families, transporting unaccompanied children back to their home countries, greater law enforcement, housing services for children, the hiring of more immigration judges and other purposes.

In his plea, Mr. Obama suggested that the only reason for Republican opposition would be politics.

"Are folks more interested in politics or are they more interested in solving the problem? If they're interested in solving the problem, then this can be solved. If the preference is for politics, then it won't be solved," he said. "This is just a very narrow issue, the supplemental, in terms of dealing with the particular problem we have right now."

Meanwhile, Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell met with dozens of governors Sunday in Nashville, Tennessee, as the administration seeks locations to host thousands of Central American children who have come to the U.S. over the past year.

Unaccompanied children from countries other than Mexico are turned over to HHS within 72 hours after U.S. authorities take them into custody.

Governors from both parties have raised serious concerns about hosting those children in their states.

"Our citizens already feel burdened by all kinds of challenges. They don't want to see another burden come into their state," said Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper, a Democrat. "However we deal with the humanitarian aspects

of this, we've got to do it in the most cost-effective way possible."

While the administration looks for support from governors, backing for the supplemental spending plan on Capitol Hill is evaporating.

"Our view, I think, as House Republicans, is, look, we're not going to write a blank check," said Rep. Michael T. McCaul, Texas Republican and chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee. "It's going to be a more targeted approach, probably through the end of the fiscal year."

Mr. McCaul also appeared on "Fox News Sunday."

House Republicans, led by Speaker John A. Boehner, also have called for National Guard troops to patrol the border. Mr. Perry echoed those sentiments Sunday, saying such a step would act as an effective deterrent.

Rep. Mike Rogers, Michigan Republican and chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, also said Mr. Obama, whom Republicans often have criticized in recent months for unilateral use of executive authority, already has the power to send these children home.

Mr. Obama "has tools in his toolbox" and "can safely get them home" to Central America "and that's where the president needs to start," he told NBC's "Meet the Press."

The White House has rejected the National Guard idea, and congressional Democrats are growing increasingly frustrated with the Republican focus on border security.

"We spend \$18 billion a year on making sure that the federal government has immigration enforcement agents. That's more than the DEA, the ATF and the FBI and all other enforcement combined. But we still have a problem, right?" Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez, Illinois Democrat, said during an appearance Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation."

"So you can keep throwing money and talk about enforcement, enforcement, enforcement, but you've got to put money also into your judicial system, and you've got to put money and a comprehensive program that deals with the issue," he said.

GOP Seeks Changes To Obama's \$3.7 Billion Border Bill

By Susan Davis

[USA Today](#), July 14, 2014

Leading congressional Republicans dug in Sunday on their view that President Obama's \$3.7 billion emergency spending request to stem the flow of children across the southwest U.S. border is too costly and needs to include tougher immigration laws to pass.

As part of the spending bill, Republicans want to enact legislation that would expedite the return of unaccompanied minors that have flooded the U.S. border. Since October, more than 40,000 children from Guatemala, Honduras and El

Salvador have turned themselves in at the border. By comparison in 2011, fewer than 4,000 children from those countries crossed the border.

“The best way to (stem the flow) is for planeloads of these young people to be returning to the country of origin and their families,” Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., told CNN on Sunday. McCain said it will deter families and “coyotes” who solicit money to get children to the border because they will see it’s an ineffective way to get their kids into the U.S. “Then it will stop — and not before,” he said.

McCain conceded that many of the children are fleeing dangerous conditions at home, but he said those seeking asylum should apply through existing channels. “The fact is that we cannot have an unending stream of children, whether it’d be from Central America or any place else, to come into our country with all of the strains and pressures that it puts on our capabilities.”

In a rare agreement between the president and Republicans on an immigration debate, the administration has indicated support for new laws to fast track deportation proceedings even as leading congressional Democrats oppose it.

What the administration is more likely to resist is GOP efforts to trim the size of his spending request.

Rep. Mike McCaul, R-Texas, who chairs the Homeland Security Committee, told Fox News Sunday that Republicans were considering a “very limited” emergency funding bill that would provide money only through the end of the fiscal year on Sept. 30. He also said they could attack provisions to tighten border security.

House Appropriations Chairman Hal Rogers, R-Texas, whose panel will write the spending bill, told reporters Friday that the current tab was “too much” but he did not say what funding level the committee is considering. House Republicans are expected to discuss the spending bill at a Tuesday meeting.

The administration is also facing push back from some leading Democrats who think the president is bowing to GOP demands on deporting the children and not doing enough to address it as a humanitarian crisis.

Senate Majority Whip Richard Durbin, D-Ill., told administration officials at a hearing last Thursday that their \$15 million request to provide more lawyers to represent the children was “grossly inadequate” and expressed concerns that the children would return to dangerous environments. “What are we returning them to?” he said.

Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, likewise criticized the White House. “I have a problem with this administration. On the one hand, they say we want to send kids back as soon as possible. Then they turn around and say, well, but these kids are escaping violence and drugs and sexual abuse and gangs. How do you reconcile those two?” he said. “These kids need to be protected. They need to have (Health and

Human Services) protect them, and care for them, and give them every meaningful right to apply for asylum.”

Rep. Julian Castro, D-Texas, also voiced caution about changing the law to make it easier to deport the children on NBC’s Meet the Press, countering that they should have the chance to make their case in court for asylum. The president has indicated that he would allow for amending the law in a way that would allow Border Patrol agents to render a deportation decision themselves to quickly deport the children back to their home country.”

“Those are decisions for an immigration judge to make, not for the president or myself or any member of Congress,” Castro said.

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Republicans Say Changes Needed To Speed Child Deportation

By Greg Giroux And Tony Capaccio

[Bloomberg News](#), July 14, 2014

U.S. law should be changed to speed up the deportation of Central American immigrant children crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, Republican lawmakers said.

The 2008 law signed by then-President George W. Bush gave legal protections to migrant children from anywhere but Mexico and Canada as part of an effort to combat human trafficking of minors. A surge of unaccompanied children – largely from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras – showing up at the U.S.- Mexico border has spurred calls for revising the law.

“All we need to do is change the act, the trafficking victims prevention act, to treat these children the same way as we do with Canada and especially Mexico,” Senator John McCain, an Arizona Republican, said on CNN’s “State of the Union” program today.

“If you come to our country illegally, you will be sent back,” said McCain, who’s helping write legislation that would change the law and condition foreign aid to the three Central American countries on their governments’ help in preventing the illegal migration of unaccompanied children.

More than 52,000 unaccompanied children were apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border from Oct. 1 through June 15, about double the total in a similar period a year earlier, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

About three-fourths of the children originated from the three Central American nations after traveling through Mexico. Under current law, the unaccompanied children must be handed over to the Health and Human Services Department within 72 hours after their arrest.

“We think that law needs to be changed,” Representative Mike McCaul, a Texas Republican who leads the House homeland security committee, said on “Fox News Sunday.”

“And you have to do that because you have to have a message of deterrence. I think we need to act” before Congress goes on recess next month, McCaul said.

Many Democrats have said the children should be treated as refugees because they are fleeing violence in their home countries.

Representative Joaquin Castro, a Texas Democrat, said the 2008 law was enacted in part “because many people believe that these kids should have a chance to make their case for asylum.”

“So I think we’ve got to be careful when we consider completely doing away with that law,” Castro said on NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

“We are the strongest, wealthiest, most powerful nation in the world, and children are coming to our borders; we should protect them,” Representative Luis Gutierrez, an Illinois Democrat who’s pushed for an overhaul of immigration laws, said on CBS’s “Face the Nation” program.

President Barack Obama last week requested that Congress approve \$3.7 billion in emergency funding to help officials cope with the influx that has strained resources along much of the U.S.-Mexico border.

The president’s proposal would increase detention capacity and court operations to speed deportation decisions, while expanding law enforcement and prosecution of criminal networks that smuggle people into the U.S. The administration also wants to improve temporary housing and care for immigrants while their cases are decided.

The proposal has received a tepid reception on Capitol Hill, with House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers saying on July 11 that Congress probably won’t pass it.

“That’s too much,” Rogers, a Kentucky Republican, said of the \$3.7 billion.

Representative John Barrow, a Georgia Democrat, echoed the Republican criticism, saying Obama’s request “spends money on unnecessary programs that we can’t afford and does nothing to address the actual problem.”

Republicans also are arguing the border crisis has been sparked by a 2012 decision by Obama to halt the deportations of some young immigrants brought to the country illegally as children.

The situation “is a disaster of President Obama’s own making,” House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte, a Virginia Republican, said last week.

The border crisis has intensified the Republican focus on heightening border security and law enforcement as a precondition for any move toward a comprehensive revision of immigration policies.

Obama and Democrats in Congress have pressed House Republican leaders to take up legislation the Senate passed last year that would create a pathway to citizenship

for many of the almost 12 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S.

“It’s been folks in Congress, specifically in the House of Representatives, who have not moved forward on a bill that would have helped us prevent some of the things we’re seeing on the border now,” Castro said on NBC.

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Obama Asks For Governors’ Support On Migrant-children Crisis

By Alicia A. Caldwell And Steve Peoples
[Washington Post](#), July 14, 2014

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell met privately with dozens of governors Sunday as the Obama administration tried to get support from the leaders of states that will host thousands of the Central American children who have crossed the Mexican border on their own since Oct. 1.

Governors of both parties expressed concerns about the cost to states, including providing public education for the children, according to those who attended the meeting. Burwell left the meeting through a side door without talking to reporters.

“Our citizens already feel burdened by all kinds of challenges. They don’t want to see another burden come into their state,” said Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper (D). “However we deal with the humanitarian aspects of this, we’ve got to do it in the most cost-effective way possible.”

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad were among the most vocal Republican critics. They seized on the administration’s plans to place the children with friends or family members without checking on their immigration status.

Under current law, immigrant children from countries that do not border the United States and who cross into this country by themselves are turned over to HHS within 72 hours. From there, they often are reunited with parents or placed with other relatives already living in the country, while they wait for an immigration court to decide their future. The court process can take years.

Neither Burwell’s agency nor immigration officials check the immigration status of relatives who take custody of the immigrant children.

Since Oct. 1, more than 57,000 children have crossed the border alone. Most are from Honduras, El Salvador or Guatemala.

“We want to make sure they’re placed in a safe and supportive home or placement, but also, it should be somebody that is legal and somebody that will be responsible to see that they show up for the hearing,” Branstad said.

According to data from the Justice Department’s Executive Office for Immigration Review, about a quarter of immigrants facing deportation hearings do not show up as ordered. The no-show rate for the juvenile immigration court docket is about 46 percent.

Amid the debate of what is causing the ongoing crush of child immigrants and how the government can stem the flow, two key lawmakers said President Obama can take administrative action to relieve much of the crisis.

At issue is a provision in a 2008 human trafficking law that puts the fate of these immigrants in the hands of immigration judges. The Obama administration has expressed some interest in asking Congress to change the law to give the administration more leeway in dealing with the crisis.

But Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Mich.), chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said Sunday that wholesale changes by Congress might not be necessary and that Obama has the authority to return the children to their native countries.

Obama “has tools in his toolbox” to deal with humanitarian issues and deter more children from coming to the United States, Rogers said. “We can safely get them home,” Rogers said on NBC’s “Meet the Press.” He added: “And that’s where the president needs to start. So he needs to reengage, get folks who are doing administrative work on the border. They need to make sure they send a very clear signal.”

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), the author of the provision in the human trafficking law, said a change in regulations, not the law, could speed the children’s return.

The law already allows HHS and the Department of Homeland Security to write regulations to deal with “exceptional circumstances” that would allow officials to return the children more quickly to their home countries, Feinstein said Thursday at a hearing on a \$3.7 billion emergency budget request from the White House to deal with the growing crisis on the border. Some of the money would go to help fund about 40 additional immigration judge teams. Federal immigration courts have a backlog of more than 375,000 cases.

— Associated Press

Peoples reported from Nashville.

Goodlatte Calls For ‘Targeted’ Border Funding

[Politico](#), July 14, 2014

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte said on Sunday that Congress should pass “targeted” emergency funding to respond to the border crisis,

particularly in boosting resources to detain the unaccompanied children and sending them back to their home countries.

The Virginia Republican also urged President Barack Obama to meet with leaders of the Mexican government to stress what their country can do to help stem the crisis of minors trying to enter illegally through the Texas border, such as securing its own southern boundary with Guatemala.

There’s an “awful lot that the president can do right now without any [congressional] action,” Goodlatte said on ABC’s “This Week.”

Obama has not sent a strong enough message to children and their parents in Central America that if the minors come here illegally, they will not be allowed to stay, said Goodlatte, a frequent critic of the 2012 directive from Obama that allowed young undocumented immigrants who grew up in the United States to be effectively shielded from deportation.

“I would definitely pass emergency funding targeted for what is necessary,” Goodlatte said, before criticizing Obama for allocating too much money toward transporting the migrants further inside the United States and caring for them. “That, I think, is what the American people don’t like to see, because they know it is not deterrence,” he said.

Here’s What The Sunday Shows Had To Say About Immigration Policy Today

[Washington Post](#), July 13, 2014

The topic that everyone had an opinion about on the Sunday shows this week? U.S. immigration policy. Here’s a roundup of what all the guests had to say. Rick Perry

The Republican governor from Texas met with President Obama this week to discuss border policy. The meet-and-greet didn’t preclude Perry from trashing the White House’s stance on undocumented immigrants — especially the tens of thousands of children coming from Central America, which he called “a problem of monumental humanitarian impact.”

“Well, I think there’s plenty of blame to spread around from this perspective,” he said on CBS’s “Face the Nation,” “but when you’re the president of the United States, you are at the tip of the sphere, so to speak.”

“I gave the president a head’s up on what was happening with these unaccompanied children,” Perry said, “these alien children who were coming in on the tops of trains. And we laid out exactly what we thought was going to happen if we didn’t address that, and now we’re seeing that become reality with literally tens of thousands of these young children, making this long, arduous, very dangerous trip, being separated from their parents, and it could have been stopped years ago, had the administration listened, had the administration been focused on the border with Texas.”

Perry made similar comments on “Fox News Sunday,” saying that if the United States wants to

“stanch this flow, you do not have to have a change in law.” He did not offer support for Obama’s \$3.7 billion emergency funding request, saying that funding for additional National Guard troops should be a priority. “They need to be right on the river,” he said. “They need to be there as a show of force because that’s the message that gets sent back very quickly back to central America.” John McCain

The senator from Arizona provided another Republican view about the U.S.-Mexico border.

CNN host Candy Crowley asked McCain what it would take for Republicans to support President Obama’s request for \$3.7 billion in emergency funding. “There has to be a halt to this,” McCain said. “The best way to do that,” he continued, is by returning these children to their home country — repeating a Republican refrain that has been heard many times in the past week. Not only would this stop the influx of unaccompanied minors, according to the senator, it would also dent the drug trade, with smugglers often paid to transport these children to the border.

“As soon as they see that their money is not effective in getting their kids to this country, it will stop — and not before.”

“We cannot have an unending flow of children from all over the world, much less Central America, into our country,” he ended.

Luis Gutierrez

The Democratic congressman from Illinois blasted the Republican opposition in the House for its stance on immigration. His sharpest words were reserved for

Rep. Louie Gohmert (Tex.), one of the strongest proponents of an immigration policy that reliant on increased deportation. Gohmert, Gutierrez said, “hasn’t ever seen an immigrant that he hasn’t thought wasn’t bringing disease to this country.”

Gutierrez also said that Perry is “just wrong” on the issue of the president’s interest in solving this crisis. “He kept repeating ‘the border, the border, the border,’ and he wants to put more National Guardsmen in, and if he put more National Guardsmen in, the children wouldn’t come. The children come... fleeing violence and torture, murder and rape. And so, they’re going to continue to come as long as those conditions exist and we don’t fix our broken immigration system.”

However, Gutierrez did say, “I think the president should have gone down [to the border], stated what the law is.”

He went on, “We spend \$18 billion a year on making sure that the federal government has immigrant enforcement agents. That’s more than DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration] and the ATF [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives] and the FBI and all the other enforcements combined. But we still have a problem, right?

So you can keep throwing money and talk about enforcement, enforcement, enforcement, but you’ve got to put money also into your judicial system, and you’ve got to put money in a comprehensive program that deals with the issue.” Mike Rogers

The Republican House Intelligence Committee chairman stressed the bipartisan support for deporting undocumented children to their home country and the dangers of “encouraging” children to try to get to the United States through the “criminal pipeline.” “We’re losing these kids along the way,” he said. He pushed the president to provide immediate relief for this problem, with Congress working out a long-term solution.

Mike McCaul

The Texas representative and Republican chairman of the

House Homeland Security Committee was on “Fox News Sunday” to discuss what the House GOP members have planned next policy-wise. “Our view, I think, as House Republicans, is look, we’re not going to write a blank check for \$4 billion,” he said.

“It’s going to be a more targeted approach, probably through the end of the fiscal year.”

Speaking of the children from Central America, he said, “they’re caught in the middle between the administration’s policies and what the drug traffickers are doing in Central America. So, they have this perilous, dangerous journey through Mexico where they’re exploited, abused, raped and, in some cases, don’t make it at all. We think if we change this law as a message of deterrence, we can actually protect and save these children.”

He ended his interview on a similar note. “I think we have to deal with this in a humane and compassionate way, but I’m not in favor of building large warehouses in the United States to warehouse these kids,” McCaul said. “I think we need to have a deterrent. And I think if we’re going to build facilities, perhaps we should think about doing that in the countries of origin in Central America, where they can better deal with these children.” Joaquin Castro

The Democratic representative from Texas — yes, Texans near the border were consulted quite a bit this morning on their immigration expertise — went on “Meet the Press” to offer his perspective.

“The administration has been trying to work with Congress to pass an immigration reform bill for over two years,” Castro said, “and so it’s been folks in Congress, specifically in the House of Representatives, who’ve not moved forward on a bill that would have helped us prevent some of the things we’re seeing on the border now.”

He also discussed his position on undocumented children and deportation. “Many people believe that these kids should have a chance to make their case for asylum, so I think we’ve got to be careful when we consider completely

doing away with that law.” The law he is referring to is a 2008 law signed by President George W. Bush, which puts undocumented children under the care of the Department of Health and Human Services. McCaul also wanted Congress to return to the 2008 law — but to expand the United States’ ability to deport children from Central America. The 2008 law made it easier for Border Patrol agents to expedite deportation of undocumented immigrants from Mexico.

Castro also said that the fate of children — and whether they should be deported — should be decided by immigration judges, not the president or Congress.

This debate, he says, “also raises the question of who we consider to be a refugee in America in the 21st century. And that’s a very tough question for us, and it tugs at our conscience.”

He ended his interview by saying that this was not Obama’s Katrina moment, and that we would likely see the president head down to the border soon.

Reps. Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.), Donna Edwards (D-Md.), Beto O’Rourke (D-Tex.) and Aaron Schock (R-Ill.)

During a roundtable on CNN’s “State of the Union,” the four representatives clashed on immigration reform.

Jaime Fuller reports on national politics for “The Fix” and Post Politics. She worked previously as an associate editor at the American Prospect, a political magazine based in Washington, D.C.

Republicans Push Obama To Secure US-Mexico Border

By Zack Colman

[Washington Examiner](#), July 14, 2014

More than 52,000 children and teenagers have been caught by Border Patrol agents since last October, with many of them are fleeing violent Central American nations wrapped up in the illegal drug trade.

The White House has asked Congress to approve a \$3.7 billion package to address the issue, but the House doesn’t look likely to approve it. House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Michael McCaul, R-Texas, said the lower chamber might be amenable to a “targeted approach,” but that it wouldn’t write a “blank check.”

The rush of Central American immigrants has overwhelmed the system. They’re treated differently than Mexican immigrants under a 2008 law signed by President George W. Bush – Central American immigrants can see an immigration judge while Mexicans are often quickly bused back across the border.

Republicans blamed that difference, along with a 2012 executive order that allowed children who immigrated to the U.S. before June 2007 to defer deportation, for the immigration spike.

McCaul said the 2008 law needs to be changed to allow quicker deportation.

“We think that law has to be changed,” he said on “Fox News Sunday”. “You have to send a message of deterrence.”

Administration officials have rejected claims that its deportation deferral policy is driving matters, instead pinning the emphasis on crisis-riddled Central American nations pushing people to flee.

“Yes, the immigration laws are being enforced, though we are faced with an extraordinary situation with thousands of people, young people especially, are fleeing Central America for economic reasons, to get away from really endemic violence in their countries,” Attorney General Eric Holder said Sunday on ABC’s “This Week.” “We are surging immigration judges to the border to process people.”

Rep. Beto O’Rourke, D-Texas, backed the White House plan, saying Sunday on CNN’s “State of the Union” that, “The origin of the problem is this instability and insecurity in Honduras, in Guatemala and El Salvador. And we really won’t stop this crisis until we address those core issues.”

Rep. Donna Edwards, D-Md., defended the administration’s border patrol efforts — a May report from the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service noted apprehensions of illegal immigrants along the Southwest border dropped from 1.6 million to 420,000 between 2000 and 2013.

But apprehensions rebounded to 414,000 in 2013 after hitting a 41-year low of 328,000 in 2011. And the Los Angeles Times reported Sunday that deportations of children under 18 at the border have plummeted since 2008, the final year of Bush’s administration, from 8,143 to 1,669 in 2013.

“As tragic and as terrible as this situation is, we cannot have an unending flow of children from all over the world, much less Central America into our country,” Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., said Sunday on CNN’s “State of the Union.”

Fly Immigrant Children Back, McCain Says

By Martin Matishak

[The Hill](#), July 14, 2014

The only way to alleviate the influx of children from Central America now at the southwest border is to ship them back to their home nations, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) said on Sunday.

“There has to be a halt to this,” McCain said on CNN’s State of the Union. “The best way to do that is to send plane loads of people ... to their country of origin.”

While the situation along the border is “tragic and terrible ... we cannot have an unending flow of children from all over the world” come to America, he said.

McCain derided President Obama’s \$3.7 billion request to deal with the ongoing crisis as not enough, saying at least \$6 billion would be need. However, some House Republicans have said the administration’s request is already too much.

McCain called on the administration to address the “root causes” of the crisis, namely the living conditions in the countries where the children come from.

He said the U.S. should beef up its presence at embassies and consulates in Central America and change trafficking laws to show “that if you come to this country illegally, you will be sent back.”

Unless the White House does that, parents will continue spending money to send their children to the border, according to McCain.

“It won’t matter how much money we spend, if they believe they can come here and stay,” he said.

Gutiérrez On Gohmert: Never Met An Immigrant ‘That He Hasn’t Thought Wasn’t Bringing Disease To This Country’

By Seung Min Kim
[Politico](#), July 14, 2014

Rep. Luis Gutiérrez had some tough words for House Republicans on Sunday as he made his case to keep intact an anti-trafficking law now at the center of the debate over the influx of unaccompanied minors at the southwestern U.S. border.

The Illinois Democrat noted on CBS’ “Face the Nation” that well-known immigration hard-liners such as Republican Reps. Louie Gohmert of Texas and Steve King of Iowa backed the 2008 legislation to effectively make it more difficult for unaccompanied children from countries other than Canada or Mexico to be deported. The measure sailed through both the House and Senate that year.

Of Gohmert, Gutiérrez said the Texas congressman “hasn’t ever seen an immigrant that he hasn’t thought wasn’t bringing disease to this country.” And King can’t help but put the words “immigrant” and “criminal” together, Gutiérrez asserted.

“So when there were calmer times, we put the children’s interest first,” said Gutiérrez, who said last week that he wouldn’t vote for additional funding to deal with the border crisis if it rolled back protections for children in the 2008 law.

The Illinois lawmaker, the most vocal advocate on Capitol Hill of immigration reform, said the unaccompanied minors are fleeing dangerous circumstances in their home countries — such as Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras — and some policymakers are engaging in a “demonization” of the children.

“They’re going to continue to come as long as those conditions exist and we don’t fix our broken immigration system,” Gutiérrez said.

Read more about: Immigration, Steve King, Luis Gutierrez, Louie Gohmert

Rep. Gutierrez: ‘The Border Is Secure’

By Justin Sink
[The Hill](#), July 14, 2014

Some of the toughest Republican critics of President Obama’s handling of the crisis on the border voted for the legislation they now blame for the humanitarian crisis unfolding there, Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.) argued during an interview on Sunday.

Gutierrez said despite suggestions from Republican lawmakers, the current crisis at the border was not a question of security or law enforcement.

“The border is secure! The fact is that these children are handing themselves over to the border patrol agents,” Gutierrez said.

Instead, he said, the crisis stemmed from a 2008 law that automatically entitles minors from non-contiguous countries to asylum hearings before they face deportations. The legislation was intended to address the issue of human trafficking.

The surge in minors has overwhelmed that judicial system, and the problem will persist unless lawmakers provide additional funding for judges and attorneys, Gutierrez said.

“You can keep throwing money and talk about enforcement, enforcement, enforcement, but you’ve got to put money also into your judicial system, and you’ve got to put money in a comprehensive program that deals with the issue,” he told CBS News.

Gutierrez singled out two Republican congressmen — Reps. Louis Gohmert (R-Texas) and Steve King (R-Iowa) — for criticizing the president despite voting for the 2008 law.

He said Gohmert “hasn’t ever seen an immigrant who he hasn’t thought was bringing disease to this country,” and that King “always says they’re criminals.”

“They put it in these terms,” Gutierrez said, before noting that “they voted for the 2002 and 2008 law.”

“So when there were calmer times, right, levelheaded people thinking about the issue, we put the children’s interests first,” Gutierrez continued. “Remember bipartisanship? This wasn’t a Democratic bill.”

The Illinois lawmaker slammed Republicans for criticizing Obama for abiding by the law and offering the children asylum hearings.

“I find Governor Perry interesting in that Republicans keep saying, ‘Well, we can’t fix the immigration issue because we don’t trust the President to enforce the law,’” he said. “And then, when the president actually follows the law in 2002 and 2008, the very law that was signed by President Bush, they said, ‘Well, he should do something different.’”

Political Fallout From Underage Illegals May Spread Far From The Rio Grande Valley

By Michael Barone

[Washington Examiner](#), July 14, 2014

The flood of underage--and many not-so-underage--illegal immigrants from the Central American countries of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador crested in the Rio Grande Valley, but now the waters are being diverted and channeled to other parts of the United States.

Well, maybe that metaphor is a bit labored, but my point is that these young and not-so-young people are being transported to various parts of the country, to be put under the care of relatives, we are told, though it's not so clear that the caregivers are always relatives. My former Washington Examiner colleague Joel Gehrke, now at National Review, highlights the at least fragmentary evidence that some are being turned over to human traffickers. Those are exactly the kind of people that a near-unanimous Congress tried to keep them away from by passing the William Wilberforce anti-trafficking law in 2008.

Two other National Review Corner items merit attention. In one Ryan Lovelace references Senator Mark Kirk's concerns about the Heartland Alliance, a group to whose care the Department of Health and Human Services has apparently consigned some 400 children. Kirk is concerned that Heartland Alliance staff may have criminal records.

In the other, Lovelace quotes the chief of staff of the mayor of Lynn, Mass., about how many Guatemalan "children" were sent there and placed in public schools. "Some of them have had gray hair and they're telling you that they're 17 years old and they have no documentation," the official is quoted as saying.

The picture of thousands of illegal youngsters streaming over the border is disquieting and seems likely to hurt the president's standing with voters--even despite his refusal to submit to a "photo-op" on the border. Democrats are trying to blame the situation on House Republicans' refusal to pass comprehensive immigration legislation. That seems pretty lame: There's nothing in the bill the Senate passed in June 2013 that addressed this particular situation. As this article in the Hill makes plain, perhaps despite the writer's intention, this is a troublesome situation for Democrats whose names are on the ballot this fall.

And the negative fallout is apparently not limited geographically. The national media may get tired of stories about young illegals crossing the border in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. But as these youngsters are sent to places as distant as Chicago and Lynn, Mass., other troublesome stories are likely to emerge, on local newscasts (which are often starved for news) if not on Obama-protective mainstream media.

Nor are Hispanics necessarily sympathetic with the border-crossers. A Washington Post new story quotes Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke as favoring "greater emphasis on the

interests of these children who are refugees from extreme violence" instead of "an acceleration of the deportation process at the expense of these children." But the Post reporters note that "O'Rourke added that he has been surprised by the anger he has heard toward the immigrants of many of his El Paso constituents, who 'feel like we can't take care of everyone, and these children and their families are gaming the system.'" O'Rourke's district, which includes most of El Paso County, is 79 percent Hispanic.

Oldtimers may remember that the influx of Mariel refugees from Cuba hurt Jimmy Carter in the 1980 election. Carter failed to carry Florida, where many refugees were housed, and Arkansas, where many were sent to Fort Chaffee. Also defeated that year were some incumbent Democrats who hadn't seemed to be in great trouble: U.S. Sen. Richard Stone of Florida and a young governor of Arkansas named Bill Clinton. Most current voters were not alive in 1980 or have forgotten the political fallouts from the Mariel influx. I'm sure Bill Clinton hasn't. I suspect that, if asked, he might have some advice for Democrats in states to which the underage illegals are being sent.

Boehner's Empty Charge Against Obama

By Charles M. Blow

[New York Times](#), July 14, 2014

In trying to lay the blame for the border crisis on the White House's doorstep, House Speaker John Boehner exploded at a press conference on Thursday, saying of the president:

"He's been president for five and a half years! When is he going to take responsibility for something?"

The suggestion in the question — that the president doesn't take responsibility for anything — is so outrageously untrue that it demands strong rebuttal.

President Obama hasn't taken all the blame Republicans have ascribed to him, nor should he have. But he has often been quick to take responsibility.

In 2009, after the administration came under fire for A.I.G. executives' receiving bonuses after the bailout, Obama said on the lawn of the White House:

"Ultimately I'm responsible. I'm the president of the United States. We've got a big mess that we're having to clean up. Nobody here drafted those contracts. Nobody here was responsible for supervising A.I.G. and allowing themselves to put the economy at risk by some of the outrageous behavior that they were engaged in. We are responsible, though. The buck stops with me."

After the failed bombing plot on Christmas Day in 2009 by a young Nigerian man with plastic explosives sewn into his underwear, the president took responsibility for intelligence lapses, saying the next month:

“Moreover, I am less interested in passing out blame than I am in learning from and correcting these mistakes to make us safer. For ultimately, the buck stops with me.”

In a 2011 interview with CNN’s Wolf Blitzer, the president took responsibility for the economy and the rate at which it was being repaired, saying:

“Well, here’s what I remember, is that when I came into office, I knew I was going to have a big mess to clean up and, frankly, the mess has been bigger than I think a lot of people anticipated at the time. We have made steady progress on these fronts, but we’re not making progress fast enough.

“And what I continue to believe is that ultimately the buck stops with me. I’m going to be accountable. I think people understand that a lot of these problems were decades in the making. People understand that this financial crisis was the worst since the Great Depression. But, ultimately, they say, look, he’s the president, we think he has good intentions, but we’re impatient and we want to see things move faster.”

(It should be noted that this president has produced 45 straight months of job growth, and the June jobs report released this month was particularly strong.)

In an interview in the 2012 election cycle, the president reiterated his philosophy about presidential responsibility in response to a question about Mitt Romney’s relationship to Bain Capital:

“Well, here’s what I know, we were just talking about responsibility, and as president of the United States, it’s pretty clear to me that I’m responsible for folks who are working in the federal government and, you know, Harry Truman said the buck stops with you.”

In a 2013 interview with CNN’s Chris Cuomo, the president said he was accountable for Washington gridlock:

“Well, look, ultimately, the buck stops with me. And so any time we are not moving forward on things that should be simple, I get frustrated.”

In an interview with MSNBC’s Chuck Todd after the health care rollout, the president took responsibility for the problems rather than simply pin them on Kathleen Sebelius, then the health and human services secretary, saying: “My priority right now is to get it fixed. ... Ultimately, the buck stops with me. I’m the president. This is my team. If it is not working, it is my job to get it fixed.”

(The site is now fixed, the law is working, and according to a Gallup report issued Thursday the uninsured rate has dropped to “the lowest quarterly average recorded since Gallup and Healthways began tracking the percentage of uninsured Americans in 2008.”)

This president is a habitual blame-taker. This is the anti-George W. Bush. The fess-upper in chief. He is the antidote to the eight previous years of obfuscation, fault-dodging and flat-out denial.

This is one of the traits that made Obama an attractive candidate, and it is one of his best traits as a president.

But taking his share of responsibility does not mean he must acquiesce to his opponents and absolve them of guilt, particularly not an intransigent Congress that would rather do nothing than something, particularly not Republican leaders who envision opportunity in opposition. The president has a duty to himself and the country to call them out for the part they play in our problems.

The real question, Mr. Boehner, is not when the president will take personal responsibility for something. He has. Many times. The real question is, When will you?

What’s The American Political Landscape Looking Like?

By Chris Cillizza

[Washington Post](#), July 14, 2014

The dog days of summer are upon us, and with them, an extended slowdown in politics — as Americans spend their time working on their tans rather than studying up on the latest fights in the nation’s capital. Things won’t pick up in earnest again until after Labor Day, when the political campaigning reemerges in full force.

As we head into this break, it’s worth pausing to review and figure out exactly what we’ve learned about the American political landscape — as it relates to the 2014 midterm and 2016 presidential elections, the hopes (or lack thereof) for legislative accomplishments, and the fate of President Obama’s second term.

Here are eight things I’ve learned.

In truth, the relationship between the executive and legislative branches has been badly frayed since “grand bargain” talks broke off in summer 2011 amid recriminations about who was really to blame. Obama seems to have come to the realization that the two sides are not going to be friends a bit later than House Speaker John A. Boehner (R-Ohio), but he has adopted a standoffish tone with the zeal of a convert. His “so sue me” taunt — and Boehner’s subsequent decision to do exactly that — marks a new low point in the relationship.

Little tends to happen legislatively in election years, and that is doubly true now as Republicans have premised their entire strategy on making the midterms a referendum on Obama’s lack of signature accomplishments. And the president, because of his relatively dismal poll numbers, is in no position to enforce his will on an obstinate Congress or rally the American people behind his agenda. The two sides are, essentially, locked in the late rounds of a prizefight; neither is strong enough to knock the other down, so they just sort of lean on each other and occasionally try to land a punch or two.

Nothing is set in stone, but Obama’s job-approval numbers — and his numbers specifically on handling the economy — are in the low to mid-40s. What history tells us is

that a president's approval numbers are among a handful of factors that correlate rather closely to the fate of his party in a midterm election. Since 1944, presidents with approval ratings lower than 50 percent have seen their party lose an average of 36 House seats, according to data from Gallup. Obama's low numbers nationally are even more of a problem when it comes to Democratic efforts to retain control of the Senate; many of the battleground states — Louisiana, Arkansas, Alaska and North Carolina — are even less inclined to approve of how he is handling his job than the nation as a whole.

It's not a lock by any means. But combine the president's less-than-stellar numbers, historical trends about party gains (and losses) in midterms and the places in which the majority will be decided, and it's clear that you'd rather be Senate Republicans than Senate Democrats at the moment. Three of the six seats the GOP needs to retake the majority — South Dakota, Montana and West Virginia — are all but locked up. They then need to win three of the following Democratic-held seats: Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, Louisiana, New Hampshire and North Carolina. (Republicans also can't lose their own endangered seats in Georgia and Kentucky.) Not a sure thing, but absolutely doable.

No, she hasn't made a final "go" decision. But the rollout of her memoir "Hard Choices" — and the aggressive pushback from her team to negative stories about said rollout — makes her intentions about the 2016 election quite clear. Clinton will enter the Democratic primary as an overwhelming favorite, a far greater favorite than she was at this time in the 2008 election. But, as her troubles during the rollout of her book suggest, some problems that dogged her in 2008 are still around.

There's little question that a year ago, most Republican operatives believed that New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie would have emerged by this time as the establishment front-runner for the 2016 nod. But then came Bridgegate, a political wound from which Christie is still healing. Former Florida governor Jeb Bush would be the Republican front-runner, but he seems entirely uninterested in making his mind up. That leaves a vacuum at the top, one being filled at the moment by the likes of Sens. Rand Paul (Ky.) and Ted Cruz (Tex.). But, in truth, no one — not even Paul or Cruz — has distinguished themselves from the pack.

Blame for the failure to pass any sort of immigration reform in this Congress will fall at the feet of Republicans. As the Republican National Committee's own autopsy after the 2012 election warned, failure to pass immigration reform is deeply problematic for the party's attempt to woo Latino voters and win a majority in national elections. Top party leaders know how much trouble they are in on the issue, but the rank and file within the party remains vehemently opposed to any "amnesty" deal.

With the exception of Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.), who looks as though he's genuinely enjoying himself, being a member of your party's leadership just isn't much fun. Rep. Eric Cantor's stunning loss last month is the prime example, but Boehner can't be thrilled at being tasked with leading a group of Republican House members who can't be led. And while Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) remains upbeat about her party's chances of winning back the majority this fall, she's about the only one. The elimination of earmarks in the House and the rise of outside funding mechanisms badly limit the control that leaders can exert over backbenchers. LINO's — leaders in name only — will start to be the rule, not the exception.

Bordering On Heartless

By E.j. Dionne Jr.

[Washington Post](#), July 14, 2014

Glenn Beck says he has come under fierce attack from some of his fellow conservatives for a grave transgression.

His crime? He announced plans to bring food, water, teddy bears and soccer balls to at least some of the tens of thousands of Central American children who have crossed the border into the United States.

"Through no fault of their own, they are caught in political crossfire," Beck said. "Anyone, left or right, seeking political gain at the expense of these desperate, vulnerable, poor and suffering people are reprehensible."

Beck, not averse to a certain grandiosity, let us know that "I've never taken a position more deadly to my career than this." But assume he's right — and he may well be. It's one more sign of how the crisis at our border has brought out the very worst in our political system and a degree of plain nastiness that we should not be proud of as a nation.

Let's stipulate: This is a difficult problem. Unless the United States is willing to open its borders to all comers — a goal of only the purest libertarians and a very few liberals — we will face agonizing choices about whom to let in and whom to turn away.

Moreover, it's clearly true, as The Post editorialized, that "there is nothing humanitarian in tacitly encouraging tens of thousands of children to risk their lives, often at the hands of cutthroat smugglers, to enter this country illegally."

But instead of dealing with this problem in a thoughtful way reflecting shared responsibility across party lines, President Obama's critics quickly turned to the business of — if I may quote Beck — seeking political gain. Last week, the only issue that seemed to matter was whether Obama visited the border.

It's not just partisan politics, either. It should bother religious people that politicians pay a lot of attention when conservative church leaders speak out against contraception and gay rights but hardly any when religious voices suggest that these children deserve empathy and care.

There are those in our clergy who could usefully consider whether they speak a lot louder when they're talking about sexuality than when they're preaching about love. Nonetheless, many religious leaders are condemning callousness toward these kids.

"The church cannot be silent," the Rev. Gabriel Salguero, president of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition, wrote in Time magazine, "as angry groups of people stoking the flames of fear yell at buses filled with helpless immigrant children and women."

And Sister Mary Ann Walsh, the media director for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, called for "a moral conscience moment" akin to the response during the civil rights era "in the welcoming of children and others escaping the violence in such countries as Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras."

It is said, and it's true, that the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act that swept through Congress and was signed by President George W. Bush in December 2008 has had the unintended consequence of encouraging the Central American children to head north. To protect victims of sex trafficking, the law guaranteed an immigration hearing to unaccompanied minors, except for those from Canada and Mexico.

As the bill was making its way through Congress, members of both parties could not stop congratulating themselves for their compassion. The bill, Rep. Jeff Fortenberry (R-Neb.) said, arose from "exemplary bipartisan cooperation" and showed how big-hearted we are.

"Together, let us end the nightmare of human trafficking," he declared, "and lead the world to see, in the poignant words of Alexis de Tocqueville, that America is great because America is good."

Suddenly, we are far less interested in being "good" than in protecting our borders — even if those we are trying to "protect" ourselves from are the youngest of refugees.

All the pressure now is to change the Wilberforce Act so it would no longer apply to Central American children. There's a strong logic to this. The law does create a powerful incentive for unaccompanied minors from Central America (which is not that much farther away than Mexico) to seek entry, en masse, to our country.

But there is another logic: that the anti-trafficking law really did embody a "good" instinct by holding that we should, as much as we can, treat immigrant children with special concern. Do we rush to repeal that commitment the moment it becomes inconvenient? Or should we first seek other ways to solve the problem? Yes, policymakers should be mindful of unintended consequences. But all of us should ponder the cost of politically convenient indifference.

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Key Republicans Balk At White House Border Funds Request

By Diane Bartz

[Reuters](#), July 13, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

McCaul Lays Out Options For GOP Border Response

By Seung Min Kim

[Politico](#), July 14, 2014

House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Mike McCaul signaled on Sunday that House Republicans will demand various policy changes in exchange for approving some emergency funding to respond to the crisis at the southwestern border.

Among those options include tweaking the 2008 anti-trafficking law dealing with unaccompanied minors that makes it more difficult to deport children from countries other than Canada or Mexico back home, McCaul said.

Republican lawmakers are also considering his border-security bill as part of their recommendations, the Texas Republican said. The legislation, which passed unanimously out of his panel last year, calls on the Department of Homeland Security to create a plan that ensures that within five years, at least 90 percent of people making illegal border crossings along the southwestern U.S. border are apprehended.

McCaul, a member of a House GOP working group that is crafting a policy response to the border crisis, said Republicans are looking for a "targeted approach" and that any emergency funding would likely run only through the end of the current fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30.

"Our view, I think, as House Republicans, is, look, we're not going to write a blank check," McCaul said on "Fox News Sunday."

Congress needs to act before the long August recess, he stressed.

Good Chance Of Action On Supplemental Before Recess, McCaul Says

By Justin Sink

[The Hill](#), July 14, 2014

There's a "good" chance House Republicans will move on an emergency supplemental to address the crisis at the border before the August recess, House Homeland Security Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas) said Sunday.

But GOP lawmakers will only support a "more targeted approach" than that requested by President Obama in his \$3.7 billion proposal unveiled last week.

In an interview with “Fox News Sunday,” McCaul proposed limiting the emergency supplemental spending to just the remainder of the fiscal year. He also said he did not support spending on facilities in the U.S. for the Department of Homeland Security to house the tens of thousands of migrant children crossing the border.

“I think we have to deal with this in a humane, compassionate way, but I’m not in favor of building large warehouses in the United States to warehouse these kids,” McCaul said.

Instead, he suggested constructing facilities back in the children’s native countries in Central America.

Obama’s supplemental includes \$1.8 billion for the Health and Human Services Department to be able to house the children while they are awaiting immigration court hearings, and \$300 million for the State Department to improve economic and security conditions in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, the home countries of the majority of the children.

But McCaul was optimistic that lawmakers would move on some sort of package in the coming weeks.

“I think we have to act soon. It’s a crisis at hand that demands action, a call for action. It’s a very tragic human crisis at the border, none like I’ve ever seen before. So I think we need to act before the August recess,” he said.

He also said Republicans were examining other ways to address the crisis, including amending a 2008 law that allows children from countries other than Mexico the ability to automatically enter into a lengthy asylum process.

“We have to have a message of deterrence,” McCaul said.

Homeland Security Committee Chair Says Immigrant Teens ‘Looked Like A Threat’

By Emily Swanson

[Huffington Post](#), July 13, 2014

House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas) said Sunday that it was “heartbreaking” to see unaccompanied immigrant children held at border detention centers, but also that some of the older children “looked like a threat.”

Speaking on “Fox News Sunday,” McCaul expressed sympathy for some of the immigrants, while also taking a swipe at President Barack Obama.

“Unlike the president, I was down there, on the border, I saw these children,” McCaul said. “It’s very heart-wrenching as a father to see that – mothers with their babies.”

But McCaul also said that he “saw some 17-year-olds that I thought looked more like a threat coming into the United States.”

The past several months have seen a surge of immigrants from Central American nations crossing into the

U.S. along the southern border. Because of a 2008 law intended to help victims of child trafficking, children from nations other than Mexico who enter the country illegally are entitled to an immigration hearing – a process that can take years to wind through backlogged courts.

McCaul said he believed it should be easier to deport immigrants to Central American countries, and added that a policy of “deterrence” could “protect and save these children.”

US Republicans Skeptical Of Obama Border Request

[AFP](#), July 14, 2014

Washington (AFP) – Senior US Republicans expressed skepticism Sunday about President Barack Obama’s emergency funding request to stem the surge of children from Central America, saying it doesn’t focus enough on border security.

US authorities have detained some 57,000 unaccompanied minors since October, twice the number from the same period a year ago, sparking a political firestorm about how best to deal with the influx.

Obama has requested \$3.7 billion to help ease an “urgent humanitarian situation” largely affecting youths from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras fleeing poverty and crime back home.

But Republicans, led by Texas Governor Rick Perry whose state borders Mexico and has felt the impact of the crisis firsthand, said Sunday the proposal doesn’t go far enough and that he would not be encouraging his congressional delegation to pass the legislation.

“As I look at that piece of legislation, it is a very large amount of money. As you analyze it, very little of it is for border security,” Perry said in an interview with Fox News Sunday.

The failed 2012 Republican presidential candidate urged Obama to position National Guard troops along the border in “a show of force.”

“That’s the message that gets sent back very quickly to Central America,” he said.

Perry contended that, in fact, Obama didn’t have to “have this big amount of money” but could instruct the Defense Department with a simple phone call to direct 1,000 troops to the border.

Senator John McCain, from the neighboring state of Arizona that is also affected by the influx, told CNN’s State of the Union talk show that much more funding – about \$6 billion – was needed to secure America’s borders.

“Every nation has the requirement to secure its borders. Our borders are not secure, no matter what they say.”

McCain advocated sending children back home, saying it would send a message to families and keep them from

paying human traffickers to smuggle their offspring to the United States on a perilous overland trek across Mexico.

"There has to be a halt to this. That's what we want. And the best way to do that is for planeloads of these young people to be returning to their country of origin," he said.

Congressman Mike McCaul of Texas, the chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, also signaled that the president's request would face an uphill battle.

"Our view as House Republicans, is look, we're not going to write a blank check for \$4 billion," he said, also on Fox News Sunday. "It will be a more targeted approach."

US Attorney General Eric Holder meanwhile acknowledged in an interview with ABC's This Week program that America's immigration laws are "broken."

"It's why we need comprehensive immigration reform," he said in remarks taped Friday.

With its funding request, the Obama administration is looking to beef up border security with aerial surveillance, improve housing for the undocumented arrivals and speed up their deportations.

The appropriation would go to several US government agencies, funding an increase in the number of immigration judges, asylum officers and border agents; an expansion in court capacity; and the addition of detention facilities, officials said.

GOP Lambasts Obama's Border Funds Request

By Diane Bartz

[Christian Science Monitor](#), July 13, 2014

Washington — Leading Republican lawmakers balked on Sunday at supporting a White House spending request aimed at bolstering the US border with Mexico, where thousands of children have crossed recently, while calling for changes in the law to allow faster deportations.

The White House has asked for \$3.7 billion in emergency funds to help pay for border security, temporary detention centers, and additional immigration court judges to process asylum cases.

The Obama administration warned lawmakers on Thursday that border security agencies would run out of money this summer if the request was not approved.

Senator John McCain, an Arizona Republican, said when asked about the spending bill that the priority had to be stopping the flow of children and teenagers from Central America to the United States.

"The best way to do that is for planeloads of these young people to be returning to the country of origin," he told CNN's "State of the Union." "As soon as they (parents) see their money is not effective in getting their kids to this country, it will stop."

More than 52,000 children traveling alone from Central America have been caught at the US-Mexico border since October, twice as many as the same period the year before.

US immigration officials say the crisis is being driven by poverty and gang and drug violence in Central America, as well as rumors perpetuated by smugglers that children who reach the US border will be permitted to stay.

House of Representatives Appropriations Committee Chairman Harold Rogers said last week that the Obama administration asked for "too much money" but declined to say what an appropriate figure would be.

Representative Michael McCaul, a Texas Republican, also declined to support the spending bill. "We're not going to write a blank check for over \$4 billion," he told "Fox News Sunday." McCaul is chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee.

McCaul said he would support changing a 2008 law that requires deportation proceedings for children that arrive from countries that do not share a border with the United States. This would allow authorities to quickly deport newly arrived Central American children, as they do Mexican children.

McCaul said that bill could see action this summer.

"It's a very tragic human crisis at the border, none like I've ever seen before. I think we have to act before the August recess," he said.

The bill saw opposition from one Democrat, Representative Joaquin Castro of Texas.

"That 2008 law, passed under George W. Bush, was passed for a reason," he told NBC's "Meet the Press." "Many people believe that these kids should have a chance to make their case for asylum. So I think we've got to be careful when we consider completely doing away with that law."

Texas Governor Rick Perry pressed the White House to send National Guard troops to the border to aid the border patrol, which has been stretched thin by the mass influx of minors.

"They need to be right there on the river because that's the message that gets back to Central America. It's important to do that because this flood of children is pulling the border patrol away from their normal duty of keeping bad people (out)," he told "Fox News Sunday."

Perry also said that conversations among Central Americans had been monitored.

"We listen to the conversations. Er, I should say that, the conversations are being monitored with calls back to Central America and the message is, 'Hey, c'mon up here. Everything is great. They're taking care of us,'" he said.

Governors Talk Border Crisis With New HHS Secretary

By Kyle Cheney

[Politico](#), July 14, 2014

NASHVILLE — The escalating crisis surrounding the flood of unaccompanied Latin American minors crossing the U.S. border dominated a “getting to know you” session Sunday between the nation’s governors and new Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell, governors who participated said.

Medicaid expansion under Obamacare also came up at a separate meeting, but with less urgency than the border crisis.

Burwell made no public appearance after her meeting, exiting through a side door after the hour-long session. She testified about the border crisis to a Senate panel last week, emphasizing the need to house the youths and address health concerns.

“She was talking about the size and nature of the issue,” said Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam, a Republican, said after the Sunday session at the National Governors Association summer meeting here.

The governors said they wanted to emphasize the potential ramifications of keeping the children in the country over the long-term.

Haslam said he had expected the new HHS secretary to focus on Medicaid but those concerns were quickly consumed by the immigration crisis.

Haslam, who revealed Burwell’s visit a few days earlier when speaking with local reporters, and Utah Gov. Gary Herbert discussed Medicaid with Burwell, who has been in the job for just over a month. They are among the GOP governors considering some form of Obamacare Medicaid expansion but negotiations have dragged on over the details. Some red states are eyeing conservative-friendly version of expansion akin to programs in place in Arkansas and Iowa and hope talks can get “re-set” with a new HHS secretary.

Flood Of Child Migrants Spurs Local Backlash

By Laura Meckler, Beth Reinhard And Peter Nicholas
[Wall Street Journal](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Hundreds Of Immigrant Kids Transported Far North Of The Border (+video)

[Christian Science Monitor](#), July 13, 2014

The focus of the political, legal, and social fight over thousands of immigration children streaming north from Central America has been along the US-Mexico border.

Hastily prepared detention facilities there are filling up. Protesters on both sides of the immigration debate face off. Legal authorities try to sort through complicated cases involving family members on both sides of the border as well the many very young children in a kind of limbo.

But government agencies and private organizations far to the north are involved as well, according to reports from governors and other concerned officials.

Fox News reported Sunday that 748 unaccompanied minors have been transferred from areas near the border to the Chicago area.

Of the original group of 748 kids, 319 have been placed with family members or sponsors while they await an immigration hearing, according to Fox. The other 429 have been placed in facilities run by the Heartland Alliance, a nonprofit organization that receives grants from the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Sen. Mark Kirk (R) of Illinois complains that state officials don’t have enough information about the situation. “These detention facilities should be completely open to the press and to the American people so that we know how what conditions are, we should be able to talk to the kids who are there,” he told Fox.

Nebraska faces a similar situation.

“I found out in the last 48 hours that approximately 200 illegal individuals have been transported to Nebraska [by the federal government],” Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman (R) told Politico, “The federal government is complicit in a secret operation to transfer illegal individuals to my state and they won’t tell us who they are.”

At Fort Sill in Oklahoma, 1,100 immigrant children are being housed.

Gov. Mary Fallin (R) tells Politico that there’s been no guidance about how long the children will be housed, whether they’re entitled to any taxpayer-funded benefits, from education to Medicaid to foster care. And she’s unsure whether they might be “let loose in the United States” once they turn 18.

“Those are all the questions and concerns that governors like myself,” she said. “They are children so we want to treat them very humanely, but we also have a lot of concerns.”

Some of those concerns break down along partisan lines.

Republican governors and lawmakers emphasize border security and potential problems in dealing with an estimated 52,000 immigrants who have come to the US so far this year – double last year’s rate, according to US Customs and Border Protection – which they blame on the Obama administration.

Democrats place the blame on the Republican-controlled US House of Representatives, which has refused to take up bipartisan immigration reform legislation passed by the Senate. They’re also more inclined to emphasize what they see as a humanitarian crisis involving refugees from a part of the world that has grown increasingly violent.

“We are not a country that should turn children away and send them back to certain death,” Maryland Gov. Martin

O'Malley (D) told reporters Friday at a National Governors Association meeting in Nashville. "It is contrary to everything we stand for as a people to try to summarily send children back to death ... in a place where drug gangs are the greatest threat to stability, rule of law and democratic institutions in this hemisphere."

Meanwhile, the immigration debate continued Sunday on the TV news programs.

"We are faced with an extraordinary situation where thousands of people, young people especially, are fleeing Central American for economic reasons, to get away from endemic violence in their countries," US Attorney General Eric Holder said on ABC's "This Week."

"Can you see where the critics are coming from when you see buses of people being brought inland after they come here illegally?" Mr. Holder was asked.

"Let me just say this: Our immigration laws are broken," he replied. "It's why we need comprehensive immigration reform."

Speaking on "Fox News Sunday," Texas Gov. Rick Perry (R) said that to "staunch this flow, you do not have to have a change in law." He says President Obama should order more National Guard troops along the border.

"They need to be right on the river," Gov. Perry said. "They need to be there as a show of force because that's the message that gets sent back very quickly back to Central America."

Perry Calls For National Guard, Agents At The Border

By Reid J. Epstein

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Rick Perry Slams Obama's Blame Game, Demands National Guard For Border [VIDEO]

By Katie Frates

[Daily Caller](#), July 14, 2014

Texas Gov. Rick Perry slammed President Barack Obama on Fox News Sunday, once again demanding the National Guard, and called on Obama to stop the blame game and get up and lead.

Host Brit Hume asked Perry to explain why he wants the National Guard sent to Texas, inquiring skeptically, "What exactly would National Guardsman and women do on the border?"

Perry explained that the National Guard acts as a front-line deterrent for illegal immigrants, and is critically important now, because most border patrol agents are stuck taking care of the illegal immigrant children. "The president was not even aware that his border patrol was back 40 or 45 miles from the

border at these checkpoints," he said. "They need to be right on the ripper, they need to be there as a show of force."

"This flood of children is pulling away the border patrol from their normal duties of keeping bad people, keeping the drug cartels, they're being distracted."

Hume pushed back, questioning how effective the National Guard could be when they aren't allowed to actually detain anyone. "They're not, under the law, allowed to apprehend any of these children that are crossing, are they?" Hume asked.

"It's the visual of it that's the most important," Perry countered. "Their conversations are being monitored with calls back to Central America, and the message is 'hey come on up here, everything is great, they're taking care of us,' and that needs to stop."

Hume then asked if Perry thought the presence of the National Guard would really deter children who have already "made the harrowing journey."

"Are they really going to be deterred by the presence of troops along the border who won't shoot them, and can't arrest them?"

"What we're talking about is sending the message back now to staunch the bleeding," Perry replied. "Those that are already here, to address them, to humanitarily [sic] take care of them, to make sure they are safe — to reunite them with their families — that is the most humanitarian thing we can do."

Perry again stressed the necessity of the National Guard to help get border patrol agents back to their actual jobs. "Right now, reports of up to 70 percent of them [border patrol] are taking care of these young people who have come in, rather than do their job of securing the border."

Hume brought up President Obama, and his hope that Perry would "put the heat" on the Texas congressional delegation to pass "this nearly \$4 billion dollar measure" that he is proposing.

And Perry had some choice words for the president.

"Very little of it [the bill] is for border security. And I think until he gets realistic about the problem and how you deal with the problem, and it is a border security issue, and we've got a track record now of five plus years of him disregarding what is going on on the border, so here's his opportunity to truly lead," Perry declared.

"Don't blame this on anyone. Be a leader, lay out a plan."

Hume then asked Perry to clarify if he was saying he would disregard the president and not pressure the Texas delegation to pass the bill.

"So in other words, governor, you don't particularly support the bill, and you're not going to be encouraging your delegation to pass it. Is that a fair assessment?"

"I think you have distilled the correct answer," Perry replied.

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Perry: ‘Very Little’ Of \$3.7B Supplemental Would Go Toward Border Security

By Justin Sink

[The Hill](#), July 14, 2014

Texas Governor Rick Perry (R) will not support President Obama’s proposed \$3.7 billion emergency spending package to address the surge of migrant children crossing the border, he said Sunday.

“It is a very large amount of money and as you analyze it, very little of it is for border security,” Perry said during an interview with “Fox News Sunday.”

The Texas governor said Obama “doesn’t have to have this big amount of money,” instead advocating for his plan of surging 1,000 National Guardsmen to the border as a show of force.

“I think until he gets realistic about the problem and how you deal with the problem – and it is a border security issue, and we’ve got a track record now of five-plus years of him disregarding what’s going on on the border,” Perry said. “Here’s his opportunity to lead. Don’t blame this on anyone. Lay out a plan.”

Perry was pressed repeatedly on how the National Guardsmen would help stem the flow of tens of thousands of migrant children across the border. Children crossing the border now are largely turning themselves into Border Patrol agents, looking to enter a lengthy asylum process during which they are reconnected with family members living in the United States.

“The issue is being able to send that message. Because it’s the visual of it, I think that is most important,” Perry said.

He also suggested the presence of the guardsmen would allow some Border Patrol agents to return to their core missions, rather than deal with the bureaucracy created by the influx of migrant children.

“This is allowing the Border Patrol to get back to what they’re supposed to do,” Perry said.

Perry met with President Obama earlier this week, and after the meeting the president publicly asked the governor to pressure the Texas congressional delegation to support his proposed border supplemental.

“I urged the governor to talk to the Texas delegation, which is obviously at the heart of the Republican caucus both in the House and has great influence in the caucus in the Senate,” Obama said. “If the Texas delegation is in favor of this supplemental – which, by the way, does not include some things that I know many of them object to around dealing with undocumented workers who have been in this country for quite some time – this is just a very narrow issue, this supplemental, in terms of dealing with the particular problem

we have right now – if the Texas delegation is prepared to move, this thing can get done next week.”

Obama also said he’d be willing to consider deploying the National Guard as part of a compromise deal for the supplemental.

The spending request includes \$1.6 billion to boost law enforcement efforts and surge additional immigration judges and lawyers too the border. But the majority of the funding would go to the Department of Health and Human Services to provide care for the children.

On Friday, White House press secretary Josh Earnest said the White House would “like to see Gov. Perry join the fight” for the Senate’s immigration reform package, saying it would send an even stronger message than deploying the National Guard.

“It seems to me that the 20,000 Border Patrol agents would be a better option – which is why, if this is his genuine view, I would expect him to be an enthusiastic advocate for common-sense immigration reform,” Earnest said. “Passing common-sense immigration reform along the lines of what passed the Senate with bipartisan support would add 20,000 officers to the border. So even if it’s only for purely symbolic reasons, as Governor Perry says, that seems like a pretty good path.”

Democrats Continue To Pile On Obama For Skipping The Border

[Channel4000](#), July 14, 2014

Yet more Democrats are piling on President Barack Obama for skipping a visit to the U.S.-Mexico border during his recent trip to Texas.

“I wish he would have come to the border,’ said U.S. Rep. Beto O’Rourke, a Texas Democrat. “It would have sent an important message to the rest of the country about how seriously he takes this issue beyond the spending request he sent to Congress last week.”

Obama’s decision to skip the border comes as more and more unaccompanied immigrant minors are making their way in the United States, creating what both Democrats and Republicans have called a humanitarian crisis. Obama has requested \$3.7 billion in emergency funding to help ease the burdens on federal officials and facilities, as well as to crack down on smugglers.

While in Texas, Obama pressed for Congress to give him the funds and met with Republican Gov. Rick Perry. But border state politicians continue to say Obama missed an opportunity to see the crisis first hand.

“I wish he would have come to my district of El Paso where we’ve seen thousands of family members,” O’Rourke said. “I wanted him to meet the men and women of the border patrol, of [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement], of

Annunciation House, a Catholic charity that's helping to take care of these families and reunite them."

"The President should have gone down there," Democratic Rep. Luis Gutierrez of Illinois told CBS's Bob Schieffer.

White House press secretary Josh Earnest says Obama's focus has been on the issue, rather than on his image.

"The President's priority was on solving the problem," Earnest said. "The President's putting the policy solution first, even though he's been criticized over photo ops. That's leadership and that's what the President's been focused on."

And while Gutierrez said he would have liked Obama to make the trip, he made clear where he thinks the blame lies in the broader legislative battles over immigration reform.

"The administration has been trying to work with Congress to pass an immigration reform bill for over two years," Gutierrez said. "So it's been folks in Congress and specifically in the House of Representatives who have not moved forward on a bill that would have helped us prevent some of the things we're seeing on the border now."

Texas Democrat Rep. Joaquin Castro praised administration officials who have made the trip. While he didn't offer any additional details, Castro said not to count out a border visit from Obama in the future.

"The fact is, this was not the President's last opportunity to get to the border. I think you will see him go down there. I think it's important for him to get down there at some point, to let people know he personally is attending the situation," Castro told NBC's David Gregory. "[Homeland Security Secretary] Jeh Johnson has been down there five or six times. He's keeping the President apprised of everything."

Texas Dem: Obama Should Have Visited 'Ground Zero'

By Martin Matishak

[The Hill](#), July 14, 2014

Rep. Beto O'Rourke (D-Texas) on Sunday said he believes President Obama should have visited the U.S.-Mexico border when he was in Texas last week.

"I wish he would have come to the border," O'Rourke, whose district includes the border town of El Paso, said on CNN's "State of the Union."

The freshman lawmaker said he wanted the president to visit McAllen, Texas, which has become operational hub in the crisis to deal with thousand of children who have crossed the border illegally.

O'Rourke called the site "ground zero" for dealing with the situation and a visit there would have allowed Obama to meet with border patrol and immigration officer trying to handle the crisis.

The president has come under harsh scrutiny from Republicans, and some Democrats, for visiting the state but not traveling to the holding facilities.

A visit "would have sent an important message to the rest of the country about seriously he views this situation," according to O'Rourke.

He called on the administration to address the "core issues," such as living conditions, in the children's home countries.

Goodlatte: Obama Has Power To Stop Immigration Crisis

[Roanoke \(VA\) Times](#), July 14, 2014

There is a tsunami hitting our nation's southern border. Unaccompanied children, teenagers and families from Central America – largely from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador – are arriving in unprecedented numbers at ports of entry in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. They are making a dangerous journey through Mexico and then walking miles across a hostile border environment, assisted by smugglers, and coming to the United States in violation of the law.

As chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, which oversees and writes our nation's immigration laws, I led a bipartisan delegation to Texas last week to examine this crisis and seek solutions on how best to stop it. During our visit, we toured federal facilities and met with those dealing with this problem firsthand at the border, including law enforcement officers and federal officials from the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, and Health and Human Services. Here are some of the key facts we learned on our trip.

Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents were quite clear that the vast majority of Central American minors who travel alone cite joining their parents who are already in the U.S. illegally as their primary reason for coming, not fleeing violence. Additionally, these parents often had a role in smuggling the minors into the U.S. While I was on a ride-along with the Border Patrol along the Rio Grande River, I witnessed the apprehension of a mother and child from El Salvador and a 15-year-old boy from Honduras. The boy said he came to reunite with his mother, who has been in the U.S. since he was 6. Both said they were coming here in violation of law, but like many others, do not believe the administration will send them back home.

We also learned that the number of Central American families arriving at the border has grown. Agents at one Border Patrol station in the Rio Grande Valley sector stated that out of all of their apprehensions, roughly 20 percent are unaccompanied minors from Central America and an additional 25 percent are families. ICE agents indicated that often a family unit will intentionally break up and come to the

border at different times to increase their likelihood of staying in the U.S. Central American families could be subject to expedited removal, but based on the administration's policies, where there is only one parent available to care for the children, they can be released into the U.S. Families have become aware of this and are splitting up when they arrive at the border to game the system.

During our briefings, Border Patrol agents stated that the best way to stop the surge of Central Americans is deterrence and there must be an end of what is now essentially "catch and release." However, it's clear that there are few, if any, consequences for illegal immigration. Word has spread to the Americas and beyond that women and children are not priorities for removal, as outlined in the Obama administration's immigration enforcement "priorities." Additionally, many of these minors and families are able to game the asylum process since most applications are approved. In fact, an internal Department of Homeland Security report states there is proven or possible fraud in up to 70 percent of asylum applications, yet the vast majority of these applications are rubberstamped anyway. The result of these policies has ultimately led to a disaster of President Obama's own making at the border.

Many have asked what can be done to stop this surge. While there are some laws that complicate how we deal with Central American minors coming here illegally, it is crystal clear that President Obama has many tools he could use now to stop this activity and prevent minors from making the dangerous journey to the United States.

If President Obama wants to stop this problem, he should enforce our immigration laws and end programs he created unilaterally that ignore entire categories of deportable aliens, allow for release of unlawful immigrants, and permit them to stay here. He also needs to direct his administration to crack down on asylum fraud and implement deterrents to stop people from entering in violation of the law. This would send the clear message that it is no longer worth the risk to subject children to the dangers of the perilous trip north to our southern border.

President Obama created this crisis and he has the power to stop it now. Children's lives are at stake, and so is the integrity of our immigration system.

Bob Goodlatte: How Obama Can Stop The Border Crisis

[Augusta \(VA\) Free Press](#), July 14, 2014

Over the last several weeks, the surge of children, teenagers, and families – largely from Central America – attempting to enter the United States illegally has continued to grow.

The failure of this Administration to enforce our immigration laws has led to a disaster of President Obama's

own making. Now, he has asked Congress for a whopping \$3.7 billion in additional funding without accountability or a plan in place to actually stop the border crisis. No amount of resources will be effective in stemming the surge of illegal border crossings if he continues to ignore the law.

President Obama has many lawful tools at his disposal right now to stop the surge of illegal immigrants at our southern border and he should act on these immediately. One step would be giving Border Patrol agents access to federal lands, such as national monuments and wildlife refuges, along the border, which are currently restricted due to strict environmental rules. As a result, federal lands along the border provide drug traffickers, human smugglers, and illegal immigrants effective routes and hiding places where authorities cannot reach them. The Administration should also restore agreements with state and local law enforcement agencies to help enforce immigration laws and relieve some of the burden on overwhelmed Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents.

Additionally, the Administration should crack down on false asylum claims and implement tougher standards for "credible fear" claims, or those who claim a "well-founded fear of persecution" in their home country when trying to enter the U.S. According to a Department of Homeland Security report, at least 70 percent of asylum cases contain proven or possible fraud. Failing to stop these cases only encourages more people to come to the U.S. and make similar claims. Along the same lines, the Administration could deter false asylum claims by detaining these individuals while the government determines whether their case is legitimate, rather than what are now essentially "catch and release" policies. The Administration also needs to stop releasing convicted criminal aliens from detention.

Furthermore, President Obama needs to demand that the Mexican government help stop this surge through Mexico and secure their southern border with Guatemala. He also needs to work with the Mexican government and the governments of Central American countries to discourage their citizens from making the journey northward.

As was evident on my recent trip, the cost of inaction is significant. I encourage President Obama to step up and lead by sending a strong, public message that those who enter the United States illegally will be returned to their home countries and that subjecting children to this dangerous journey will no longer be tolerated. These actions would send the message that the United States is serious about enforcing our immigration laws.

Bob Goodlatte represents the Sixth District in Congress.

Meet A Mother In D.C. Who Risked Having Her Kids Smuggled To Her From Honduras

By Pamela Constable

[Washington Post](#), July 14, 2014

From the moment she fled poverty-stricken Honduras a decade ago, Allis Godoy knew she would find a way to be reunited with the children she left behind. She was desperate enough to have them smuggled across Mexico to the U.S. border, spending thousands of dollars and risking their lives so they could join her in Northwest Washington.

Four years ago, her teenage son David made the hazardous trip. Two and a half months ago, her youngest daughter, Madison, finally reached her side. By then, the pixie-like 10-year-old had endured two failed smuggling attempts and a third that landed her in the custody of U.S. immigration agents in Texas on April 14. Two weeks later, she was flown to Washington by the federal government and greeted by the mother who had last seen her when she was 6 months old.

It was the crowning achievement of Godoy's life.

"If people call this a crime, why is it a crime to want to give your children a better future?" asked Godoy, 39, who makes salads in a restaurant kitchen and lives in a tiny apartment in Columbia Heights. "I have only one goal in life," she said. "To make sure my children never have to endure what I did as a child."

Official Washington is in an uproar over how to handle the tens of thousands of unaccompanied children who have been arriving at the border since last fall, a surge that has overwhelmed the government and intensified the public debate over illegal immigration. But just a few miles from the Capitol, in neighborhoods such as Godoy's, is a parallel universe where families are waiting for the same children with open arms.

Almost everyone in the region's Salvadoran, Honduran and Guatemalan immigrant communities knows someone whose son or niece has traveled here from the border. New children often appear in school classrooms, health clinics and social service programs, speaking no English and still getting over their shock.

Godoy's story might astonish and anger many Americans, but it is an utterly normal part of life in her world, where the ability to "send for" one's children is a source of pride and relief for families who fled poverty and conflict in Central America, often entering the United States illegally. Many have struggled for years at menial jobs, worrying constantly about children back home.

With no legal options, these parents frequently pay \$2,000 to \$5,000 to have their children transported to the U.S. border — or more if they are smuggled further inland. Financially stretched immigrants often borrow the funds or pool resources with family members.

"It is not safe in Honduras. There is so much poverty and delinquency," said Godoy. "I never wanted to leave them, and my dream was to go home after a few years. But it didn't work out. Everything was so hard here, and I didn't have the

courage to go back empty-handed." Some of her relatives faced the same dilemma, so they helped each other pay to bring their children north. "This is a family investment in their future," she said.

In the past two years, reports of gang violence have skyrocketed in Godoy's homeland, where the per capita murder rate is one of the highest in the world. The growing danger made her determined to bring Madison to the United States before she reached adolescence and became a target for gangs and other predators. Her oldest daughter, 23, is married and remains in Honduras.

Legally, Madison could face deportation back to Honduras — it says so in black and white on the documents issued by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers who processed her at the Mexico-Texas border.

She is part of the unprecedented wave of unaccompanied children reaching the border in recent months, mostly from Central America. Their numbers have soared from 5,200 in 2012 to more than 52,000 this year — and there are fears they could reach 90,000 by summer's end, according to internal Border Patrol estimates.

Unlike children arriving from Mexico, who may be immediately sent back, those from Central America and beyond are given shelter and if possible released to relatives because of U.S. laws against child trafficking. But they are also given papers saying they are "subject to removal" under U.S. immigration laws.

President Obama, who first framed the border surge as a humanitarian crisis, has come under sharp attack from Republicans and some Democrats. Last week, he promised that most of the youths will eventually be deported and asked Congress for \$3.7 billion to stem the influx and speed up judicial processing.

Godoy had to provide immigration authorities with numerous personal documents to qualify as Madison's temporary sponsor, and she attended a class on sponsorship at a Catholic Charities office in the District. She knows she is required to make sure the child appears at all immigration hearings and to report if she runs away or moves to another address.

But there is little in Godoy's experience that suggests Madison will ever be forced to leave the country. Her son David, who has been in the United States since 2010, is in the final stages of obtaining a special humanitarian visa for undocumented youths. Several children of her relatives and friends are still here several years after arriving from the border. Godoy herself, while still undocumented, has applied for a resident visa through a program for women victimized by crime or abuse, and she expects this will protect her from being deported.

"We have followed all the immigration procedures for Madison, and I have faith she will be able to stay," Godoy said one recent evening as she watched her daughter play on

a jungle gym with her brother Adonis, 7, who was born in the United States. The children had never met until April, but they laughed and clowned familiarly. Madison, pretending to be a pony, whinnied in delight.

Godoy said that the girl had weathered her daunting journey well but that she is still nervous around strange adults. Since reaching Washington, she has had numerous health checkups and counseling sessions. After two weeks in summer school, she has produced reports in Spanish on animals and planets and picked up some useful English words. At one point on the playground, she ran over and tugged on her mother's sleeve, saying, "Mami, tengo HUNGRY."

Even in Spanish, Madison did not want to talk about her recent ordeal, answering questions with shrugs and monosyllables and then falling silent. But David, now 17, vividly described his trip from Honduras four years earlier. First, he said, a bus took him across Guatemala with a group of 10 or 15 other children. Then, they were told to walk across a desert for eight hours in the dark. Finally, they were pushed into a boat and crossed a river.

Later, Godoy mentioned that David had been stopped and held for ransom in Mexico. The smugglers called and forced her to send an additional \$1,400 so he could continue his journey. When he and the other children finally reached American soil, the teen said, "we walked a little, and then we were caught. The people were nice. They let me call my mom. She cried, and she said everything would be okay."

Madison's interactions with American authorities appear to have been equally welcoming. According to documents sent to her mother, she was seen in Texas by social workers, teachers, doctors and lawyers, all of whom spoke Spanish. She was sheltered by several agencies, including a Baptist church and a nonprofit aid group called Raices. Then she was put on a plane, accompanied by a Spanish-speaking woman, and flown to Washington at U.S. government expense.

Once the girl arrived in the District, an elementary school enrolled her for summer classes and several nonprofit clinics gave her checkups. A number of Latino community agencies, founded to assist an earlier generation of Central American refugees, are providing hundreds of border children with health care, legal aid and social services.

"This is what we were created to do," said Alicia Wilson, executive director of La Clinica del Pueblo in Columbia Heights, established 31 years ago for war refugees from El Salvador. "We have been providing health care and services for newcomers and young people in exactly this situation for decades. The main difference this time is the larger volume. We need to make sure we have enough capacity to help."

Despite the easy access to services, though, Wilson said many families still face a "real and persistent fear" that their reunion with long-separated children may be short-lived.

"We try to deal with their immediate needs without creating the illusion that everything is going to be okay now," she said.

For Godoy, who recently remarried after years as a single mother, Madison's arrival has added new sources of stress to a chaotic daily schedule. Unable to afford child care, she constantly juggles work shifts with clinic visits, legal appointments and summer school pickups, spending hours driving the family van and texting at stoplights to plan her next move. With Madison and Adonis crammed into bunk beds, she often parks David with relatives. By the time she gets home, she is exhausted.

But for a few quiet moments on the playground one recent evening, there was undisguised joy in her laugh as she watched her two youngest children chase each other around a jungle gym, and there was a formidable set to her jaw as she vowed to never let them be parted again.

"When I was Madison's age, my parents were so poor that they had to hire me out," Godoy recounted with a grimace. Forced to leave school after the third grade, she said she worked as a domestic servant in a more affluent home, forbidden to sit on the furniture or eat on the plates, and was then sent onto the streets to sell tortillas.

"Madison has been through a lot, too, but that's over now," she said.

As she drove the children home a little while later, Godoy spotted a friend carrying groceries along the sidewalk. She honked and waved, and the woman waved back. "Her two kids," Godoy explained, "just arrived from Honduras."

Border Patrol Agent Contracts Severe Pneumonia

By Jessica Chasmar

[Washington Times](#), July 14, 2014

A Border Patrol agent is expected to have chronic asthmatic symptoms for life after he reportedly contracted bacterial pneumonia while processing illegal immigrants in Laredo, Texas.

The agent, who was not named, has been hospitalized for seven days with bacterial pneumonia. The illness has caused the agent's throat to swell so badly that he can barely speak, National Review Online reported.

"It's a very traumatic experience," said Jarrad Seely, vice president of the National Border Patrol Council Local 2455.

Mr. Seely said it's too soon to tell if the agent will be able to make a full recovery and return to work. The agent was reportedly healthy prior to processing the immigrants.

"Our agents have been getting sick more often than before with flus and congestion and a whole bunch of respiratory illnesses," said Hector Garza, secretary and treasurer of NBPC 2455, National Review reported.

"The processing room was severely overcrowded and that just made [it] the perfect breeding ground for these diseases."

Mr. Seely said the Laredo sector has recently had illegal immigrants arrive with active cases of tuberculosis, scabies, lice and chicken pox, National Review reported.

On Texas Border, Volunteers Get To Work To Help Flood Of Immigrants

By Molly Hennessy-fiske, Los Angeles Times

[Los Angeles Times](#), July 14, 2014

McALLEN, Texas The old-fashioned trolley bus stopped just outside Sacred Heart Catholic Church, and eight or so passengers new immigrants who had just stolen across the Rio Grande from Mexico filed off, clutching water bottles and manila envelopes marked with their intended destinations in the U.S.

A man, frowning, headed for the door of the church with a young girl in tow. So did several women clutching children, looking dazed when a large group of volunteers suddenly stopped what they were doing and raised their hands in applause. "Bienvenidos," said one. Welcome. The new arrivals were ushered inside.

"This is the first experience a lot of people here have of meeting an American," explained Cesar Riojas, 50, one of hundreds of south Texas residents who have transformed the squat brick church hall here into a bustling support center for the hundreds of new immigrants now crossing into the U.S. from Mexico each week.

"I put myself in their position," Riojas said. "How would I want to be treated?"

The surge of about 57,000 unaccompanied youths since October and large numbers of immigrating parents with children has thrown the Obama administration's immigration policy into disarray and sparked new demands across the U.S. for heightened border security. But in the Rio Grande Valley, a porous frontier traveled by illicit wayfarers throughout history, the new influx of children and parents from Central America has been most immediately a reason to get to work.

The estimated 800 volunteers at the hastily organized immigrant relief center are retirees and businessmen, stay-at-home moms and students from nearby University of Texas-Pan American. Organizers from Catholic Charities have been joined by the Salvation Army, by Baptists, Methodists and Episcopalians. Teachers have brought their classes. An evangelical radio host summoned followers. In a region where many residents live in shacks and trailers without electricity, the center has received so much donated food that much of it is being stored offsite.

"The more you have, the more you separate yourself from those who have nothing," said Riojas, a self-described

conservative Republican from nearby Harlingen who is taking time off from his job as a consultant.

Valley residents started the relief center about a month ago with the help of a local nun after meeting immigrant families by chance at the bus station. They began organizing on Facebook and persuaded the church to let them use the hall.

Since then, the facility has served more than 3,000 immigrants, at times 200 a day. There are a few paid staffers, and volunteers work in shifts with assigned duties. Small teams lead immigrants through the process of getting bathed, clothed and bused to destinations around the U.S. where they will remain with friends or family until their immigration cases are heard in court. With many too traumatized and exhausted to hold down food, the newest are offered chicken soup and bottles of Pedialyte.

Massive tents in the parking lot have been set up as sleeping quarters for up to 60 adults awaiting buses, with portable showers and toilets nearby, donated by Hidalgo County. A local Baptist church brought a portable laundry.

"The community here have been very welcoming," said Sarita Fritzler, the Washington-based team leader for the charity Save the Children, who recently arrived from running a similar effort for Syrian refugees in Iraq.

Jose Luis Zelaya, 27, a doctoral student at Texas A&M University, about 380 miles north, who is studying to become a teacher, also volunteers. He was an immigrant himself under similar circumstances when he arrived in the valley 14 years ago as an unaccompanied minor from the gang-plagued Honduran city of San Pedro Sula.

Zelaya said he was familiar with the tales of violence and trauma many of the new immigrants tell before leaving his home to join his mother and his 9-year-old sister in Texas, he said, he'd been threatened by a gang, shot in each arm while he was playing soccer.

Just 13 years old at the time, Zelaya memorized his mother's phone number in Texas and boarded the train through Mexico that has ferried thousands of Central American immigrants on similar journeys over the years. He saw children raped, he said, and a man who fell from atop the hurtling train to his death. When he made it to the Rio Grande, he swam across alone and fell asleep in some bushes, where the Border Patrol found him.

Zelaya went on to graduate from high school and Texas A&M, and is now staying in the country under President Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

"I understand what they're going through," he said of his decision to come help the newest arrivals. "I understand the journey, what it is to be in a detention center and what they can have if they're reunited" with families, he said. "I know our country is grappling with this. If we send them back, they're being sent back to death."

Ofelia De Los Santos, a native of nearby Edinburg who is coordinating volunteers, said she can't help but think of her 18-year-old grandson.

"He's never had to run for his life, to be thirsty or hungry," she said, her voice catching as she removed her glasses. "You go home and think: What would I do if my children were being recruited by those gangs? Would I sell my house and send my children north?"

In the early days of the relief effort, volunteers were walking families from the bus station at all hours, mothers leading children by the hand through a series of back alleys where drifters lurked and broken glass glittered underfoot. Those with longer layovers they took into their homes, providing food and a place to rest.

Now the process is more formal. Arrivals are announced by loudspeaker and ushered through.

"Who's my volunteer with this family?" called out Hermi Forshage, handling intake last week at a table marked "Catholic Charities Disaster Response."

Forshage, 54, was working with a Guatemalan mother and her teenage son, reviewing their immigration paperwork and bus itinerary to Mobile, Ala.

"They're very, very scared," she told the volunteers before handing them off. "They don't speak Spanish. She knows 'si' very well, though, right?" Forshage said.

The woman, who spoke an indigenous language, nodded. "Si."

They shared a fragile smile. The woman looked relieved.

"She likes to cry," Forshage said. "She's already made me cry once."

A volunteer named Sandy in a red San Antonio Spurs cap moved the pair to pick new outfits from the dozens of folding tables stacked with clothes, toiletries and other supplies, sorted by age, sex and size.

A new pair took their place in front of Forshage this time a Salvadoran father and his small daughter, clutching a stuffed purple hedgehog labeled "Kiss me."

Forshage brightened. "How old are you?" she asked.

The girl held up three fingers.

"This is hard," Forshage sighed, reviewing the pair's bus tickets to Indiana and handing them a sign that read, "Please help me, I do not speak English, what bus do I need to take?"

Some of the new arrivals have been pregnant women; a few were women who gave birth after crossing and showed up with babies in their arms.

Carmen Garza, 46, a mother of four from nearby Mission, said some skeptical friends had asked why the immigrants kept coming, and whether they carried diseases. She said she tried not to judge the immigrants. She grew up just over the border in Mexico, where she has relatives and her husband still works.

"Who are we to judge them? We've led a privileged life," she said.

Forshage said she had stayed in touch with some of those she has helped.

"I talk to them and reassure them that the worst is over. Of course, when they go before the judge for deportation proceedings, who knows?" she said. "But will they ever show up?"

She is touched by the immigrants' stories, she said, but also pained. Parents tell her about extortion by smugglers, about children kidnapped with guns to their heads, about youngsters who fell ill and almost died during the journey.

Still, she said, she planned to keep volunteering.

"If my neighbor is in trouble, I help my neighbor," she said. "And these people are our neighbors."

Feds Ask Churches To House Migrant Families

By Neil Munro

[Daily Caller](#), July 14, 2014

The Department of Homeland Security has asked Catholic churches in California to temporarily house and feed groups of Central American migrants until 2016, according to an official at the diocese of San Bernardino.

But any unpaid cooperation is legally questionable, because it may be intended to bypass Congress' authority to fund — or to not fund — federal agencies' new practice of distributing the flood of migrant families to homes across the country.

The department "has reached out to the diocese and the bishop, and asked us to shelter families in transition," Maria Christina Mendez, at the Office of Hispanic Affairs, told The Daily Caller. The services would be needed for the next 18 months, "or longer," she said.

In response, the diocese has offered to let family groups of migrants stay at its buildings for up to three days, while they are being relayed by federal immigration agencies to cities and towns where they want to live, she said.

"Some of them are going to the East Coast, some of them are going all the way up north," she told The Daily Caller.

The illegal inflow includes at least 100,000 people since October. Many are in so-called "family units" of adults and children.

At least 50,000 migrants are unaccompanied youths and children, many of which are being sent by smugglers — dubbed "coyotes" — to their parents who are illegally living in the United States. Roughly half of the youths are males who say they are aged between 14 and 17. These youths and children are not being sent to the Catholic diocese.

So far, one convoy of family groups has been sent to the diocese, said Virginia Kice, western region

communications director at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The transfer of migrants into California has been suspended following public protests in Murrieta, Calif., she said.

The diocese has offered to shelter and feed the migrants at some of its facilities, including a convent and a school, Mendez said.

“None of them are going to stay more than 72 hours, we’ve been told,” she said.

The diocese’ activities were exposed only after parishioners called into Rush Limbaugh’s radio show to protest the bishop’s agreement to provide shelter to the families for DHS.

“They have made the decision that they’re going to absorb the immigrants that are coming through because the federal government called the bishop’s office on Monday,” said one of the parishioners, named Ann. “The church will reimburse us for any out-of-pocket expenses and we were told not to talk to anybody about it, especially the media.”

They were told to be silent to prevent any local protests, Ann said. “They don’t want a lot of people there at the churches when they busload these mothers and children,” said Ann.

Americans in several states — including California, Michigan and Virginia — have successfully protested and blocked the administration’s effort to transport the illegals to new homes.

The church’s provision of free services to DHS — and its reported offer to pay homeowners for services given to DHS — however, are also potentially illegal.

Federal law, dubbed the Anti-Deficiency Act, prevents government agencies from taking free services from people or private organizations, because that would allow the agencies to bypass congressional power of the purse.

“We reached out ... to a number of community and faith-based groups several weeks ago,” Kice said. “They could serve an invaluable intermediary in the process. ... Our goal was simply to mitigate the impact on the migrants, to try to make their transition easier.”

The adult migrants and their children are being dispatched to regional ICE offices, where local officers will decide whether their claims of persecution or claims for asylum are sufficiently justified to deserve a court case, she said.

But, she said, “we didn’t provide any assurance of reimbursement.”

The agencies can accept services in emergencies where lives are threatened. But there is no evidence that any migrants are endangered once they are detained.

The legality of particular actions are “fact specific, and it is really hard to make a determination” without a careful analysis, said Ray Natter, a lawyer with the D.C. firm of Barnett Sivon & Natter, P.C.

But, “the general rule is you can’t provide voluntary services to the government,” said Natter, who is the author of a report on the issue, and a former counsel to the Senate’s banking committee.

The Catholic Church’s charitable arm does receive funding for immigration-related services from the federal government.

The church’s charity is a Christian duty, not a political stance, Mendez said. “We don’t have anything to do with immigration — we’re just providing food, clothing and shelter.”

The Catholic diocese in El Paso, Texas, has already helped 1,500 of the migrants, Mendez said.

The San Bernardino diocese spokesman, John Andrews, did not return calls seeking information.

Roughly 50 percent of the migrant youths will get to stay in the United States, Kevin Appleby, the director of migration policy for the Conference of Catholic Bishops, said in July.

On July 8, the administration asked Congress for \$3.7 billion, at least half of which is intended to help the illegals settle into new homes in American cities and towns.

So far, GOP legislators have rejected Obama’s budget request, and have urged him to use existing laws and authorities to block and deter the mass migration from Central America.

With Children In Need, A Texas Town Sets Politics Aside

[MSNBC](#), July 14, 2014

McALLEN, Texas —The communities on the front lines of the border crisis knew the situation was growing into a massive humanitarian emergency long before the Feds arrived. When detention centers were still warehouses and it hadn’t occurred to politicians to issue press releases, residents were already gathering baby formula, diapers and toys.

It began in the Spring. More and more mothers with their young children were parked at the main bus terminal, often without

food, supplies and clean clothes. Most had not showered in days, stranded in an unfamiliar town with no way to reach loved ones living in the U.S. Women, on their way to work or errands, began to notice and with little plan or organization began arriving with help. But they could hardly meet the demand, and the bus station parking lot began to resemble a never-ending tailgate party.

“Pretty soon it became such a bottleneck there that they were told to leave,” recalled Ofelia de los Santos, who works with Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley.

That’s when Sister Norma got the call.

“They came to me and asked me to please help,” Sister Norma Pimentel said in an interview. Within days, Pimentel

tasked Catholic Charities with expanding the operation to the parish halls at Sacred Heart, a few blocks away from the central bus station. The makeshift shelter opened in only a matter of weeks.

What started out of the trunk of a car, in a church basement and over parking lot chatter has become the collective outpouring of an entire community. Pop-up shelters in McAllen, run by community groups and faith-based organizations, now fill a crucial void in services for migrant mothers and children as the government struggles to keep up with the demand.

While the Obama administration scrambles to deal with the humanitarian crisis at hand, faith-based and community organizations are also in emergency response mode. The groups fill a crucial gap in care for the thousands of migrant families who braved a treacherous journey north. And in times when the political optics are just as important, these organizations are not just providing care for those in need, but also serve a cushion to the government's response to the crisis.

"You know, if the church doesn't help these people, who will?" de los Santos said.

The Rio Grande Valley was hit first and hardest, with the surge of unaccompanied minors coming to the U.S from Central America. Its very location makes the region a heavy traffic point for illegal border crossings, but this time was different. There were more and more children, from toddlers to teenagers, traveling on their own. And they weren't trying to sneak into Texas – many were immediately turning themselves in.

By the time President Obama formally declared the situation a "humanitarian crisis" and funneled emergency money and resources to the border, federal immigration agents had already run out of beds for the apprehended kids. The Rio Grande Valley saw a more than 178% increase in the number of migrant children crossing into Texas. Federal facilities were unequipped and ill-prepared to fill the unique needs of children who were traveling alone.

"Our government seems to be taking its time and declaring it an emergency," de los Santos says. "It is a crisis, we have families that have been authorized to be here temporarily that are in trouble and they need help."

The core tenets of service set up a unique dynamic for congregations and church volunteers. Many are from churches that hold staunchly conservative social values, and live in deep-red pockets with some of the harshest anti-immigration laws in the country. Yet when called to serve, volunteers are putting compassion and humanity ahead of political beliefs.

"This is our calling, our opportunity to serve," said Sister Leticia Benavides with the Catholic Charities. "As a Christian myself, I find that this is my obligation to be here. And I think that all of the volunteers that you see here are here because

of that. They have a call, we all have a call to serve, and this is our time to serve."

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The frustration and vitriol of immigration opponents was on full display in Murrieta, Calif., this month, when groups of protesters stopped busloads of migrants en route to Border Patrol facilities. There were reports of racial epithets being flung, and some said they were

even spit on

. The protesters held signs saying "Return to Sender" and "Illegals Out!"

Flare-ups in Murrieta have become almost routine. But in the same region that's been a hotbed for anti-immigrant sentiment, many are now offering a safe haven for the families being released from federal immigration custody. On Thursday, two churches in San Bernardino County opened their doors to more than 50 immigrant families. Volunteers brought food, clothes and even air mattress to the churches to give families a respite before they're sent off yet again.

"As a church, we want to let them know that there are people here in the United States who love and support them, they're praying with them and for them," John Andrews of the Catholic Diocese of San Bernardino County

told the local NBC News affiliate

. "Maybe that can give them some of that spiritual food for the next leg of their journey."

The makeshift shelters being set up along the southwestern border not only offer aid but fill a crucial void left by the federal government. Last month, the feds were on the hook after busloads of immigrant families were left stranded at Greyhound stations in Tucson and Phoenix. Arizona Republican Gov. Jan Brewer used the controversy to jab Obama for "another disturbing example of a deliberate failure to enforce border security policies and repair a broken immigration system."

The bus station drop-offs are happening more and more these days as border facilities in Texas become so crowded they need to send children and families to nearby states simply to be processed. But increasingly, church groups are showing up at the stations with food and supplies, becoming the next link in the chain for the migrant families' journeys.

"[Immigration and Customs Enforcement] sincerely appreciates the support of the many volunteers who are aiding with the effort," Western Regional ICE spokesperson Virginia Kice said in a statement after migrants were being transferred to transition centers in Southern California. "The shared goal of all concerned is to mitigate the impact of the transfers on both migrants and the community and ensure individuals receive any assistance they need to facilitate travel to their final destinations."

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On some days, more volunteers show up to help at the makeshift shelter in McAllen than there are families looking for help.

“The minute we put out a call for it, we need diapers or we need deodorant ... the next day it appears – in bulk,” de los Santos boasted.

Volunteers work in shifts as spotters by the bus station to identify families dropped off by immigration officials. Trolleys provided by the city of McAllen shuttle families back and forth from the station to the church.

“Bienvenidos,” volunteer greeters exclaim, applauding and cheering as new families arrive.

Each family is paired up with a sponsor who shepherds them through the winding obstacle course of stations set up for families. First a hot meal – chicken noodle soup, along with fruit cups and Pedialyte for the kids. While the families eat, their sponsors search through the donated clothes spread over 20 tables. Volunteers take special care to find outfits that not only fit the children, but have matching tops and bottoms too. “It’s a mom thing,” one says with a laugh, eye-balling the size of a t-shirt from the pile of girl’s clothes by holding it up to her own young daughter who is volunteering for the day.

The showers outside the parish hall are the main draw for the families. Nearly every mother sighs heavily the moment they exit the shower doors. For the first time since they entered the parish, the moms smile.

Catholic Charities and its partner, Save the Children, an international non-profit, are well-practiced in emergency relief. Catholic Charities operates much like a federal disaster agency throughout the region, swooping into areas devastated by anything from extreme weather to a health crisis. Save the Children is an expert in international refugee crises, which is exactly how they view the situation at the U.S. border.

“We do this work all around the world – this psychological feeling of safety is so important for children, particularly when they’ve been through these horrendous circumstances,”

said the organization’s CEO, Carolyn Miles.

Both groups have been pressing the government for access to federal centers that are ill-equipped and overcrowded with migrant kids.

“We would really like to get into those centers and provide services that we know how do from our experiences all around the world for those children,” Miles said. “This is not about politics ... it’s about taking care of kids.”

“That’s the number one priority that we should have as a country.”

Fontana Is Thrust Into The Spotlight On Immigration Issue

[Fontana \(CA\) Herald News](#), July 14, 2014

Fontana was thrust into the spotlight on the immigration issue on the morning of July 10.

In an unusual outreach endeavor, members of St. Joseph Catholic Church, along with other volunteers from the Diocese of San Bernardino, set up a transition center to provide assistance to 46 people (all women and children) from Central America.

A 16-year-old girl from El Salvador who identified herself as Dianca was one of the first to depart. After thanking the diocese, she was driven away early in the afternoon.

Later, the City of Fontana released a statement which read in part:

“The temporary placement of Central American immigrants at the St. Joseph Roman Catholic Church in Fontana is a humanitarian effort on the part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Bernardino in cooperation with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). While the City of Fontana is understanding of the issues and concerns of residents on both sides of this issue, the City has no direct control over the policies of ICE or the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Bernardino. The City of Fontana will continue to monitor the situation for code and public safety issues that may arise.”

The immigrants, who entered the United States through Texas, are claiming to be fleeing from violence in their home countries and are seeking asylum as refugees.

United Nations officials, noting that violence associated with criminals (including drug traffickers) has increased in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador in recent years, are urging the U.S. to permit the immigrants to stay here.

But with tens of thousands of these migrants arriving at the border and overwhelming federal authorities, there is much debate about how best to handle the situation.

Earlier this month, protesters who oppose illegal immigration converged on Murrieta in Riverside County, forcing Department of Homeland Security buses carrying undocumented women and children to turn back after arriving at a Border Patrol station.

In Fontana, several TV news channels from Los Angeles descended on St. Joseph Church to report on the transition center.

There was an immediate and strong reaction to the story on the Fontana Herald News Facebook page, with most of the commenters expressing a positive response to the church’s actions.

“I’m proud of our diocese for the service they provided,” said Erin Mitchell, one of the commenters. “We are enjoined to welcome the foreigners in our midst.”

But Lisa Fountaine made the point that “we need to worry about our own first rather than praising helping others when we don’t take care of all of ours.”

Claudia Herrera said: "Glad to hear this church is serving humanity correctly by helping the needy. All churches should. What would Jesus do?"

Republic Special Report: Pipeline Of Children

[Arizona Republic](#), July 13, 2014

Over 50,000 unaccompanied children have been apprehended in the U.S. this year, the vast majority from Central America. A dangerous journey from their home countries through Mexico into the U.S., becomes a risk they are willing to take.

Arizona Nightly News Special Report: Pipeline Of Children

[Arizona Republic](#), July 13, 2014

This is a topic that – if it hasn't already – will get you fired up and give you something to talk about. I'm sure you've seen some of the stories already, as thousands of unaccompanied children cross the border to uncertain futures.

Politicians are talking and there have been some ugly moments as some communities refuse to accept migrants.

Always a hot topic in Arizona, the immigration story has taken a real turn. It's raised a lot of questions about how to handle these young migrants.

12 News will be airing a special report on what we're calling the "Pipeline of Children" Monday at 6 p.m. We'll dedicate the entire Arizona Nightly News to the topic.

We'll have stories and reports from the 12 News team and their discoveries of what they saw while covering the story. We'll show you the story behind the stories of the families, the border-patrol agents, and activists.

12 News reporter Joe Dana talks about the things he's seen down near the border and closer to home when reporting on the activists and attorneys.

"I would walk around there and see the little shoes, coloring books, clothes of the families making the journey in hopes to find a better life and just be happy," he said.

Hear more from Joe and the rest of team Monday at 6 p.m., and join the never-ending conversation on Facebook and Twitter @12news, #immigrantchildren.

'ICE Air' Distributes Immigrant Influx

[Associated Press](#), July 13, 2014

One by one, some striding in flip-flops, others walking with shoulders hunched and fists in pockets — and one or two in what appeared to be handcuffs — the youths stepped out of the rear of an MD-82 that had landed at Port San Antonio's Kelly Field.

Directed by casually uniformed officials, the youths headed for waiting buses with darkened windows. The officials then got back on the plane, and the buses drove toward for Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland.

At the Air Force base, children were taking turns playing soccer in impromptu fields outside the military dorms used to house some of the flood of young Central American immigrants heading north for a chance at the American dream.

They were passengers on "ICE Air," a low-profile but increasingly busy carrier that uses San Antonio as one of its main hubs, the San Antonio Express-News (<http://bit.ly/1k3SKuT>) reported.

Run by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE Air uses a fleet of charter planes — this particular one owned by Orange Air LLC, a relatively new charter operation that has been kept busy flying back and forth, with stops in Texas, Arizona and California.

Since October, more than 52,000 unaccompanied Central American minors have been taken into custody after crossing the border.

Although the youth immigration crisis is only recently making headlines, ICE Air has been around for years, providing air transport between ICE Enforcement and Operations' 24 field offices and "hub cities" such as San Antonio; Mesa, Arizona; Alexandria, Louisiana; and Miami.

Media in 2008 and 2009 widely reported about the U.S. government-paid flights — with box lunches the main passenger amenity — to take adult immigrants back home, primarily to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

In addition to using seats on commercial aircraft, ICE Air has since 2006 used charters to deport hundreds of thousands of people to their home countries.

During the 2013 fiscal year, ICE Air transported 189,000 people to 16 countries, conducting an average of 43 charter flights a week to foreign and domestic locations. The cost per flight hour has been reported at about \$8,300.

With the surge of unaccompanied minors taking the gamble that they'll at worst be sent home after a years-long process, there have been even more ICE flights.

"In speaking with our officers assigned to ICE Air Operations, ICE's air transportation arm, air transports have been so heavily used during the crisis that two additional planes have already been leased, and still more could be utilized," Chris Crane, president of the National Immigration and Customs Enforcement Council 118, said during June 25 testimony before the House Judiciary Committee.

But according to a recent update by U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar, a Laredo Democrat, none of the surge of unaccompanied minors has been sent home. Rather, there's been stepped-up deportation of Central American adults. Cuellar said there currently are at least 20 to 25 flights a week, each carrying 135 adults.

While ICE has been scrambling to transport minors with commercial, charter, and Coast Guard and Homeland Security aircraft, that movement has been between U.S. destinations.

Orange Air did not return a call about the company's work with ICE, but flight records showed as many as six flights a day for the plane since mid-June, all to or from the border states of Texas, Arizona and California with at least one flight to Lawton-Fort Sill in Oklahoma, which also has a facility for unaccompanied youths.

On June 26, the plane traveled from Brownsville to Tucson, Tucson to McAllen, McAllen to El Paso, El Paso to Brownsville, Brownsville to Tucson, and Tucson to McAllen.

"They're just moving them around to places where they can house them till they figure out what to do next," said Ira Mehlman of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, which favors increased immigration enforcement. "At this point, they're scrambling to find places to put them around the country, and nobody seems to want them. And not because they don't have compassion, but because it comes with enormous expense."

Harris County officials said unaccompanied minors were being flown into George Bush Intercontinental Airport after protesters in Murrieta, California, blocked buses carrying immigrants to a processing station.

"When you have unaccompanied minors, you become obligated not just for the education but for all kinds of services, everything from feeding to housing," Mehlman said. "We don't expect 10-year-olds to take care of themselves."

U.S. Customs and Border Protection statistics show the number of unaccompanied children crossing into the Rio Grande Valley sector alone has ballooned 178 percent so far this fiscal year compared to the year-ago period. The fiscal year starts in October.

In attempt to stem the flow, the Obama administration has been trumpeting the message that there are no "permits" given to those who cross the border, and that the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) act, which spares youths brought here as children from deportation, does not apply to recent arrivals.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, in Panama City recently, stressed that message in a meeting with leaders from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala.

"There are rules of law, and there is a process, and there is false information that is being spread about benefits that might be available to these young people," Kerry said.

CBP Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske traveled to a busy crossing area on the Rio Grande earlier this month to launch a Spanish-language campaign broadcasting the perils of the journey via the airwaves and on billboards.

"Children, especially, are easy prey for coyotes and transnational criminal organizations, and they can be subjected to robbery, violence, sexual assault, sex trafficking or forced labor," Kerlikowske said.

Cuellar, who spent that day at a Rio Grande Valley field hearing on the crisis, said the better deterrent would be showing photos of people being flown home.

"This is not the first time we've had a surge," he said. "You had the Brazilians in 2005, you had the Civil War from El Salvador in the 1980s," Cuellar said. "And talking to Border Patrol (members) that have been in the process before ... the best deterrent is to detain and remove (them) as quickly as possible."

But Cuellar said that would take changing the 2008 law that says minors from countries that don't border the U.S. are turned over to Health and Human Services to be placed with family members or foster homes until their hearing — which may be two years away.

"Mr. Juan Osuna, who's in charge of all the immigration courts, he said, 'Henry, even if we go through this process and we get an order to remove, ICE is going to say, 'Are they criminals? Are they a priority? Oh, they're not a priority? Well, we'll get to those whenever we can,'" Cuellar said.

"The way the process is right now ... if I am a mother with kids or I am a child and I just make it to the U.S., they're going to put me in a bus station or they're just going to let me go with a piece of paper. That's a pretty good risk I need to take."

Cuellar said he's working with Kay Granger, R-Fort Worth, chairwoman of the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee on legislation that would change language in the law so unaccompanied minors are treated the same irrespective of whether their home countries border the United States.

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Houston Co. Official Confirms Feds Talking To Company About Hous

[KSLA-TV Shreveport \(LA\)](#), July 14, 2014

A Houston County official has confirmed the federal government is in talks with the company which bought the former state school about using the facility to house illegal immigrants. The Cornerstone Program based out of Colorado took over the Davy Crockett Regional Juvenile Center (formerly Crockett State School) earlier this year. Since then Houston County Judge Erin Ford said the organization has faced challenges trying to get juveniles into their facility, but the occupancy could soon rise.

Houston County Economic Development Director Thom Lambert confirmed that the federal government has been discussing the possibility of using it as a holding facility for the droves of illegal immigrants that are inundating our nation's borders.

Ford says nothing is set in stone.

"I don't know of any direct contact on the use of that school for anything other than the adjudicated juveniles," said Ford.

The East Texas News talked with Cornerstone President Joseph Newman who confirmed that a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) representative did tour the facility on June 30 to determine if the facility would be suitable. Newman said there have been a few calls back and fourth but nothing concrete has been determined. He went on to say that housing illegal immigrants would not be his first choice for the Crockett facility but as Americans, we have to care for the ones that have already crossed.

"We're Americans," said Ford. "We're the most compassionate people in the world. It's one of the things that makes us such a great country. So when a child comes across the border unaccompanied, compassionately, I want to make sure they're taken care of until they're reunited with the family across the border. So yes, I think that we've got to do something. We can't put them in tents. We can't leave them outside. We've got to feed, clothe, house, and care for the children, but having said that, we've got to stop those children before they get into the country."

Lambert said if the idea to house illegal immigrants happens, it will be good for the county because it will create jobs. He said the immigrants will be detained within the facility and not intermingled with other youth there.

Newman said there are nine juveniles that are currently at the facility.

The City of Crockett and Houston County began a partnership with Cornerstone Programs to transform the old Crockett State School to a new juvenile treatment facility in January.

Residents in Crockett did not seem to like the idea of having the facility take in immigrants.

"I believe it is the lack of the president doing what he wants to do," Wesley Holmes said. "He said he had a phone and a pen, and he did what he wanted to do. That's part of the reason we are in this mess."

"Instead of bringing them deeper into the US, they should take them back home where they should be with their parents, because they don't need to be here," Jesse Taylor said. "They are in a foreign country. They have no income. They have no language. They are just like a fish out of water."

The Houston County Sheriff's Office said they do not believe they have the infrastructure to handle the group if they are brought here.

"There is a better way and better solution to this, but bringing them to Crockett, Texas is not the better way," said Chief Deputy G.P. Shearer.

Empty Texas Detention Center Could House Immigrants

[WCSC-TV Charleston \(SC\)](#), July 14, 2014

LITTLEFIELD, TX (KVII/CNN) – An empty detention center in Littlefield, TX is being considered as a holding place

for illegal immigrants. The facility has been closed since 2009.

"The facility is ready to go at this point and time, we've maintained the facility over these last few years to ensure that if we had a possible occupants that we could move them in immediately," said Littlefield City Manager, Mike Arismendez.

"We maintain it pretty much on a monthly basis. We flush the toilets, sweep the floors, mop floors, keep everything flowing. This has taken away from our normal activities. Baby-sitting this thing," said Michael Williamson, head of Public Utilities.

The upkeep is at the cost the small town; \$750,000 of their annual budget is spent on the empty facility. The city manager's rebuttal to opposition for housing illegal immigrants is the city could use the revenue. Plus, the issue is not something he can change on a local level.

"It's a federal issue as to how they're going to secure the border. We simply have a mechanism and the ability to place individuals in our facility to house them," Arismendez said.

And if the words detention center make you cringe for those who may have to stay there, you may want to think again. This one was originally built for juveniles and has a medical center, outdoor recreation, gym and more.

"Full of books, resources, law library just around the corner," Williamson said.

The largest pod can house 128 people and the two others are similar, just smaller.

"It's going to have an impact to the city, it's going to have job creation, it'll help alleviate the debt service, so we can kind of see it as a positive for the city," Arismendez said.

The city has been talking with Immigration and Customs Enforcement for the past two years on the issue, but they are not celebrating the new management until the deal is closed.

"Depends on how the government funds everything and until they signed the dotted line," Williamson said.

Most CentAm Child Migrants Now With Family Members In U.S.

[FOX News Latino](#), July 11, 2014

Justin Bieber and Selena Gomez are desperate to make each other insanely jealous ... at least that's how it looks after they both flaunted their dinner dates with new people. The first shot...

Most of the 52,000 Central American minors who entered the United States illegally since October 2013 are now staying with family members in this country, though they remain subject to deportation, the federal Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families said.

Ninety-six percent of the migrants processed through the Unaccompanied Alien Children Program have been given over to family members, HHS spokesman Kenneth J. Wolfe said.

From the moment their families take charge of them, the youngsters are booked to appear in court, where it will be decided whether they can stay in the U.S. or not.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said it does not know exactly how many of the immigrants released over the past two months have appeared in its offices to continue the deportation process.

Most of the youngsters come from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

Due to the crisis of the massive entry of Central American children, three temporary shelters were opened at military bases in Texas, California and Oklahoma, Wolfe said.

The average time the minors can remain in the shelters is 35 days, and of the children who arrive there, 85 percent reunite with their families.

HHS has approximately 100 permanent shelters that are generally located in cities near the border.

According to ICE, the immigrants released at bus stations in Arizona after being transferred from Texas must appear within 15 days at the nearest ICE office. EFE

Federal Officials Acknowledge Flights Of Immigrants To Massachusetts

[Boston Globe](#), July 11, 2014

Federal immigration officials acknowledged Friday that they increased the number of charter flights this year carrying immigrant detainees to Massachusetts.

The flights, which started in April to Hanscom Field and Logan Airport, have been shrouded in secrecy. Federal and state officials have portrayed the flights as routine, but others say the flights seemed unusual in a state far from the Southern border.

Continue reading below

Daniel Modricker, spokesman for US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, said ICE has chartered seven flights to Massachusetts since April, an increase from past months, but he would not provide statistics on past flights or say how many detainees were on board.

Four of the flights contained immigrants who had recently crossed the border, he said; they were arrested in Texas and were being transferred to detention centers in New England. The three remaining flights stopped in Massachusetts to collect detainees to deport them.

Modricker said ICE flew the detainees to Massachusetts because they needed room in detention centers on the Southern border, where thousands of immigrant children and some adults largely from Central America, have crossed in recent months. He said all

detainees on the planes were adults, not unaccompanied children or families.

“The recent influx of crossings along the southwest border requires a large-scale nationwide response,” Modricker said in a statement Friday. “While New England is geographically removed from the immediate area of concern, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Boston has provided support when and where it makes logistical sense.”

Until now, federal and state officials have suggested the flights were routine. In June, ICE said the transfer of detainees from one part of the country to another is “part of the normal removal process.”

Also in June, Andrea J. Cabral, state secretary of public safety and security, said in a letter to House minority leader Bradley H. Jones Jr. that the flights were “routine transports of detainees.”

Cabral’s office did not respond to requests for comment Friday.

Modricker said that the majority of detainees on the flights have since been deported and that almost all the rest are in detention facilities across New England. ICE does not have detention centers in this region and typically pays local jails about \$100 per immigrant per day to house the detainees. It is unclear how many have been released.

Jones, a Republican from North Reading, said ICE officials should be more forthcoming about the number of past flights, whether more flights are coming in, and what is happening to all the detainees on board. “I think they’ve tried to portray it as routine, but I think it’s hard to believe that,” Jones said Friday. “It’s got to be costing taxpayers somewhere some money.”

Bristol County Sheriff Thomas Hodgson said he had been unaware of the flights and that he has not seen an increase in the number of immigrant detainees in his county jail. To the contrary, he said, the jail is currently housing only 136 detainees; usually they have about 220. Hodgson, who said he is going to the Texas border with other sheriffs next week to address the immigration influx, blasted the Obama administration and Congress for politicizing the issue and often refusing to allow federal immigration officials to disclose basic information to the public, such as details about the flights to Massachusetts.

“They’re trying to protect the political flank and make sure that they dance as much as they can so that people can’t find out,” Hodgson said. “That’s the reality that we’re dealing with. It’s sad. It’s really sad. We can’t deal with problems unless people honestly put them out there.”

Tragedy At Falmouth’s Doorstep ?

[Falmouth \(MA\) Patch](#), July 14, 2014

The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE has confirmed they sent six charter flights to Massachusetts with Mexican detainees (children) .

A jumbo jet can hold 400 people.

There could have been well over 2000 children transported into Massachusetts in the past few weeks.

Massachusetts Governor Patrick : "I don't know anything about it."

After Hurricane Katrina displaced groups were placed at Camp Edwards located on Otis Air National Guard Base on Cape Cod in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts took in 2500 hurricane victims.

Poll Question: Do you believe Governor Patrick ?

'Unprecedented' Immigrant Issue A Drain For State

[Boston Herald](#), July 14, 2014

The unprecedented shipment of illegal immigrants from Texas to Massachusetts is not only straining the resources of local jails, it is costing taxpayers millions of dollars for health care, the Bristol County sheriff said yesterday.

At least one illegal immigrant — brought to Massachusetts from Texas by Immigration and Customs Enforcement — is in a hospital with 24-hour surveillance, according to Bristol County Sheriff Thomas M. Hodgson, who is responsible for holding about 80 adults who are awaiting deportation.

"We have two officers, around the clock, at the hospital taking care of this person, and that's one bill. Due to the medical issues he has, the bills are going to be in the millions — and that's just for one person," Hodgson said. "That's directly from the medical staff. That's just one person's bill."

Citing a lack of space, federal authorities have since April sent six planeloads of illegal immigrants to Massachusetts, where they will be held in Bay State lockups, according to Hodgson. The federal government has not told him how long the new inmates will be in Massachusetts, he said.

"It's hard to know. I don't know what their plan is, and I don't think they know," Hodgson said.

ICE spokesman Daniel Modricker did not return repeated requests for comment yesterday.

Hodgson's jails, as well as those in Plymouth, Suffolk, Franklin and Norfolk counties, have for years held illegal immigrants, under the sheriffs' lucrative contracts with ICE — which does not have its own lockups in Massachusetts. The system has brought in more than \$100 million since 2005.

But the sudden overflow influx from Texas is new.

"We don't normally have them for years and years," Hodgson said. "We're just doing what we always do when it comes to detention, but what's unusual is that they're coming from Texas by the planeload, and that's not something we're used to. It's unprecedented."

Massachusetts lawmen aren't being told how many more illegal immigrants will be shipped in during the coming

weeks and months, according to Hodgson, and "that's a serious problem that we're dealing with."

Advocates for illegal immigrants are pointing to the recent revelation as yet another reason for immigration reform.

"If they don't pose any threats, the federal government should use an alternative to detention and save the taxpayers money," said Eva Millona, executive director of the Massachusetts Immigration and Refugee Advocacy Coalition. "These prisons are overcrowded, and it turns into a very unpleasant situation for immigrants who have not committed any crimes. Congress should really act to pass a broad reform that would address the issue of outdated immigration laws."

Atkins: Revelation Undercuts Trust In President

[Boston Herald](#), July 14, 2014

WASHINGTON — In politics, secrets can be more dangerous enemies than lies. The Obama administration is learning that firsthand after the admission of a secret that is causing a backlash even in the politically friendly state of Massachusetts.

No one really thought of the Bay State as a battleground in the political war over illegal border crossings that is currently raging in southern border states and among Washington politicians. Then suddenly, the quiet admission by federal officials this weekend that there was an uptick in the number of planes bringing immigrants into the state — officials previously said the flights were routine — brought the fight to the Northeast.

No matter who is to blame for the problem of immigrants pouring into the country in such numbers that border-state detention facilities are filled beyond capacity, the secrecy surrounding the ICE's cross-state transport of immigrants has now created its own problem.

Up to now, President Obama could focus on the fact that the crisis, spurred by a surge of Central Americans coming into the country via Mexico, was mainly caused by two factors: a federal law aimed at protecting victims of human trafficking that prevented immigrants from most countries from being summarily deported at entry, and the congressional gridlock that prevents any amendment to that law to protect those seeking to escape human bondage while still trying to fix the problem that is overloading our border detention system.

While Republicans sniped at him for not visiting the Texas border area at the epicenter of the crisis, Obama sought emergency funds from Congress to do something more than pose for a Texas photo op. When GOP rivals suggested that the problem was caused by the administration's ineptitude — or worse, by the

administration's design — the president correctly pointed out that Congress has always had the power to fix the immigration system and chose not to use it.

But in a political atmosphere where perception can bear far more weight than reality, the decision not to notify local authorities of the transfer uptick is, at best, inexplicable. It steers the discussion away from the actual causes and solutions of the underlying problem, and instead leaves the administration open to a “gotcha” moment upon which conservative pundits could pounce.

It's the secrecy that plays right into the narrative of not only conservative critics who genuinely believe that the president is overstepping his authority, but also that of the conspiracy-mongers who believe that the Obama administration is purposely funneling immigrants into the country for political gain.

By the time ICE officials came clean, the damage was already done. And all the president had to do to avoid it was give local officials a head's up.

Let's Not Abandon Families That Seek Refuge

By James W. Ziglar

[Washington Times](#), July 14, 2014

On Tuesday, President Obama sent a request to Congress for emergency supplemental appropriations to address the increased flow of families and unaccompanied children crossing our border illegally. The administration also indicated that it will separately work with Congress to relax the legal protections for unaccompanied children in the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, and it previously announced plans to hold families with children in immigration detention.

Many of these children and families are fleeing horrific conditions in Central America's Northern Triangle: El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. In these countries, violence, persecution and human trafficking are pervasive. Honduras actually has the world's highest murder rate. Not surprisingly, the U.N. Refugee Agency found that 58 percent of the unaccompanied children are asylum seekers.

How we treat those who request the protection of the United States should be consistent with our country's ideals and laws. Unfortunately, the administration's response is falling short.

There has long been a bipartisan commitment to refugees that should inspire the president and Congress. The Refugee Act of 1980 passed Congress with strong bipartisan support. The Council on Foreign Relations' Independent Task Force on Immigration Policy — co-chaired by former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and Bill Clinton's chief of staff, Thomas “Mack” McLarty — emphasized that the U.S. commitment to refugees is “enshrined in international treaties and domestic U.S. laws that set the standard for the rest of the world; when

American standards erode, refugees face greater risks everywhere.”

The world is watching. The United States encourages other nations to provide refuge to those fleeing violence and persecution. While the number of people apprehended at our border has risen significantly, it's still a drop in the bucket compared with the several million who have fled Syria and sought refuge in countries far less able than the United States to handle such flows.

Effective safeguards are crucial to identify those at risk of persecution, trafficking or torture. These risks are especially great for children, who may not know why their families sent them on the perilous journey to the United States and who are most vulnerable to trafficking. The bipartisan U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has repeatedly raised concerns about the process for identifying asylum seekers in expedited removal proceedings. In many cases observed by USCIRF experts, border officers didn't follow established procedures to identify asylum seekers. The government would only exacerbate the situation if it jettisons key safeguards for at-risk refugees and children.

Holding children, families and asylum-seeking adults in immigration detention facilities, particularly for extended periods of time beyond initial processing, is also inconsistent with this country's ideals. Last year, USCIRF issued a report detailing its concerns about U.S. detention of asylum seekers. In many cases, the use of detention is not necessary to meet the government's important objective of assuring appearance for court hearings and possible deportation.

Alternatives to detention have proven effective. Criminal justice systems across the country are increasingly relying on them, prompted by groups such as the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Recent statistics from an alternatives-to-detention program used by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) reveal that immigrants appeared for their final hearings 97.4 percent of the time and complied with final orders 85 percent of the time. There also are strong community-based models run by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Many of the children crossing the border alone have parents or other relatives already in the country. About 85 percent of the unaccompanied children are reunified with family, often their parents. That is real “family reunification,” a central tenet of U.S. immigration policy.

The U.S. government should adequately staff border enforcement and U.S. protection and adjudication systems so that they can conduct timely — but not rushed — hearings that reflect America's commitment to fairness. Additional resources are urgently needed to improve the conditions in Central America prompting so many to flee. This problem is in our backyard and we ignore it at our peril. The United States

also should intensify its targeting of smugglers and human traffickers who prey on children and families.

What the U.S. government should not do is turn a blind eye to the conditions that these people are fleeing and force them to return to danger. Would we counsel the Jordanians to deport the Syrians who are refugees in their country? I doubt it. America should stand firm as a beacon of hope for those fleeing violence and persecution.

James W. Ziglar was commissioner of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) under former President George W. Bush. He is a member of Human Rights First's board of directors and is a senior fellow at the Migration Policy Institute.

Backlogged Immigration Courts Face New Deluge

[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

LOS ANGELES (AP) – Adolescent girls in braids and pigtailed and teenage boys wearing jeans and sneakers sat alongside their parents in the courtroom of Immigration Judge Frank Travieso to hear how long they might be allowed to stay in the United States.

Travieso grabbed four thick books and dropped each one on his desk with a thud, warning the families in his Los Angeles courtroom about the thousands of pages of immigration laws and interpretations that could affect their cases and urging them to get a lawyer.

"This is even smaller print," he said of the 1,200-page book containing regulations during the hearing last month. "I am not trying to scare you, but I'm trying to ensure your children get a full and fair hearing."

He then sent them on their way and told them to report back in February.

The scene is one that could become more common as the country's already backlogged immigration courts brace for a deluge of tens of thousands of Central American children arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border in recent months.

The court system is so overwhelmed that it can currently take three years to get a hearing, and many believe the delays will only get worse in the months ahead. For many immigrants, the delays in the court system work in their favor because they know they have so long before their cases are resolved.

"This situation just happens to be a magnitude unlike anything we have ever seen," said Lauren Alder Reid, counsel for legislative and public affairs at the U.S. Justice Department's Executive Office for Immigration Review, which runs the courts.

Immigration courts in the United States have long been troubled. The courts, overseen by the Department of Justice, have more than 375,000 cases being handled by just 243 judges, according to the agency.

It can take months or years to get hearings for immigrants who aren't in detention facilities, let alone a resolution. Immigration lawyers said judges are already setting hearings for 2017.

The Obama administration has said it will move quickly to process thousands of immigrant children and families arriving on the Texas border fleeing violence and extortion from gangs in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Since October, more than 57,000 unaccompanied children have reached the U.S., prompting the government to set up temporary shelters and fly immigrants to other states to be processed. Officials have asked Congress for \$3.7 billion in emergency funding to cope with the crisis, including the hiring of more judges.

After Central American immigrants are apprehended at the border, they are usually processed at one of several facilities that have been set up across Texas and the Southwest.

Children are placed in shelters and reunited with family members in the U.S. before being told to report to an immigration office and ultimately given a date before a judge in a process that can take years.

In immigration court, many immigrants fail to attend their hearings and are issued deportation orders. More than one in five immigrants not in federal custody were given court orders in their absence during the 2013 fiscal year, according to court statistics.

Obama administration critics say the huge delays only encourage more immigrants to try to come here and turn themselves in at the border, knowing they'll be allowed to wait years for their cases to be resolved.

"The system is so dysfunctional," said Jessica Vaughan, director of policy studies at the Center for Immigration Studies. "They get to stay, and the more time they spend here, the more difficult it is to get them removed."

Vaughan said courts ought to handle cases in reverse order, tackling those on the border first to speed up deportations and deter would-be immigrants and stem the surge.

Since the influx, the immigration courts have temporarily reassigned seven judges to hear cases in southern Texas and three judges to handle hearings at a recently created New Mexico detention facility via teleconferencing, Alder Reid said. She could not say how many cases have been postponed but expects the latest influx of immigrants will have a significant impact.

"The number of non-detained backlog cases is going to rise from overwhelming to overwhelming times ten," said Bruce Einhorn, a retired immigration judge in Los Angeles. "Until we enlarge the court system, we should brace ourselves for a bloody mess."

The huge flow of immigrants into the court system has also created legal issues for the immigrants themselves.

Attorneys are typically not provided at government expense or required in immigration court, and children may end up in court on their own with only a relative to vouch for them.

Megan McKenna, advocacy director for Kids in Need of Defense, said her organization's offices in Houston and New York were flooded this month with requests for pro-bono lawyers. She estimates the number of children lacking attorneys has jumped from about half to at least 70 percent since the influx began three years ago.

Immigrant advocates fearing the administration may try to curtail children's access to the courts to cope with the crunch sued this week to try to get the government to give them lawyers.

At the border, adults who fail to prove they have a fear of returning to their country could be deported more quickly and without seeing a judge. Government officials and lawmakers are debating ways to handle the children's cases more swiftly, much like they do with Mexican youth, who often don't get a hearing in court.

Unaccompanied children from Central America, however, are reunited with family and given a court date. Those abandoned or abused by their parents may apply for a special legal status, and those fleeing violence can apply for asylum at a government office.

The immigration courts currently have more than 41,000 juvenile cases, including those involving unaccompanied border-crossers as well as long-time residents facing deportation and adults who were initially apprehended as children.

In immigration court in Los Angeles, Marta Vasquez, 55, was told by Travieso to bring her teenage daughter back next year with an update on her application for asylum. Vasquez, who came here fleeing an abusive husband in Guatemala nine years ago, left the building without fear that her family would be torn apart by deportation – at least not any time soon.

"These are the first court dates," Vasquez later said. "Only God knows if this is going to be short or is going to be long."

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5 Things To Know About Immigration Courts

[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

An overlooked element in the immigration debate is the nation's Immigration Court system, where many of the newly arrived migrants will have their cases resolved. Here are key facts about the court system and its struggles:

OVERFLOWING CASELOAD

The number of immigrants with cases before the immigration courts has jumped 7 percent since October to

more than 375,000, the agency's highest caseload to date. The number of cases before the immigration courts rose by 23,000 during the previous fiscal year.

WAIT TIMES

The average time a pending case has been before the immigration courts is now 587 days, which is about 19 months, according to the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University. Immigration lawyers say getting a hearing can take much longer than that. For example, in Los Angeles, the average time a case has been before the immigration court is more than two years, data show.

COURT LOCATIONS

The country has 59 immigration courts overseen by the U.S. Department of Justice. Some are inside detention centers, while others deal with immigrants who are not detained. The states with the biggest immigration caseloads are California, New York and Texas.

DEPORTATION VERSUS RELIEF

Immigration judges decided more than 140,000 initial cases during the 2013 fiscal year, which doesn't include cases reopened or returned on appeal. More than two-thirds of the immigrants were ordered deported, while about 17 percent qualified for relief. Four years earlier, about 82 percent of the initial cases decided by the courts ended in deportation, according to agency statistics.

NATIONALITIES

The top five countries of origin of immigrants with initial cases decided by the court during the 2013 fiscal year were Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and China, according to the Justice Department's Executive Office for Immigration Review.

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Immigration Court Backlog Adds To Border Crisis

By Hector Becerra

[McClatchy](#), July 14, 2014

SAN ANTONIO — On a June morning last year, Alex Alvarez left his home in the lush Salvadoran region of Morazan to make the now-familiar journey of tens of thousands of other young immigrants from Central America.

There was no father or mother to send him off with a blessing, nor any waiting for him at his destination in the United States. The only blessing that mattered now would come from an immigration judge in the boxy, orange-brick courthouse where the now-18-year-old sat one morning last week – his first court hearing since arriving more than a year ago.

Also on the docket were 12 Honduran, two Guatemalan and eight Salvadoran children who had already been released from detention. A smaller group of children was due to appear in the afternoon. Those boys and girls, staying at a Baptist shelter, showed up smartly dressed, the boys in dress shirts and ties.

"I told him the important thing for him is to keep studying," said Alvarez's brother-in-law Mario Olmos, 37, who drove him to court that day. "If you don't study, the judges don't see the point of you staying in this country."

He hoped, Olmos said, that Alvarez wouldn't be in the immigration court system as long as he himself has: three years and counting.

On Wednesday, Justice Department officials announced plans to speed up court proceedings for unaccompanied youths and families, whose accelerated influx across the Southwest border in recent months threatens to paralyze a court system already hampered by congestion and delay.

The new policy will assign a greater proportion of the nation's 243 immigration judges to hear juvenile cases, either at the border or by video, and appoint new temporary judges to help handle a surge of at least 57,000 unaccompanied minors into the U.S., most of them from Central America, since Oct. 1.

But a lawsuit filed Wednesday by a coalition of public interest groups could inject further delays into the system, calling for juvenile immigrants to be guaranteed legal representation before their deportation cases can proceed in immigration court.

The Obama administration has sought to hammer home a message that children who are crossing the border illegally will be sent back.

But the number of cases already pending in the nation's 59 immigration courts – a caseload that has more than doubled in the last 15 years – and a long history of delays that can stretch as long as five years raise questions about whether federal officials will be able to make good on their pledge to speedily deport new immigrants not eligible to remain in the U.S.

The average case takes 578 days to make its way through the immigration courts, with 366,758 cases currently pending, according to federal court records compiled by Syracuse University.

A law signed by President George W. Bush in 2008 makes it difficult to repatriate unaccompanied minors to Central America without letting them appear before an immigration judge.

But the current court system involves "processes layered upon processes layered upon processes," said Jonathan Ryan, executive director of Raices, a nonprofit group that provides free or low-cost services for child immigrants, families and refugees.

Once in court, many things can happen that can drag cases out for months or longer. A day in immigration court in San Antonio last week provided just one example of how this can happen.

There were 32 cases on the docket in the courtroom of Judge Anibal D. Martinez. But as the morning progressed, it became apparent that many of the children and their lawyers were not showing up. "Every other kid is MIA," immigration attorney Linda Brandmiller whispered from a bench at the back of the small courtroom.

Brandmiller said a legal organization had misinterpreted a message from the court and sent out an email that caused confusion, leading attorneys and their clients to believe that many of the cases would not be heard that day.

Most of the hearings for children that did arrive resulted in the scheduling of additional hearings, usually several months away. Martinez warned the children, most of whom listened to the proceedings on headsets through a translator, that he might have to order their removal from the country if they were absent.

Just before 9 a.m., Cristian, a 17-year-old from El Salvador with spiky hair and a checkered shirt, sat before the judge. His legal representative said the teen had been a victim of human traffickers and needed to have his case proceed on a confidential basis. The judge set a hearing for late October and waived the requirement that Cristian be present.

Soon, Alvarez – wearing a light blue polo shirt, black jeans and white leather shoes – was sitting before the judge, with legal representative David Walding at his side. Alvarez said he left a verdant region of El Salvador that was the scene of the 1981 "El Mozote" massacre, in which the Salvadoran army killed more than 800 civilians in an anti-guerrilla campaign. His father died when he was about 5 years old, he said, and his mother when he was about 12, both from illness. Alvarez said he left as a result of pressure from gangs that had forced other boys to join.

He crossed the border last August, and after a brief stay at a warehouse got caught while walking with a group of immigrants near McAllen, Texas. Days later he was flown to a detention facility in Chicago, though his siblings in the U.S. were in Austin, Texas. Walding said that required him to apply for a change of court venue, which took a couple of months.

Another delay was introduced when Walding applied in March for Special Immigrant Juvenile, or SIJ, status, based on his client having been an orphan and essentially abandoned. SIJ status can help pave the way to permanent residency, but a state court would have to make the finding.

Martinez set Alvarez's next hearing for Oct. 29, but excused him from appearing in court then so he could go to school.

The night before the court hearing, about 50 volunteers gathered at a legal justice center for a meeting run by Raices, the immigrant service group, which has been holding screenings of children at San Antonio's Lackland Air Force Base, where more than 1,000 young immigrants at a time have been held in a hastily organized detention center. Ryan, the organization's director, said the screenings were key to linking immigrants with free attorneys and determining what kind of relief the minors might qualify for.

He told the gathered that they should be prepared to hear shocking things, and asked them to mute their reactions.

"You cannot display your own shock. You can't really display your own horror," Ryan said. "You're going to make the kid think they said something wrong because they upset you."

The next day, sitting in the back of the courtroom, Ryan said there was a pieced-together, almost improvised quality about the legal representation the child immigrants were getting. Volunteer lawyers from organizations such as Raices are important, but they are a "poor replacement for a public defender model," he said.

As court came back into session at about 1 p.m. and Judge Martinez took his seat, a handful of protesters waved signs – one reading "No deportation without legal representation" – in the muggy heat outside the building.

There would be no deportation orders because of the confusion caused by the email, Martinez said. He told one 17-year-old Guatemalan boy seeking asylum that he knew he took "a long trip for a better life" and advised him that if he were lucky enough to win legal residency, it could all unravel if he committed a crime.

He urged him to "get an education while here and make the most of your life," reminding him that American taxpayers were paying for that.

The last hearing was for a curly, red-haired 17-year-old Honduran boy whose SIJ status had been previously approved. His attorney successfully petitioned to close the teenager's court case – he was clear to remain in the U.S. and apply for lawful permanent residence.

Martinez reminded him that all could be lost if he broke the law. "Good luck to you, sir," the judge said.

Later that day, Alvarez got a message back in Austin. On the very day of his first court hearing, his own SIJ application had been approved.

Backlogged Immigration Courts Brace For Even More Cases

[KWTX-TV Waco \(TX\)](#), July 14, 2014

LOS ANGELES (July 12, 2014) Backlogged immigration courts are bracing for another deluge of cases after tens of thousands of Central American children began arriving on the U.S.-Mexico border.

The courts have temporarily reassigned judges to hear cases in southern Texas and at a New Mexico detention facility via teleconferencing since the influx began, said Lauren Alder Reid, counsel for legislative and public affairs at the U.S. Justice Department's Executive Office for Immigration Review.

She could not say how many cases have been postponed, but she expects the surge in immigration will have a significant impact on other immigrants' cases.

The immigration courts are backlogged with more than 375,000 cases, and it can take months or years for immigrants not in detention facilities to get a hearing, let alone a resolution.

Debate Over Whether Undocumented Immigrants Ever Show Up To Court Hearings

[KDBC-TV El Paso \(TX\)](#), July 14, 2014

El Paso, TX (KDBC) — Thousands of immigrants set off on the dangerous and deadly journey to the United States, and for those who survive it, another lengthy and complicated process lies ahead.

"Right now, we are happy because we have a legal status, and we can continue to go to school, and live our lives, and plan our futures while we wait for our mom to return," said Nitza Alvarado.

Nitza and her two sisters are from Mexico and among the countless immigrants south of the US border, who fled their home country for safety and protection.

The girls say their mother was kidnapped by the Mexican military and their lives were threatened when they questioned authorities about it.

"Violence is the main factor. It pushes you at some point beyond the toleration of extreme poverty," said Carlos Spector, an immigration attorney in El Paso.

Spector argues many of the undocumented immigrants recently crossing into the United States illegally are here for that same reason.

He says once they're released by federal authorities and reunite with family in other parts of the country, they can stay temporarily until it's time to see an immigration judge, who decides if they have a legitimate reason to stay for good.

The process can take months or even years.

But no matter the wait, the court date is the government's way of keeping track of those who make it past the border.

"93% percent of them who are released show up," said Spector.

But that's where some lawmakers disagree.

"Once they're placed somewhere in the country, 90% of them don't show up for a court date," said Republican U.S. Senator Jeff Flake from Arizona in an interview with PBS.

If they don't show up, the government puts them on a "removal list" and they're deported immediately if they're caught.

Lawmakers like Flake argue most won't qualify to stay, and allowing the immigrants to further enter the country is sending them the wrong message.

Under US immigration laws, undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Canada can immediately be deported without a trial, if authorities decide they don't have a valid reason to stay in the United States.

Nearly Half Of Unaccompanied Migrant Children Don't Show Up For Court

[Al Jazeera America](#), July 14, 2014

The Executive Office for Immigration Review would not speculate on the events that might prohibit someone from appearing in immigration court. Attorneys have told America Tonight that many children don't speak the language and may be unaware of their own court cases, but the large percentage of absent children could indicate that many are falling through the cracks, joining the ranks of America's estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants.

So far in 2014, judges have ruled in 5,328 cases involving children from the same three Central American countries, which represented 87 percent of the total cases, an uptick from last year. Of those, 49 percent weren't present in court.

Under a 2008 law, all unaccompanied minors from Central America must go through deportation proceedings, a process that can take years. This isn't true for child migrants from Mexico, who made up the bulk of unaccompanied minors entering the U.S. until the past year or so, when Central American children started flooding in by the tens of thousands. So while Mexico is still the second most common origin country of unaccompanied minors, it is a distant fourth when it comes to juvenile immigration rulings. So far this fiscal year, child migrants from Mexico did not show up to court 27 percent of the time, the data shows.

Some of the immigration decisions for these migrant children could be in their favor, according to Kate Sheehy, deputy counsel for the Office of Legislative and Public Affairs at EOIR. For example, some children could qualify for asylum or special immigrant juvenile status, which puts them on a path to citizenship.

This year, 57,000 unaccompanied minors have already entered the United States illegally — double what it was in the same period last year. As we explore in an in-depth report airing July 15, the U.S. immigration system is already overwhelmed by the sheer volume of these cases, and these new numbers add weight to experts' claims that it's also deeply broken.

Nearly Half Of Illegal Immigrant Juveniles Don't Show Up To Hearings

[Breitbart](#), July 10, 2014

At a Thursday Senate Appropriations Committee hearing on the \$3.7 billion in supplemental funding that the Obama administration requested to deal with the crisis, Juan Osuna, the Director of the Executive Office for Immigration Review at the Justice Department, said the total pending case load for the federal government is 375,000 illegal immigrant juveniles.

He said 46% of juveniles do not show up to their hearings. That percentage, though, could be higher since the administration does not have the exact numbers for illegal immigrant children who have recently received notices to appear before immigration officials and judges.

As Breitbart News has reported, there have been at least 57,000 illegal immigrant children who have unlawfully entered the country since October of last year, and Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson said he expects a total of 90,000 to enter before October of this year. Federal officials have estimated that at least 150,000 more illegal immigrant children will attempt to enter the country in the next fiscal year.

Many illegal immigrant migrants have said they were coming to the United States to receive so-called "permisos" that they believe will allow them to remain indefinitely in the United States. Those "permisos" are notices to appear before immigration judges and officials by a certain time.

Flood Of Lawsuits To Follow Wave Of Illegal Immigrants?

[Fox News](#), July 11, 2014

Illegal immigrants pouring across the border could trigger a wave of lawsuits flooding the U.S. court system for years and costing taxpayers millions, according to legal experts.

The American Civil Liberties Union has already sued the federal government to ensure that each of the 60,000-plus unaccompanied children who have come across the border since November gets taxpayer-funded representation at deportation hearings. But legal advocacy groups who represent illegal immigrants could file additional suits alleging improper treatment at the hands of the government. And with the system overwhelmed, there's little doubt corners are being cut.

"You can bet there is a phalanx of left-wing lawyers trying to line up illegal alien plaintiffs," said Tom Fitton, president of Judicial Watch. "The sky's the limit, it could be a nightmare."

— Jessica Vaughn, The Center for Immigration Studies

Slow asylum hearing dockets — like those that have already prompted a class action suit on behalf of 40,000

illegal immigrants — are certain to get much worse, experts say. But every interaction between the government and the illegal immigrants pouring in could potentially trigger a cause of action if lawyers can prove the letter of the law was not followed.

Jessica Vaughn, director of policy studies at the Center for Immigration Studies, said there's little the White House can do now that the children — most of whom are from Central America — are already here. Under U.S. law, kids from non-contiguous countries cannot be turned back at the border and must be granted deportation hearings.

"If we start sending these kids back to their home countries, there will be lawsuits galore," said Vaughn. "We're already seeing suits for conditions and denial of privileges. The sky's the limit, it could be a nightmare."

President Obama has asked Congress for \$3.7 billion to deal with the border crisis, money that would include tending to the care and legal needs of the illegal aliens. But the courts are already clogged with suits like one from a woman who claims the Border Patrol kept her in a car for eight hours without feeding her and another filed in March by Americans for Immigrant Justice claiming illegal immigrants in the Texas Rio Grande Valley facility were held in brightly lit, cold, cot-less cells.

And earlier this month the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans ruled that a Mexican teenager killed on Mexican soil by a Border Patrol agent who claims he was being pelted with rocks had rights under the U.S. constitution. His family is suing for \$325 million.

Vaughn said the administration makes it easy to sue the federal government, both with policies that critics say have invited the influx, and half-hearted efforts in court.

"This administration is empowering these groups by not lifting a finger to defend itself," Vaughn said. "ICE often times doesn't bother to send a prosecutor to appear in court. This creates a climate which makes people think they can get away with anything."

Illegal immigrant advocacy groups hailed the ACLU suit filed Wednesday in San Antonio on behalf of eight illegal immigrants ranging in age from 10-17. Immigration courts do not have to provide legal representation for adult illegal immigrants who are fighting deportation, but the ACLU suit said that the children it is representing must get legal help. And they have not been able to find lawyers, partly because the nation's immigration courts are backlogged by 367,000 pending cases of children and adults, according to the suit.

A ruling that the government must provide representation could prove expensive to taxpayers, but no one expects illegal immigrant children to represent themselves. And the Obama administration has already signaled it is open to the idea of providing legal help where needed.

"We welcome this suit with open arms," says Cheryl Little executive director of Americans for Immigrant Justice. "The money the president has requested is not enough. We've been overwhelmed and at crisis level for two years. Free legal assistance for children regardless of their status can mean life or death."

Under the president's proposed money request the Department of Justice would be given \$15 million to hire attorneys to defend unaccompanied minors against deportation in removal proceedings before an immigration judge. An additional \$1.1 million would be allocated for "immigration litigation attorneys" who, presumably, would assist adult illegal immigrants in their proceedings.

"The president is asking U.S. taxpayer to spend millions to help illegal immigrants who knowingly broke our laws to avoid deportation," says Vaughn. "The federal government is undercutting its entire mission. No one is defending our law."

Vaughn says the law requires legal counsel and hearings for unaccompanied minors but questioned why children released into parental custody are being treated as unaccompanied under the law. According to Vaughn almost half of the children in the current border crossing surge have been released to relatives living in the U.S.

However, Little said she's concerned there is a move underway to send children back to their home countries too soon by using video conferencing to expediting hearings which according to Little would "violate these children's right to their full and fair process."

The ACLU is looking for other causes of action amid the border crisis, too.

"There was only one open bathroom and no activities for children who were stuffed into small cells," said ACLU of Texas senior staff attorney Adriana Pinon. "We're monitoring the situation. There's always the possibility of a lawsuit."

Meanwhile, conditions for agents working in border facilities remains challenging.

"Agents in the El Paso and Laredo sectors are getting sick," said Shawn Moran vice president of the National Border Patrol Council. "We're working in close proximity doing medical screening on people and seeing cases of H1N1 swine flu, chicken pox, measles, lice and tuberculosis. People who are supposed to be cleared are being released into the community. Given the dormant period of some of these diseases there is a concern."

Moran doubts there's much legal recourse for agents who get injured or sick as a result of the border crisis. And taxpayers won't have much recourse, either, Vaughn predicted.

"The average taxpayer does not have the means," Vaughn said. "There's more financial aid available to illegal immigrants than there is for the average taxpayer."

Texas Immigration Courts Facing Backlog Of Cases, Delays

[Wichita Falls \(TX\) Times Record News](#), July 13, 2014

The Department of Justice is scrambling to find legal resources to deal with the flood of unaccompanied minors, but Texas immigration courts already have a backlog.

Judges Reassigned To Deal With Immigration Backlog In Texas And

[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

LOS ANGELES (AP) – The country's backlogged immigration courts are bracing for a deluge of cases after tens of thousands of Central American children began arriving on the U.S.-Mexico border.

Lauren Alder Reid, counsel for legislative and public affairs at the U.S. Justice Department's Executive Office for Immigration Review, says the courts have temporarily reassigned judges to hear cases in southern Texas and at a New Mexico detention facility via teleconferencing since the influx.

She could not say how many cases have been postponed, but she expects the surge in immigration will have a significant impact on other immigrants' cases.

The immigration courts are backlogged with more than 375,000 cases, and it can take months or years for immigrants not in detention facilities to get a hearing, let alone a resolution.

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Feinstein: Child-trafficking Law Is Flexible In Dealing With Flood Of Migrants

By Carolyn Lochhead

[San Francisco Chronicle](#), July 12, 2014

(07-11) 15:04 PDT WASHINGTON – Two Bay Area Democrats – Sen. Dianne Feinstein and Rep. Zoe Lofgren of San Jose – wrote the law now at the center of the controversy over what to do with the 50,000-plus children and other Central American immigrants swamping the Texas border.

Feinstein defended the provisions of a 2008 child-trafficking law, which the Obama administration says ties the hands of the government in dealing with unaccompanied minors crossing the border. The law prevents immediate deportation of children coming over the border alone from countries other than Mexico and Canada. Federal officials must assess each child to see if he or she is eligible for asylum or refugee residency, a process that can take months.

Feinstein says the law has an "exceptional circumstances" loophole that could give the administration more flexibility to remove children.

"I'd just like our distinguished heads and secretaries to know I kind of, in the Senate at least, began this effort legislatively back in 2002, and I want to tell you what happened," Feinstein said at a Thursday hearing of the Appropriations Committee, which is considering President Obama's request for \$3.7 billion to deal with the influx of Central Americans.

"I was home," Feinstein said. "I turned on the TV, and what did I see? I saw a 15-year-old Chinese youngster, shackled, hand cuffed, and tears rolling down her face in front of an immigration judge. She had no interpreter, no counsel. She had been held in a jail cell for eight months and was detained another four months.

"She was one of the survivors from a container of Chinese who came to this country, one of the very few. And I believe her parents died coming across the ocean. And I thought at the time, 'I'm going to take a look at the law and see what we can do.' "

The result was the Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act, which passed the Senate just before Christmas in 2005, and was later incorporated into the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008, passed with broad bipartisan support and the signature of former President George W. Bush just as he was leaving office.

The Obama administration is seeking changes to the law, and Republican Sens. John Cornyn of Texas and John McCain of Arizona, among others, are working on legislation.

Lofgren has strongly defended the law, telling The Chronicle that the problem is a shortage of immigration judges to sort out who is a legitimate refugee and who should be deported.

Feinstein's goal, she said, was "to see that unaccompanied youngsters who came from countries that were far away, through no initiative of their own, for the most part, really would have a process that was somewhat different. ... They would be able to at least have help in terms of pro bono counsel, in terms of an advocate, in terms of research as to whether there was a place to bring them back to their country, or whether there was a place for them here."

Feinstein said at the time, there were about 5,000 such children a year.

She told Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson, who wants more flexibility to deport, that the law contains a provision for "exceptional circumstances" that could provide the administration the authority it wants without changing the law.

She argued that "exceptional circumstances" could be triggered by large numbers coming in.

"It may be the number of children coming through in a week, or a month, however you see it," Feinstein said. "This is really hard, and from 5,000 we've gone now to 60,000, and

I really, I offer to work with you. I hope the bill does not need amending because it took six years to get where we are.”

Lee: Immigration Reform Will Solve The Humanitarian Crisis

[Roanoke \(VA\) Times](#), July 14, 2014

Jackson Lee is a Democrat from Texas's 18th Congressional District. She is a senior member of the House Committees on Judiciary and Homeland Security and is ranking member of the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security.

To look at the hundreds of young helpless faces is to understand that this situation is first and foremost a humanitarian crisis. These children are not perpetrators or criminals – they are in many cases victims fleeing deadly violence in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, and are seeking temporary safe haven in the United States, as so many people before them have done for centuries.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, these three Central American countries have among the highest per capita homicide rates in the world, with Honduras topping the list and the other two nations in the top five.

Upon my visit to South Texas borders, I witnessed hundreds of children whose young faces were pressed against glass jails with tears running down their faces. We are dealing with helpless children who have traveled a treacherous journey, and it should be within our American values to care for these children who fled their homes to escape violence.

To address this issue of the humanitarian crisis, I introduced H.R. 4990, the “Justice for Children Now Act of 2014,” which authorizes the immediate hiring of an additional 70 immigration judges in the Executive Office of Immigration Review. This bill will help reduce the backlogs to help advance the flow of the children's immigration court hearings. I also support the president's request for \$3.7 billion to respond to the humanitarian crisis on the border.

Throughout my 10 terms in Congress, I have worked to reform our broken immigration system. The humanitarian crisis along our borders is the latest reminder that our immigration system is broken and needs to be reformed so that it is fairer, more efficient and more humane. We should seize this historic opportunity to pass a sensible comprehensive immigration law that will secure our borders while at the same time preserve America's character as the world's most open and welcoming nation.

The bipartisan bill introduced in the House, H.R. 15, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act, incorporates the best of the Senate bill. The bill includes provisions that will reduce the immigrant visa backlog, promote family reunification, protect workers,

provide immediate relief to DREAM Act children, and a reasonable path to earned citizenship.

H.R. 15 has 200 co-sponsors, including three Republicans. Yet, Republican leadership continues to prevent the House from holding a vote on this necessary and popular legislation. Comprehensive immigration reform has enjoyed widespread support from law enforcement, faith leaders, agriculture groups, veteran groups, Nobel Laureates, the business community and the American people across party lines. On March 26, 192 House Democrats signed a discharge petition demanding that Speaker Boehner bring H.R. 15 to the floor for a vote.

We need immigration legislation that establishes a path to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants in this country. If carried out under fair and reasonable consideration, immigration reform can offer major benefits to our economy. Legalizing the current undocumented immigrants in our country would add a cumulative increase of \$832 billion to our GDP. Also, the Center for American Progress reported immigration reform would create 121,000 new jobs each year for the next decade. Legalization would also, in turn, increase immigrants' income, adding a boost to our economy.

Comprehensive immigration reform is the only logical response if we are to address the challenges we face at our borders. Within our own country, this reform must include the chance to earn pathway to legalization. Millions of people are living in the country without documentation, and most of them are hard-working people looking for a better life, but our legal immigration system continually has enormous backlogs, preventing valuable skilled and unskilled labor from entering the country.

Sensationalizing or politicizing the situation does nothing to fix the problem. Angry mobs protesting buses carrying innocent children for processing does nothing to solve the problem and reflects poorly on the perpetrators. We are and must be better than that as a Congress and as a nation. Congress should pass comprehensive immigration reform now.

PHILLIPS: Liberal Lawyers Ensuring Illegal Aliens Are Never Deported

By Judson Phillips

[Washington Times](#), July 14, 2014

On Wednesday, in a move that was missed by most of the mainstream media, a group of so-called “civil lights” lawyers filed a lawsuit in Seattle. The purpose of their suit is to compel the government to assign court-appointed lawyers to every minor illegal alien so they can fight their deportation.

Left-wing groups are moving quickly to make sure those illegals stay and ensure that more come.

This lawsuit will be successful.

How is it possible to see the future? Simple. The left is using a strategy known as “sue and settle.” To put it mildly, it is nefarious.

Liberals have done this with several environmental suits, and now they are going to do this with immigration amnesty.

Providing lawyers for illegal aliens is not a popular idea. It would be dead on arrival in Congress.

But when you have liberal lawyers, who needs Congress?

In a few weeks, probably on a Friday afternoon so it can slip into the Friday afternoon news black hole, the Obama Regime is going to quietly settle this case with a consent order.

Under that order, the Regime is going to agree with the plaintiffs in the lawsuit. The order, which will be signed by a federal judge will stipulate that every minor child must receive a court-appointed lawyer for their deportation hearings.

Once this consent order is signed, it will be binding on the Obama Regime, and it will be binding on the government in future administrations. In 2017 when President Allen West takes over and says, “Enough, we aren’t going to fund liberal lawyers for illegal aliens,” he won’t be able to reverse the policy.

The only way to stop it will be for Congress to pass a law that specifically overrules the consent order.

Once this program is in place, lawyers will sign up to be court-appointed attorneys for these illegals. Some will do it because they are true believers. Others will do it because times are tough for lawyers and the federal government pays well.

Every hearing will be contested. If an illegal loses, there will be round after round of appeals. Even if a removal order becomes final, there will still be round after round of what are known as “gang plank” appeals. These are last-minute appeals that do nothing more than gum up the works.

But screwing up the system is what liberal lawyers do best.

There is one way this lawsuit could be stopped now: If Congress attached a bill to a must-pass piece of legislation that denies federal courts the jurisdiction to hear that lawsuit. That is a power that Congress has but never uses.

America is under assault. Barack Obama and the hard left want to erase the southern border. That way, instead of exporting American values and prosperity to other nations, we will be importing poverty.

These left-wing lawyers are gaming the system to bring the American system down.

Perhaps Shakespeare was right about lawyers — at least the radical left wing lawyers.

Bergdahl Is Set To Resume Life On Active Duty

By Eric Schmitt

[New York Times](#), July 14, 2014

WASHINGTON — Six weeks after being released from five years in Taliban captivity, Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl is expected to return to life as a regular Army soldier as early as Monday, Defense Department officials said late Sunday.

Sergeant Bergdahl has finished undergoing therapy and counseling at an Army hospital in San Antonio, and will assume a job at the Army North headquarters at the same base, Fort Sam Houston, the officials said.

He is also expected to meet with Maj. Gen. Kenneth R. Dahl, the officer who is investigating the circumstances of Sergeant Bergdahl’s disappearance from his outpost in Afghanistan in 2009.

Sergeant Bergdahl’s transfer from the therapy phase to a regular soldier’s job is part of his reintegration into Army life, officials said. He will live in barracks and have two other soldiers help him readjust.

The sergeant has been an outpatient at the hospital for about three weeks, during which time he continued to participate in debriefings about his time as a Taliban prisoner. He was released six weeks ago in exchange for five senior Taliban detainees.

Last Thursday, Senator Carl Levin, a Michigan Democrat who heads the Armed Services Committee, released letters from each of the Joint Chiefs of Staff supporting the repatriation of Sergeant Bergdahl, a rebuttal to critics who said the swap should not have been made.

IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS **ENFORCEMENT**

US Border Effort Sputters As Migrants Cross Again

[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

MEXICALI, Mexico (AP) – A U.S. effort to discourage immigrants’ repeated attempts to enter the country illegally by dropping them back in Mexico hundreds of miles away from where they were caught has been sharply scaled back after producing relatively modest gains.

U.S. authorities insist the Alien Transfer Exit Program has contributed to overall achievements in border security and say the cutbacks reflected a need to shift resources to deal with Central Americans pouring into Texas.

The government has flown or bused hundreds of thousands of Mexican men to faraway border cities since February 2008, believing they would give up after being separated from their smugglers.

But government statistics and interviews with migrants in Mexican shelters suggest the dislocation is a relatively ineffective deterrent, especially for immigrants with spouses, children and roots in the U.S.

After being dropped off, many get on another bus and head right back to where they started. Once there, they reunite with their smugglers for another attempt, taking advantage of a standard practice that they pay only when they cross successfully.

"It's a nuisance. That's all," said Pablo Hernandez, 50, who lingered in the hallway of a shelter in Mexicali, swapping stories with other migrants after the U.S. government took him on a five-hour bus ride from Tucson, Arizona.

Hernandez planned to take a commercial bus to the Mexican town of Altar to reunite with his smuggler, who provided a phone number and said he wouldn't demand his \$3,400 fee until Hernandez made it.

The challenges illustrate the limits and pitfalls of massive spending increases on border enforcement.

Despite overwhelming numbers of Central Americans crossing in Texas, the Border Patrol is making strides by key measures, including a drop in the percentage of migrants who are arrested entering the country again after being caught.

The recidivism rate for all migrants arrested on the Mexican border fell to 16 percent in the 2013 fiscal year from 17 percent a year earlier, 20 percent in 2011, 24 percent in 2010 and 27 percent in 2009.

But results for ATEP, as the program is known, were higher: 25 percent last year, up from 24 percent the previous year, down from 28 percent the year before, 33 percent in 2010 and 34 percent in 2009.

Last year's 9-point difference between ATEP and the overall rate matched the widest ever.

ATEP has barely fared better than "voluntary returns," the term for migrants who are simply turned around without being charged. Criminal prosecutions have yielded the lowest recidivism rates.

Without fanfare, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency largely withdrew from ATEP last June after spending \$15.2 million to fly 50,295 Mexican men on 421 flights from Harlingen, Texas, to California's Imperial Valley, which neighbors Mexicali.

ICE virtually stopped providing detention space for ATEP and pulled back on bus transportation.

Thomas Homan, ICE's executive associate director for enforcement and removal operations, told a congressional panel in March that ATEP was "a good border enforcement strategy" but that ICE shifted money to flying home Central Americans who cross in South Texas, the busiest corridor for illegal crossings.

On Tuesday, President Barack Obama asked Congress for \$3.7 billion in emergency spending to deal with that crisis.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which oversees the Border Patrol, said in a statement that ATEP has disrupted smuggling networks and contributed to an overall decline in recidivism rates. The program, it said, "was designed specifically to create displacement and increase time between entry attempts."

Asked to provide the cost, Customs and Border Protection said ATEP "uses resources that were already in place ... and cannot be separated from the normal cost of doing business."

Until last year, ICE typically paid a night of detention, which cost an average of \$119 a person.

Air-conditioned buses still leave the Border Patrol's Tucson compound each weekday with up to 188 passengers. Two follow a 700-mile route east to Del Rio, Texas, where they are dropped off in the neighboring Mexican city of Ciudad Acuna. Two head about 300 miles west toward Mexicali.

As ATEP grew, Mexicali became the top destination for those deported to Mexico, peaking at 66,517 in 2012, a 24 percent increase from two years earlier, according to Mexico's National Immigration Institute. Several migrant shelters opened in the sprawling city of 750,000 to handle the influx.

Migrants gravitate to a breezy, sunlit hallway to discuss their next moves at the Hotel of the Deported Migrant, which housed up to 300 people a night after opening in 2010. The Mexican government offers discounted bus tickets and a limited number of free flights to their hometowns, but few consider it.

Abel Delgado, who lived in the Phoenix area for 23 years and was a cook and construction worker before he was deported in 2010, was bused from Tucson after four days of walking through the Arizona desert.

The 30-year-old planned to reunite with his smuggler for another attempt in Arizona after the summer heat, determined to rejoin his wife and daughters, ages 5 and 8.

"If I didn't have family, I'd stay here," he said.

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Four-Time Deportee Arrested For Allegedly Molesting 9-Year-Old Girl

By Chuck Ross

[Daily Caller](#), July 14, 2014

A Mexican national who records show has been deported from the U.S. four times was arrested Saturday for allegedly fondling a 9 year-old Texas girl.

According to the Parker County sheriff's office, 35 year-old Israel Andrade allegedly broke into a Springtown, Tex.

home around 6 a.m. and molested the young girl while her family was asleep, WFAA reports.

Following the attack, the girl ran screaming to wake her parents.

Andrade allegedly stole the family's computer and their cell phones, forcing the girl's mother to have to call 911 from a nearby convenience store.

According to Fox DFW, footprints led police to Andrade, who was found at a friend's home sleeping on top of a pile of the phones. Other evidence was recovered linking Andrade to the burglary and the attack.

The sheriff's department stated that Andrade's relatives said he had re-entered the U.S. about a month ago, according to WFAA. Records from the Immigration and Naturalization Service show that he was deported on four separate occasions — in July 2003, Feb. 2004, Sept. 2009, and Dec. 2010.

Andrade's ability to come back in to the country so easily prompted Parker County sheriff Larry Fowler's heavy criticism of U.S. immigration policy.

"How long will we have to tolerate this type of injustice?" Fowler asked in a written statement, according to WFAA. "It is time for American citizens to make a stand and begin petitioning for tighter security at our borders in order to protect our citizens."

The incident occurs amid an unfolding border crisis occurring in southern Texas as tens of thousands of illegal immigrants are being apprehended at the border and shipped to various locations in the U.S.

It is unclear whether Andrade was booked for any violent crimes during his previous stays in the country.

Earlier this year it was revealed that approximately 36,000 criminal illegal aliens had been released from the custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in 2013. Nearly 200 of those were murderers while more than 400 had committed sexual assault. The revelation prompted Texas Republican Sen. John Cornyn to send a letter to Department of Homeland Security chief Jeh Johnson asking for statistics on how many illegal aliens who had committed violent crimes had been released.

According to WFAA, Andrade faces a first-degree felony charge of indecency with a child by sexual contact, as well as burglary of a habitation.

Follow Chuck on Twitter

TRANSPORTATION SECURITY **ADMINISTRATION**

Fliers To Pay Higher TSA Fee To Help Pay Down Deficit

By Hugo Martin

[Los Angeles Times](#), July 14, 2014

Get ready to pay more when you fly.

The so-called Sept. 11 security fee that was intended to fund the Transportation Security Administration is about to increase. The TSA, however, says it won't necessarily benefit from the extra revenue.

The fee hike could increase the cost of air travel by as little as 60 cents or as much as \$22.40 or more, depending on the number of layovers and length of the stops.

TSA critics and the airlines are fuming about the hike.

"Why the increase?" wrote traveler Jon Berggren in a comment filed with the TSA. "When I go to the airport, I see two out of eight lanes open and 20 TSA agents walking around in circles and the line is out of the terminal. Where is all this money going?"

The increase, starting July 21, raises the security fee from \$2.50 per leg with a \$5 cap, to a flat fee of \$5.60 per one-way trip with no cap. The cost of a round-trip flight from Los Angeles to Orlando, Fla., with no layovers would increase from \$5 in TSA fees to \$11.20.

If the flight has long layovers, travelers will pay more.

Passengers will be charged a \$5.60 fee for each leg of a trip if there is a layover longer than four hours, based on changes adopted by the TSA. In other words, a round trip from Los Angeles to Orlando, with stops of four hours or more in each direction, would incur fees of \$5.60 for each leg, for a total of \$22.40.

TSA officials say the agency is not getting a hike in revenue because Congress has directed the new fees to go to the U.S. Treasury to help reduce the government deficit. What's more, Congress eliminated a separate security fee that generated \$420 million a year for the TSA.

Airline officials say the fee hike is just another way the federal government is tapping an already highly-taxed industry.

"Our government must stop using airlines and their passengers as its own personal ATM whenever it needs more money," said Vaughn Jennings, a spokesman for Airlines for America, a trade group for the nation's carriers.

To read more about travel, tourism and the airline industry, follow me on Twitter at @hugomartin.

Still Showing Up At TSA Airport Security: Guns, Knives, Bear Spray, Grenades (+video)

[Christian Science Monitor](#), July 13, 2014

For years now we've all been instructed on airliner security etiquette.

We know not to make smart remarks using the "b" word. Present our boarding pass and government-issued I.D. to no-nonsense uniformed officers of the TSA (Transportation Security Administration). Take off our shoes and pass

through body scanners with a chance that our day might include a personal pat-down by a stranger.

And above all, do not bring with you anything on the no-no list, especially anything that could be seen as a potential threat. We all know that the terrorists who attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 9/11 did it with simple sharp tools.

So do we all follow these simple rules meant to avert another attack? Nooo, we do not.

Here's some of what the TSA found during one recent week: 42 firearms, 74 credit card knives, inert grenades and a live smoke grenade, eight ounces of bear repellent, knives in the handles of brushes and combs, and 17 stun guns. Of the 42 firearms, 35 were loaded and nine had rounds chambered.

TSA keeps a jaunty blog reporting such finds and offering tips on how to avoid embarrassment if not prosecution.

"Sure, it's great to share the things that our officers are finding, but at the same time, each time we find a dangerous item, the line is slowed down and a passenger that likely had no ill intent ends up with a citation or in some cases is even arrested," reads the most recent blog post. "The passenger can face a penalty as high as \$7,500. This is a friendly reminder to please leave these items at home. Just because we find a prohibited item on an individual does not mean they had bad intentions, that's for the law enforcement officer to decide."

For all of 2013, TSA found 1,813 firearms in carry-on bags, 1,477 of which were loaded. Firearms were intercepted at a total of 205 airports with Atlanta on top of the list for the most firearms intercepted (111).

Some examples:

- A loaded .45 caliber pistol with six rounds and one chambered was discovered strapped to the ankle of a Pittsburgh passenger during a pat-down after he had opted out of AIT (Advanced Imaging Technology).

- While resolving an alarm on checked baggage, officers at Boston Logan discovered a fully disassembled 30-30 rifle concealed within the lining of the bag and taped to the straps. Police responded and ran a check on the serial number of the rifle, revealing that it had been stolen.

- In what was believed to be an attempt to avoid declaring his firearms, a passenger at Houston wrapped two guns in newspaper and placed them in a box of detergent powder in his checked baggage.

One only need read the comments on TSA's blog to get a sense of how much of the public feels about a level of security that is not only severe (in the eyes of many) but decidedly not leak-proof.

"So no mention of the knife and gun missed in separate incidents at Sky Harbor in Phoenix? How about the fact that DHS/TSA is letting illegal immigrants fly without any ID

except an easily reproducible court document with no pictures, watermarks, etc.?" writes one.

"Was the TSO who found the bear repellent the same Phoenix TSO who missed the loaded gun and knife?" writes another, also referencing a Fox News report last week.

More substantively, Atlantic magazine's Jeffrey Goldberg details TSA's challenges and weaknesses.

"Suspicious that the measures put in place after the attacks of September 11 to prevent further such attacks are almost entirely for show – security theater is the term of art – I have for some time now been testing, in modest ways, their effectiveness," he writes.

"I've ... carried, at various times: pocketknives, matches from hotels in Beirut and Peshawar, dust masks, lengths of rope, cigarette lighters, nail clippers, eight-ounce tubes of toothpaste (in my front pocket), bottles of Fiji Water (which is foreign), and, of course, box cutters," Goldberg reports. He's also been able to board flights using forged boarding passes. Sometimes he's told to give up items (like his Leatherman tool), sometimes not.

TSA screens some 1.7 million passengers a day.

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Texas Ranks High Among 6.5 Million Coastal Homes At Storm-surge Risk

By Carol Christian

[Houston Chronicle](#), July 14, 2014

An estimated 6.5 million homes on the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Coast are at risk this year of storm-surge damage.

If, in the worst-case scenario, they were all damaged, the reconstruction cost would be nearly \$1.5 trillion, according to a new report by CoreLogic, a data analysis firm in Irvine, Calif.

Fifteen major metro areas, including Houston, would account for about two-thirds of that staggering amount, or more than \$986 billion.

Storm surge is more than water that accumulates due to heavy rain. As defined in the CoreLogic report, storm surge is a "complex phenomenon that occurs when water is pushed toward the shore through the force of powerful winds associated with cyclonic storms."

As a storm moves across the ocean, the strong winds inside it "act as a plow, causing water to pile up along the front of the storm, with the highest water levels accumulating along the right-front quadrant as the hurricane spins counterclockwise," the report states.

Houston is ranked No. 8 in the list of 15 metro areas, with 216,880 properties potentially affected by all categories

of hurricanes and \$41.9 billion in total reconstruction value, the report said.

Among 19 states on the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Coast, Texas ranks No. 3 in the number of properties at risk, with 434,400 homes in the path of destruction.

The situation will only get worse as population and development increase in coastal communities, officials say.

“Our job is to be able to respond to that development,” said Francisco Sanchez, spokesman for the Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

By the same token, Sanchez said, coastal residents need to remember two things: They will be the ones most likely asked to evacuate for a major storm, and every storm is different, regardless of category.

“The storm surge is not reflected in the current category system,” he said. “Forget category and focus on the surge. Local emergency managers will make recommendations based on the uniqueness of the storm and the topography of the community.”

Anyone who is likely to be asked to evacuate needs to know the designated evacuation routes and understand that the return home will depend upon how bad the storm’s impact is, Sanchez said.

In the CoreLogic report, hurricane-prone Florida tops the at-risk list with 2.5 million homes vulnerable to storm-surge damage. It also has the highest total reconstruction cost – more than \$490 billion.

Second on the list of number of homes at risk is Louisiana, followed by Texas, New Jersey, Virginia, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Massachusetts.

In the ranking of the reconstruction value of properties at risk, New York is second to Florida, followed by Louisiana, New Jersey, Virginia, Texas, South Carolina, Massachusetts, North Carolina and Maryland.

Storm-surge areas are not the same as flood zones delineated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, although many home owners have that misconception, the report states.

Your house may not be in FEMA’s designated floodplain, but that doesn’t necessarily mean you can relax about your flooding risk.

“In fact, varying levels of flood risk for both fresh water and storm surge can and do extend beyond the FEMA boundaries,” the CoreLogic report states.

Gov. Asking FEMA To Help State, Local Officials

[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

MINOT, N.D. (AP) – Gov. Jack Dalrymple is asking the Federal Emergency Management Agency to assist state and

local officials in assessing the damage caused by overland flooding in several areas of the state.

State emergency management officials say initial assessments show total flood damages are exceeding FEMA’s threshold of \$1 million for federal cost-share assistance.

KXMC-TV in Minot (<http://bit.ly/1rjvZf>) says torrential rains in some areas of the state led to flooding that damaged roadways and other public infrastructure. Counties in the northern and northwestern parts of the state have been hit particularly hard.

Dalrymple says he will continue working with local officials and FEMA to move forward on repairs and other flood-recovery assistance.

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SECRET SERVICE

Obama’s Unpredictability ‘Stresses’ Secret Service

By Justin Sink

[The Hill](#), July 14, 2014

President Obama’s recent campaign-style adventures outside of the White House bubble are a chance for the president to shed the confines of his office, relishing the beer, barbecue, and face-to-face conversations with everyday Americans he wistfully describes as too inaccessible as president.

But the more frequently “the bear gets loose”, as the president and top staffers jokingly refer to the unscheduled forays away from the White House grounds, the more heartburn the president causes for the Secret Service agents charged with protecting his life.

Obama himself acknowledges that his impromptu walks and trips to restaurants can prove stressful for his security detail.

“I don’t get a chance to take walks very often,” he told a crowd in New York earlier this year. “Secret Service gets a little stressed. But every once in a while I’m able to sneak off.”

In Minneapolis late last month, he told a town hall meeting he liked to “tease” his Secret Service agents about how he was becoming unpredictable, before taking an unscheduled trip to a natural foods store and ice cream parlor. And in Austin earlier this week, Obama described how during a previous trip to the city, an unscheduled walk along the river had tested his detail’s nerves.

“I got about probably a mile, mile and a half, and then some people started spotting me so that by the time — Secret Service got nervous, and then by the time we got

back, there was a big rope line and there was all the fuss,” Obama said.

The pull between allowing the president more freedom to engage with voters, escaping the confines of his office and the security challenges such movements create seemed crystalized in a pair of events during Obama’s trip to Denver earlier this week.

After grabbing some pizza at a photo-op with individuals who had written him letters, the president decided to forgo his motorcade and instead walk down a downtown promenade. During that trip, the president was approached by — and ended up shaking hands with — a man wearing a full latex horse mask.

Later that evening, Obama dropped by a pool hall and brewery, where one patron asked Obama if he wanted to smoke pot with him.

“Do you want a hit, man?” the man says on a video that quickly went viral online.

While both incidents were ultimately harmless, they underscored the unpredictability of what can happen when a president ventures out of the bubble.

“Any time the president leaves the White House complex, there are risks involved,” said Secret Service spokesman Ed Donvoan.

So-called “off the record” events pose a “unique challenge” for the president’s security team, said Dan Emmett, a former Secret Service agent and the author of “Within Arm’s Length,” a book about his time working on presidential details across three administrations.

“There’s a huge challenge in that you have virtually no time to put it together,” Emmett said. “The biggest worry is wandering random crime in progress, or if you happen to run into the random crazy guy — the people walking down the street talking to themselves who could be armed somehow.”

Emmett says that the proliferation of smart phones and social media, which allow any individual to instantly broadcast the president’s whereabouts out, only heighten the risk of trips outside the bubble.

“Word gets around quickly — everybody has an iPhone,” he said.

Still, Donovan says the agency “mitigates these risks as much as possible.”

“We apply our knowledge and experience, and we’ve been doing this a long time,” he said.

Unscheduled trips can also have their benefits, said Mickey Nelson, who retired recently as the Assistant Director of the Secret Service.

“We use the element of surprise to our advantage,” Nelson said. “If we don’t know where we’re going there to the last minute, the adversary certainly doesn’t know it.”

Nelson says that on presidential trips outside of Washington, the traveling Secret Service team includes dedicated agents who can fan out and help secure areas

ahead of the president at a moment’s notice. He also said that in addition to “overt assets” like the agents traveling next to the president, “usually there’s a lot of covert” resources helping to protect him.

And after the president arrives at a restaurant or store, it’s fairly easy for agents to control the flow of patrons in and out — which decreases the risk posed by selfies with the president lighting up Twitter.

“We’ve been doing unscheduled movement since we started protecting the president in 1901,” Nelson said. “We’ve done them in war zones like Iraq and Afghanistan. We know what we’re doing.”

The Secret Service was reluctant to discuss if they had had discussions with the president’s staff about the frequency of the president’s “off the record trips,” which are happening with greater frequency as the midterm elections approach.

“But it just stands to reason, if something is happening more regularly that we are preparing for it more regularly,” Donovan said. “If we’re protecting a foreign dignitary and we know he likes to ride motorcycles, then we bring in people who know how to ride motorcycles. We prepare for things, and that would include if any protectee of ours is doing more events.”

Obama has not been subtle in indicating that such trips are more likely.

“What I’ve said to my team is ‘Get me out of Washington,’ “ Obama told donors at a fundraiser Wednesday night in Texas.

And White House press secretary Josh Earnest has said walks down Main Street are one part of the White House’s efforts to break through a difficult media environment.

“The President, like many of his predecessors, has talked about the challenge that’s posed by the presidential bubble; that one of the things that this President misses the most is the ability to walk down the street and talk to people,” Earnest said.

“That’s particularly important to him because he is sitting in the Oval Office, right up that hallway, making the kinds of decisions that he knows have a substantial impact on the daily lives of Americans,” he continued. “And he is looking for as many opportunities as he can to try to get some access and some insight into what are the challenges that people are facing.”

Questions Remain In The Shooting Death Of Miriam Carey

By Editorial Board

[Washington Post](#), July 14, 2014

THE FINDINGS of the U.S. Attorney’s investigation into the death of a young mother after a harrowing car chase on Capitol Hill settles the issue of whether there was criminal or

civil rights culpability. Prosecutors said they found insufficient evidence that the two officers who shot Miriam Carey used excessive force or had criminal intent. That there will be no criminal prosecution leaves unanswered a critical question: Was there a better, nonlethal means of dealing with the situation?

The responsibility for answering that question lies with the two federal police agencies involved in October's pursuit of Ms. Carey. It is important they respond in a way that is as transparent to the public as possible.

Announcing the decision not to bring criminal charges, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. issued a statement that detailed the frightening seven minutes of Oct. 3, 2013, when Ms. Carey attempted to breach security checkpoints at the White House and Capitol Complex, led police on a high-speed chase, hit a uniformed officer and attempted to run over another officer — all the while refusing to obey multiple commands to stop. It was later discovered that Ms. Carey had mental-health issues; her 1-year-old daughter who was in the car with her was unhurt.

Prosecutors typically do not announce a decision to decline to pursue criminal charges. The detailed statement of facts that summarized the events, accompanied by still photos from video footage, was acknowledgment of the unique circumstances of the case and the intense public interest.

We hope that point is not lost on the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Capitol Police and that they will be equally forthcoming once they complete their own administrative inquiries to determine if officers followed use-of-force policies and whether any changes in policies or practices are warranted. The agencies have been provided, according to a statement from Mr. Machen's office, with "voluminous materials" gathered during the investigation, including ballistic reports and witness interviews.

What happened to Ms. Carey was a tragedy. Whether it was preventable or if there are lessons to be learned are questions still awaiting answers.

NATIONAL PROTECTION AND PROGRAMS

Electronic Health Records Ripe For Theft

By David Pittman

[Politico](#), July 14, 2014

America's medical records systems are flirting with disaster, say the experts who monitor crime in cyberspace. A hack that exposes the medical and financial records of hundreds of thousands of patients is coming, they say — it's only a matter of when.

As health data become increasingly digital and the use of electronic health records booms, thieves see patient records in a vulnerable health care system as attractive bait, according to experts interviewed by POLITICO. On the black market, a full identity profile contained in a single record can bring as much as \$500.

The issue has yet to capture attention on Capitol Hill, which has been slow to act on cybersecurity legislation.

"What I think it's going to lead to, if it hasn't already, is an arms race between the criminal element and the people trying to protect health data," said Robert Wah, president of the American Medical Association and chief medical officer at the health technology firm CSC. "I think the health data stewards are probably a little behind in the race. The criminal elements are incredibly sophisticated."

The infamous Target breach occurred last year when hackers stole login information through the retailer's heating and air system. Although experts aren't sure what a major health care hack would look like, previous data breaches have resulted in identity and financial theft, and health care fraud.

Health care is the Johnny-come-lately to the digital world, trailing banks and retailers with decades of experience in cybersecurity. Most hospitals and doctors have gone from paper to electronic health records in the space of a few years while gobbling up \$24 billion in federal incentive money paid out under the 2009 Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act.

"Frankly, health care organizations are struggling to keep up with this," said information security expert Ernie Hood, of the The Advisory Board Co.

Significant breaches are already occurring. Over the course of three days, hackers using a Chinese IP address infiltrated the St. Joseph Health System in Bryan, Texas, and exposed the information of 405,000 individuals, gaining names, address, Social Security numbers, dates of birth and other information.

It was the third-largest health data breach tracked by the federal government.

The L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center reported late last year that hackers attacked its computer systems over a course of two months trying to steal credit card, Social Security and other financial information. About 59,000 clients and former clients were left vulnerable.

While a stolen credit card or Social Security number fetches \$1 or less on the black market, a person's medical information can yield hundreds of times more, according to the World Privacy Forum. Thieves want to hack the data to gain access to health insurance, prescription drugs or just a person's financial information

The Identify Theft Resource Center — which has identified 353 breaches in 2014 across industries it tracks, says almost half occurred in the health sector. Criminal

attacks on health data have doubled since 2000, according to the Ponemon Institute, an industry leader in data security.

Health care is the industry sector least prepared for a cyberattack, according to security ratings firm BitSight Technologies. The industry had the highest volume of threats and the slowest response time, leading the FBI in April to issue a warning to health care providers.

The industry “is not as resilient to cyber intrusions compared to the financial and retail sectors, therefore the possibility of increased cyber intrusions is likely,” the FBI stated.

Why health care and why now?

The high value of health information makes it attractive to hackers.

A credit card can be canceled within hours of its theft, but information in a patient’s health record is impossible to undo. The record contains financial records, personal information, medical history, family contacts — enough information to build a full identity.

A patient’s credit card information alone may be easier to hack from an unsuspecting hospital than from a company like Target, Michaels or Neiman Marcus, experts say.

“Criminal elements will go where the money is,” said Wah, who was the first deputy national coordinator in the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT. “They’re seeking health records not because they’re curious about a celebrity’s blood type or medication lists or health problems. They’re seeking health records because they can do huge financial, fraudulent damage, more so than they can with a credit card number or Social Security number.”

Other health security experts say hospitals’ response to cybersecurity issues has been lackluster, with providers still focused on privacy and confidentiality rather than data terrorists.

Security takes money and expertise to implement and isn’t a glamorous job, since success is measured by something not happening. The health system is still in the process of developing and vetting best practices.

The annual security assessment by the Health Information Management Systems Society showed that about half of surveyed health systems reported spending 3 percent or less of their IT budgets on security. Some 54 percent of the 283 IT security professionals surveyed had tested a data breach response plan, and slightly more than half of hospitals had an IT leader in charge of securing patient data.

Health facilities pay their security staffs less than any other industry, said Stephen Boyer, co-founder of BitSight. “This may be the case of you get what you pay for,” he said.

1 In 10 has had info breached

Nearly 1.84 million people have been victims of medical identity theft, according to a Ponemon report released last year, including 313,000 victims in 2013 — a 19 percent jump from the previous year.

Thieves steal health insurance information to gain medical care for themselves or others. Increasingly, people with fake health ID cards show up for care at emergency departments, or use stolen identities to secure prescription drugs that they resell, according to a white paper from the Medical Identity Fraud Alliance.

An Army reservist who left his insurance card at home while in Iraq had it “borrowed” by his uninsured brother, who used it to pay for thousands of dollars in coverage after a car accident. An elderly man who lost his insurance card discovered it had been stolen after care at an emergency room where he learned that someone else’s allergy to penicillin was on his chart.

The out-of-pocket costs incurred by victims of medical identity theft average more than \$18,000, according to the Ponemon report. HIMSS security survey showed that 12 percent of health care organizations have had at least one case of medical identity theft reported by a patient. Many thefts go unreported and even undiscovered.

Since the Department of Health and Human Services began tracking the numbers in 2009, more than 31.6 million individuals — roughly 1 in 10 people in the U.S. — have had their medical records exposed through some sort of hack, theft or unauthorized disclosure. These may not represent the most serious attacks, according to experts at EY, formerly Ernst & Young.

“Threats are far more sophisticated than the breach reporting, which is kind of a trailing indicator,” said Reza Chapman, senior manager of EY’s Health Care Advisory practice. “Some organizations have a little more of a sophisticated threat problem that they may not frankly be aware of.”

It’s difficult to know how stolen information is being used. “Nobody really ever knows unless you reach out to those individuals to see if they were affected,” said Dennis Seymour of Ellumen, which specializes in health care IT.

How the Hill is responding

On Capitol Hill, health industry cybersecurity gets lumped in with the retail, financial and other sectors, says House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers (R-Mich.), and the difference between security and privacy becomes obscured.

“Hospitals are not spending a lot of time trying to make that information secure,” Rogers said in an interview. “They’re trying to make sure there isn’t a disclosure, which is absolutely appropriate, but that’s not the same thing that someone on the outside, a hacker, can get in there and steal that information and use it for nefarious purposes.”

Hospitals must proactively set standards for cybersecurity, rather than simply following government privacy rules, which were written in a different time, says Kathy Downing of the American Health Information Management Association.

For more than three years, Rogers has been championing the Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act, which would encourage the government and industry to share cybersecurity information and best practices. The House has twice passed it, but the issue has been slow to gain traction in the Senate.

Last month, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee approved some companion legislation.

HHS, meanwhile, is stepping up with more aggressive enforcement of security breaches. Its Office of Civil Rights, which investigates privacy violations, has levied \$10 million in fines in the past year. In May, it fined New York Presbyterian Hospital and Columbia University Medical Center a combined \$4.8 million for disclosing the personal health information of 6,800 individuals, including patient status, vital signs, medications and laboratory results.

There has yet to be a massive breach of health information that has captured the public's attention like last year's involving retail industry Target. But the AMA's Wah thinks it's just a matter of time.

"I believe that we're not talking about if there's going to be a big data breach in health care, it's going to be how many and when," Wah said. "Because there already are a tremendous number of data breaches that are occurring in health care today."

OFFICE OF HEALTH AFFAIRS

C.D.C. Closes Anthrax And Flu Labs After Accidents

By Donald G. Mcneil Jr.

[New York Times](#), July 12, 2014

After back-to-back potentially serious laboratory accidents, federal health officials announced on Friday that they had closed the flu and anthrax laboratories of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and have halted shipments of all infectious agents from the agency's highest-security labs.

The accidents, and the C.D.C.'s emphatic response to them, could have important implications for other laboratories around the world engaged in research into dangerous viruses and bacteria.

If the C.D.C. — which the agency's director, Dr. Thomas Frieden, called "the reference laboratory to the world" — had multiple accidents that could have, in theory, killed not just laboratory staff members but even people in the wider public, there will undoubtedly be calls for more stringent controls on other university, military and private laboratories that handle dangerous pathogens.

One of the accidents, in which as many as 75 C.D.C. employees were potentially exposed to live anthrax, was

revealed last month. The second, disclosed on Friday, related to the cross-contamination of a flu sample with a dangerous H5N1 bird flu strain.

In addition to those two accidents, Dr. Frieden also announced on Friday that two of six vials of smallpox recently found stored in a National Institutes of Health laboratory since 1954 contained live virus capable of infecting people.

The samples will be destroyed as soon as the genomes of the virus in them can be sequenced. The N.I.H. will scour its freezers and labs for other samples, he said.

"These events revealed totally unacceptable behavior," Dr. Frieden said. "They should never have happened. I'm upset, I'm angry, I've lost sleep over this, and I'm working on it until the issue is resolved."

Dr. Frieden suggested the potential implications of these accidents himself, saying that the world needed to reduce the number of laboratories handling dangerous agents, reduce the total amounts of such agents circulating and reduce the number of lab staff members who have access to it.

At the C.D.C., laboratory workers who knowingly failed to follow lab procedures or failed to report incidents will be disciplined, he said. A committee of experts will be convened to revise C.D.C. laboratory procedures.

CDC Says It Improperly Sent Dangerous Pathogens In Five Incidents In Past Decade

By Lena H. Sun And Brady Dennis

[Washington Post](#), July 12, 2014

Federal government laboratories in Atlanta improperly sent highly dangerous pathogens, including anthrax, potentially lethal botulism bacteria and deadly bird flu virus to other laboratories in five separate incidents in the past decade, officials said Friday.

The incidents, which raise troubling questions about the federal government's ability to safely store and transport potentially deadly pathogens, prompted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to halt operations at two labs and impose a moratorium on biological material leaving multiple labs at its Atlanta headquarters.

"These events should never have happened," CDC Director Tom Frieden said in a conference call with reporters. The American people "may be wondering whether we're doing what we need to do to keep them safe and to keep our workers safe," he said. "I'm disappointed, and frankly I'm angry about it."

The CDC disclosed the incidents in a report Friday detailing safety lapses that occurred last month, when as many as 84 workers may have been exposed to live anthrax after employees unknowingly sent live samples of the bacteria from one CDC lab to other CDC labs.

As part of its internal investigation, the CDC found that “this is not the first time an event of this nature has occurred,” according to the report. “At the time of this writing, CDC is aware of four other such incidents in the past decade.”

Frieden said most distressing was the discovery Wednesday that on March 13, shipments of “highly pathogenic” H5N1 influenza virus were inappropriately sent from the CDC to a U.S. Department of Agriculture laboratory in Georgia. It took six weeks for staff to report the discovery.

The release of the CDC report comes days after government officials discovered decades-old vials of smallpox in a building on the Bethesda campus of the National Institutes of Health. The vials, which officials said appear to date from the 1950s, were flown to the CDC and initial testing has confirmed the presence of smallpox-virus DNA.

Frieden said two of six vials labeled as smallpox already have shown growth in tissue cultures, meaning the samples are viable, or alive. He said it could take as long as two weeks to determine whether the remaining samples also are viable. In the meantime, researchers at CDC will sequence the genetic makeup of the smallpox before ultimately destroying the samples in the presence of officials from the World Health Organization.

“That’s what should have been done decades ago, and that’s what will be done now,” Frieden said.

He said that the vials included a date – Feb. 10, 1954 – which came after smallpox had disappeared from the United States but decades before it had been eradicated worldwide.

“Whoever created these vials didn’t do so out of malice,” Frieden said.

It remains unclear how the smallpox samples ended up in Building 29A, in a lab that the Food and Drug Administration has operated since 1972. On July 1, a scientist preparing for the lab’s move to the main FDA campus in White Oak, Md., found the vials in a cardboard box in a cold storage room. There is no cure for smallpox, which killed hundreds of millions of people in the 20th century alone before finally being eradicated in the late 1970s, and historically about one-third of people who contracted it died from the disease.

NIH Director Francis Collins told employees in an e-mail Friday that investigators will examine “all freezers, refrigerators, cold rooms, storage shelves, and cabinets, as well as all other areas of storage such as offices associated with laboratories” as part of a “clean sweep” to account for the contents inside the government’s research facilities.

The CDC report said last month’s anthrax incident in Atlanta happened because scientists were using unapproved sterilization techniques when they transferred some samples of anthrax bacteria from the bioterror lab to other CDC labs that were not equipped to handle live anthrax. Scientists did not confirm the anthrax was inactivated before they

transferred it, and failed to follow standard operating procedure to inactivate the samples.

Frieden said he has established a high-level working group and appointed a single point person to review all safety procedures at CDC, including on a lab-by-lab basis. “Fortunately none of these incidents resulted in anyone becoming infected or getting sick,” he said. “The organisms involved were all safely disposed of.”

Friday’s CDC report described four other incidents:

- In 2006, the CDC’s bioterror lab transferred vials of anthrax DNA to two outside laboratories, the report said. The bioterror lab “believed they had inactivated the samples,” but testing found viable anthrax bacteria. The bioterror lab instituted new procedures for shipping or transferring DNA from bacterial agents. Those procedures were not followed during last month’s anthrax incident, the report said.

- In 2006, shipments from another CDC lab were found to contain live botulism bacteria, which can cause paralysis in infected people. The bacterium produces a nerve toxin in the body. There are five main types, including food-borne. All forms can be fatal. Botulism causes muscle weakness and kills by paralyzing the respiratory muscles, according to the CDC.

- In 2009, newly available test methods show that a strain of *Brucella*, which can cause a highly contagious bacterial infection called brucellosis, had been shipped to outside laboratories as early as 2001 because researchers believed mistakenly that it was a vaccine strain of the bacteria. It was not.

- Only as CDC officials finalized Friday’s report on the recent anthrax incident did they discover that earlier this year, employees at an agency lab had sent a strain of the H5N1 influenza virus, commonly known as avian flu, to a USDA lab. That lab, located in Georgia, had notified CDC of the “contaminated” specimens on May 23. The CDC said Friday that while there was no apparent safety risk posed by the incident, there were “unacceptable delays in reporting of the inadvertent shipment.”

CDC Outlines 5 Incidents In Which Deadly Pathogens Were Mishandled

By Michael Muskal

[Los Angeles Times](#), July 12, 2014

Dangerous germs, including anthrax, botulism and a strain of bird flu, were improperly sent among government laboratories in five incidents during the last decade, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which said it had closed two labs and had imposed a moratorium on shipping deadly pathogens.

The announcement of the previously undisclosed incidents comes days after the CDC said scientists had discovered six vials of the smallpox virus in an unused

storage room at the National Institutes of Health campus in Bethesda, Md.

No member of the public nor any of the workers in the government laboratories were affected by the five incidents, according to Benjamin N. Haynes, senior press officer for the CDC's infectious disease team.

In a conference call with reporters, CDC director Tom Frieden said he was angry about the lapses.

"These events should never have happened," Frieden told reporters. The American people "may be wondering whether we're doing what we need to do to keep them safe and to keep our workers safe.

"I'm disappointed, and frankly I'm angry about it."

The Atlanta-based CDC is one of the government's top health and research agencies. It handles some of the most advanced work in laboratories that require stringent precautions in the handling of killer pathogens. Friday's report outlines problems going back to 2006.

Last month, the agency announced there had been a problem at its main Bioterrorism Rapid Response and Advanced Technology anthrax lab at the Roybal Campus in Atlanta and dozens of workers could have been exposed. The agency investigated, and its report examining that incident and outlining four others was released Friday.

According to the report, the main problems in June included in the use of unapproved sterilization techniques during the transfer of some samples. Workers failed to ensure that the anthrax was inactive before transfer and failed to follow standard operating procedures to inactivate the virus.

That Roybal Campus lab has been closed since June 16, the CDC said, and the facility will remain shuttered until corrective actions are taken. Those include "appropriate personnel actions" against those involved in the incident and a full review on how the agents are shipped around the country. Major government research facilities in Atlanta and Colorado are among those affected by the moratorium on shipping.

A second lab was closed after a sample of flu virus was contaminated by a deadly strain of H5N1 bird flu. The contaminated sample was sent from an Atlanta CDC lab to another government lab in Georgia.

The mistaken shipment took place on March 13, but was not discovered for weeks. It was reported to top officials this week and was included in the current report. There were no apparent safety problems after the shipment, the CDC said, but noted "unacceptable delays in reporting of the inadvertent shipment."

The report also outlined three other questionable shipping incidents, including two in 2006. One 2006 incident involved the shipment of anthrax DNA that was thought to be inactive, but turned out to be viable. The other incident that year involved the botulism bacteria, which was shipped live from a CDC lab to an undisclosed facility. Botulism generally

produces a nerve toxin that can cause muscle weakness and can kill if it spread to the respiratory system.

The fifth incident in 2009 involved the shipment of a strain of Brucella, which can cause a contagious bacterial infection called brucellosis. The shipment was incorrectly thought at the time to be a vaccine, the report said.

The release of the CDC report comes days after government officials discovered vials of smallpox that appear to date from the 1950s. The vials were flown the CDC from Maryland for testing.

Frieden said that two of six vials have shown growth, so they seem to be viable, and that it could take weeks to determine the status of the other vials. All will be destroyed, he said.

The vials, dated Feb. 10, 1954, were discovered as Food and Drug Administration scientists prepared to move their lab from the NIH campus to the FDA's main facility.

CDC Stops Shipment Of Dangerous Materials

By Natalie Villacorta

[Politico](#), July 12, 2014

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is halting shipments of biological materials from its high-level biosecurity labs in Atlanta following incidents involving the improper handling of dangerous infectious agents, including anthrax, bird flu and botulism bacteria.

In a report Friday, the agency revealed that five situations had occurred during the past decade, raising questions about the safety of government laboratories and the adherence of workers to critical protocol.

"I think this is a wake-up call. These events should never have happened," CDC Director Tom Frieden said on a media call to discuss the findings of an internal review of a potential anthrax exposure last month. He called the incidents a "symptom" of a broader problem and acknowledged that Americans "may be wondering whether we're doing what we need to do to keep them safe and to keep our workers safe."

The June incident on CDC's campus began as researchers working with anthrax failed to properly inactivate the bacteria before sending them to lower-security labs, where unknowing workers didn't wear adequate protective gear while handling the material.

But there also was a campus breach this spring involving a deadly influenza virus, which Frieden said he only learned of Wednesday. It occurred in one of CDC's top labs, which is now closed.

According to the agency's report, the laboratory involved in the most recent anthrax incident experienced a similar breakdown in safety protocol in 2006 when anthrax DNA was not correctly inactivated. That same year, another CDC lab shipped samples of botulism bacteria that were still active. And in 2009, CDC discovered that for years it had

been shipping the wrong strain of a dangerous parasite to outside laboratories.

Federal lawmakers have been pressing the CDC for more information since last month. On Wednesday, Frieden will testify before the oversight subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

“The repeated breakdown in protocols and safety failures involving the world’s deadliest germs and pathogens is wholly unacceptable,” House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Fred Upton (R-Mich.) said Friday in response to the new report.

Subcommittee Chairman Tim Murphy (R-Pa.) was equally harsh. “With the release of today’s report, we’ve learned the dangerous transfer of possible live anthrax bacteria by the CDC’s Atlanta lab was not an isolated incident by a rogue scientist but rather one of multiple mishaps over the last several years.”

More than 70 workers were started on antibiotics as a precaution following the potential anthrax exposure last month. The agency has concluded that it’s highly unlikely any came into actual contact with the bacteria, and Frieden said none has become ill. The incident occurred because scientists were not following an approved protocol for inactivating the anthrax and did not confirm that the sample was inactive before transporting it, he said.

In addition, the laboratory’s use of anthrax was not appropriate, he said, and the scientists were not aware of the best protocols for inactivation. The lab is now closed and will remain so “until certain specific actions are taken,” according to the report.

Frieden called the incident earlier this year even more “distressing” because of the lengthy lag before he was notified that a strain of low-pathogenic flu had been cross-contaminated with the H1N1 avian flu virus. Officials know that it happened as agency scientists were transferring the strain to a USDA lab, which subsequently discovered the contamination. The CDC is still trying to determine how it happened, however, and Frieden said he had no valid explanation for the notification delay.

The high level of security at both labs “strongly suggests” that no one was exposed to the H1N1 virus, he added.

Frieden said that the CDC will be examining the “culture of safety” throughout all of its labs. When people work with deadly materials day in and day out, it’s possible that they can become a little “careless,” he suggested.

“The issue isn’t about individuals doing the wrong thing,” he said. “The issue is about systems that aren’t reliably preventing this from happening.”

The moratorium on the movement of biological materials from biosafety level three and four labs will remain in place pending a review. The CDC has also established a working group that will oversee improvements in laboratory

safety protocol under the guidance of a new director of laboratory safety.

Frieden said he will invite outside scientists to participate in an external advisory group for laboratory safety. Staff members who violated safety protocols or failed to report violations in a timely manner will be disciplined.

CDC is not the only federal agency that has disclosed serious breaches involving dangerous materials in recent days. Its report follows the discovery earlier this month of several vials containing smallpox in a long-unused storage room at NIH in Bethesda, Maryland. The sealed vials, which dated to 1954, were flown to the CDC’s high-containment facility in Atlanta for testing and then will be destroyed.

CDC Discovers Botched Shipment With Bird Flu, Closes Down Labs

By Ferdous Al-faruque

[The Hill](#), July 11, 2014

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Friday said it has closed two laboratories and halted some shipments of dangerous disease samples after discovering new safety breaches, including one that involved the dangerous avian flu.

The CDC, which is already under fire for safety mishaps involving live anthrax, said samples that were sent in March to the Department of Agriculture for research were contaminated with the highly infectious virus H5N1.

The flu samples from the Roybal Campus in Atlanta were destroyed as soon as the CDC realized the mistake. CDC Director Thomas Frieden said he didn’t learn about the incident until this week.

“I’m upset, I’m angry, I’ve lost sleep over it,” Frieden said.

The revelation came in a new report where the CDC outlined the findings of a separate investigation into the mishandling of anthrax last month in Atlanta.

The agency reported last month that up to 80 workers at Atlanta labs might have been infected with the deadly anthrax bacteria after live samples were mistakenly moved to a lab with lower biosecurity safety precautions.

The CDC report says no staff members had become ill from the anthrax exposure as of July 10.

In response to the investigation, Frieden said he has ordered an immediate moratorium on transferring any biological samples between high-level labs until officials have reviewed all their safety protocols.

The CDC chief has also ordered “appropriate actions” against any worker who knowingly violated safety rules and failed to report breaches, and has created a new position, director of laboratory safety, that will be filled by CDC official Michael Bell.

“This was a serious event that should not have happened,” the CDC said of the potential anthrax exposure at the Atlanta lab.

The new safety lapse with bird flu — a virus that scientists have long feared could create a deadly pandemic — is another embarrassing misstep for the CDC and federal health officials.

The National Institutes of Health this week disclosed it found six decades-old vials of smallpox virus at a laboratory in Bethesda, Md. Small pox was eradicated decades ago, and the few remaining samples of the disease are supposed to be tightly controlled.

The Atlanta lab where the most recent anthrax scare happened has also been the site of other contamination problems in the past decade.

In 2006, the CDC found the lab had accidentally sent anthrax DNA to two outside labs. In the same year, it accidentally received live Botulism from another lab location. In 2009, the lab was also found to be sending live Brucella to outside labs to be used for vaccines.

Lawmakers are up in arms about the safety lapses and are vowing thorough investigations.

A House subcommittee is holding a hearing next week with Frieden, and is likely to bombard him with tough questions about the health scares.

House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Fred Upton (R-Mich) called the CDC’s safety breaches “wholly unacceptable.”

“This latest revelation underscores the need for our investigation and the importance of next week’s hearing to review the safety measures and practices at the CDC,” he said.

Upton noted the CDC’s measures after the reported 2006 safety lapses have not worked.

“We will seek to find out why CDC thinks its latest actions will prove more effective than past efforts, and whether congressional intervention may be necessary,” he added.

Frieden said people are right to raise questions about the CDC’s procedures.

“Together I’m sure these events have many people asking and questioning government labs,” Frieden said. “They may be wondering whether we are doing what we need to do to keep our workers and our communities safe, and I think it’s fair to raise those questions.”

Still, Frieden stressed the need for the CDC to conduct research with dangerous samples, saying the work is critical to preventing outbreaks and stopping bioterrorism.

“We wish we didn’t have to do research like this but the fact is anthrax has been used as a weapon and there’s a risk it will be used as a weapon,” he said. “In fact the project that led to the potential exposure [of anthrax] was a project to figure out a quicker way to diagnose anthrax.”

TERRORISM INVESTIGATIONS

Terror Suspect Says U.S. Agents Breach Privacy Rights Of Millions

By Kirk Mitchell

[Denver Post](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from this source currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

2 Men Face Sentencing In Conn. For Terror Support

[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (AP) – Two British citizens face sentencing for supporting terrorists through websites that sought to raise cash, recruits and solicit items such as gas masks for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Babar Ahmad is scheduled to be sentenced Wednesday and Syed Talha Ahsan on Thursday in federal court in New Haven.

Prosecutors say Ahmad deserves a 25-year sentence, calling his support far-reaching. Ahmad’s attorney says prosecutors overstated the case and the 10 years he already has served in prison is enough.

Prosecutors say Ahsan should get a 15-year sentence, saying he traveled to Afghanistan to train for terrorism.

Ahsan is also seeking a sentence of time served for what his attorney called his peripheral involvement in the case. He says the military training was for self-defense.

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FBI: Utah Man Wanted To Bomb Police Station

By Michelle L. Price

[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

TREMONTON, Utah (AP) — Authorities arrested a 47-year-old Utah man Thursday that they say had been plotting to kill police officers and blow up a police station with the hope the attacks would cause an uprising against the government.

FBI agents and police in Tremonton arrested John Huggins on Thursday on a charge of possessing an unregistered destructive device, U.S. Attorney’s Office of Utah spokeswoman Melodie Rydalch said in a statement Friday evening.

Huggins made an initial appearance in federal court late Friday and will remain in custody until a detention hearing Tuesday afternoon, Rydalch said. It was not immediately clear where Huggins was being held.

If convicted on the unregistered-device charge, Huggins could face 10 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

Huggins built an improvised explosive device and possessed explosive materials and instructions for making bombs, FBI Special Agent Steven Cadiz said in court documents.

In February, a “concerned citizen” contacted Tremonton police to report Huggins threatened to blow up a Bible study group and had buried bombs around the city of Ogden, Cadiz said.

Police later determined that information was incorrect, but Huggins had threatened to blow up the Tremonton Police Department and wanted to assassinate two officers before the bombing, according to court records. He also planned to blow up bridges and other infrastructure to prevent emergency responders from being able to help, the court records state.

Huggins stated he believed the attacks would cause the community to rise up against the government, investigators said.

It’s unclear in the court documents where and when Huggins made the threats.

Local investigators were helped by the FBI and a confidential informant, who met with Huggins on multiple occasions, Cadiz said. At one point, the informant bought a USB thumb drive from Huggins that contained instructions on how to manufacture drugs, bombs, booby traps and other information.

The informant told investigators that Huggins had videos of himself blowing up a vehicle.

All of the information was kept on a computer in a trailer, where Huggins also later manufactured shrapnel and explosive devices, the informant told investigators.

An undercover FBI agent later met with Huggins and discussed bomb making, Cadiz said in court records. Huggins later offered to make a bomb for the agent, according to court records.

On Monday and Tuesday of this week, the confidential informant told Tremonton police that Huggins had been making explosive devices and shrapnel to put inside them.

Huggins met with the undercover agent and the confidential informant at a Tremonton restaurant on Thursday, Cadiz said. After more discussion of bomb-making, Huggins was arrested, Cadiz said.

Investigators searching Huggins’ trailer later found a homemade explosive device similar to a grenade and other explosive material, Cadiz said.

Rydalch said the investigation was ongoing and Huggins could face additional charges when the case is presented to a grand jury.

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Utah Man Arrested In Bomb Plot To Cause Uprising Against Government

[Reuters](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Utah Man Suspected Of Antigovernment Plot To Bomb Police Station

By Maya Srikrishnan

[Los Angeles Times](#), July 14, 2014

A 47-year-old Utah man is jailed, accused of plotting to kill police officers and blow up a police station in the town of Tremonton to start an uprising against the government, according to the U.S. Attorney’s office.

John Huggins was arrested Tuesday and appeared in federal court Friday afternoon, charged with possessing an unregistered destructive device, Melodie Rydalch, spokeswoman for the U.S. Attorney’s office in Utah, said in a statement.

He will remain in custody until a detention hearing Tuesday, Rydalch said. If convicted, Huggins could face up to 10 years in prison and \$10,000 in fines, she said.

According to court documents, Huggins built an improvised explosive device and possessed explosive materials and instructions for making bombs.

A “concerned citizen” contacted Tremonton police in February to report that Huggins had threatened to blow up a Bible study group and had buried bombs around the city of Ogden, FBI Special Agent Steven Cadiz said in the court papers. Tremonton is about 35 miles north of Ogden.

Although the information was inaccurate, police learned Huggins had threatened to blow up the Tremonton Police Department, the documents allege. He also wanted to assassinate two officers before the bombing and blow up bridges and other infrastructure to prevent emergency responders from being able to help, according to the criminal complaint.

Huggins said he believed the attacks would cause the community to rise up against the government, investigators said in the documents.

The FBI and a confidential informant who met with Huggins helped local investigators, according to the documents. At one point, the papers said, the informant got a USB drive from Huggins containing instructions on how to manufacture drugs, bombs and booby traps.

The informant told investigators that Huggins had videos of himself blowing up a vehicle, the court papers said. All of the information was kept on a computer in a trailer, where Huggins also manufactured shrapnel and explosive devices, the informant told investigators.

An undercover FBI agent later met with Huggins and discussed bomb making, during which Huggins offered to make a bomb for the agent, Cadiz said in court records.

On Monday and Tuesday, the informant told police that Huggins was making explosive devices and shrapnel to put inside them. Huggins met with the undercover agent and the informant at a Tremonton restaurant Thursday, Cadiz said. After discussing bomb-making again, he was arrested.

Investigators found a homemade explosive device similar to a grenade while searching his trailer after the arrest, Cadiz said in the court documents.

Rydalch said the investigation was ongoing and additional charges may be presented when the case comes before a grand jury.

Police, FBI Arrest Tremonton Man In Bomb Plot

[Ogden \(UT\) Standard-Examiner](#), July 11, 2014

...
TREMONTON – A joint investigation between local police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation has led to the arrest of a man they say threatened to bomb several targets, including the Tremonton Police Department in order to instigate an uprising against the government.

John Huggins, 47, was under surveillance by the FBI after an anonymous tip came into local police that he was planning to blow up his Bible study group. Police say they learned that he was allegedly planning to blow up the police department along with several bridges and infrastructure points to prevent assistance from showing up, according to court documents.

Huggins had allegedly targeted two police officers to kill before initiating his plan.

Police say Huggins goal was to get the community to rise up in defiance of the government.

An informant for the police met with Huggins several times to discussed explosives. The informant purchased a USB drive from Huggins containing various plans to manufacture drugs, explosives and booby traps.

Huggins showed the informant a home-made explosive, built out of a 5-Hour Energy bottle, held together by glue and covered with shrapnel.

On Thursday, an undercover agent made contact with Huggins, posing as like-minded individual with an interest in explosives. The agent was able to convince Huggins to sell him schematics on explosives and agreed to build him one.

After the meeting, Huggins was arrested.

A search warrant on his home revealed the grenade-like, explosive device. Bomb technicians determined that the device was not armed with the chemicals needed, but could still function with the ingredients in Huggins' home.

Huggins was indicted in U.S. District Court on the charge of possession an unregistered destructive device. The maximum penalty if found guilty is 10 years in prison.

The case will be reviewed by a grand jury who may decide to press additional charges.

Huggins has had multiple run ins with police, including drug and weapon charges in the past decade. The Cache County Bomb Squad has dealt with disarming Huggins' explosives before.

Huggins will remain in custody until a detention hearing on July 15.

OTHER CYBER NEWS

Insurers Struggle To Get Grip On Burgeoning Cyber Risk Market

By Leigh Thomas And Jim Finkle, Reuters
[Reuters](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

FBI Cyber Expert Is Ex-discount Furniture Salesman

By Joe Mandak
[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

PITTSBURGH (AP) – J. Keith Mularski's world has expanded greatly since he stopped selling discount furniture to join the FBI in 1998. Especially since he transferred from Washington, D.C., in 2005 to fill a vacancy in the Pittsburgh field office's cyber squad – which he now heads.

Since then, Supervisory Special Agent Mularski has been recognized as a foremost expert on cybercrime. His profile has risen even more since the Justice Department used Mularski's sleuthing to bring two indictments with worldwide ramifications.

In May, five Chinese Army intelligence officers were charged with stealing trade secrets from major manufacturers including U.S. Steel, Alcoa and Westinghouse.

In June, a Russian man was charged with leading a ring that infected hundreds of thousands of computers with identity-thieving software, then using the stolen information to drain \$100 million from bank accounts worldwide.

Mularski, 44, said in April during an oral history interview for the National Law Enforcement Museum that he became a furniture salesman out of college because jobs were hard to come by then. He spent about five years in the business before joining the FBI.

"I was in private industry beforehand. But I've kind of always liked computers," Mularski told The Associated Press during a recent interview.

All 56 FBI field offices have cyber squads. Mularski chose Pittsburgh largely because of family considerations – he grew up in suburban White Oak, the son of a steelworker.

“It kind of looked like cyber was the wave of the future,” Mularski said. “The majority of all my computer training was just on-the-job training at the bureau.”

It has proved remarkably effective.

Even before the Chinese and Russian cases made worldwide headlines, Mularski was making cyber waves.

He made his reputation infiltrating Dark Market in 2006. The worldwide Internet forum allowed crooks to buy and sell stolen identity and credit card information.

Mularski infiltrated the network by pretending to be a notorious Polish computer hacker using the screen name “Master Splyntr” – a takeoff on the cartoon rat who guides the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

Mularski was inspired while watching the cartoon character with his young son: “He’s a rat that lives underground. It was perfect,” he said.

Mularski befriended the criminal mastermind behind the site and persuaded him to let Mularski move the operation onto new computer servers. The servers happened to belong to the FBI, which led to more than 60 arrests worldwide.

Misha Glenny, a British journalist who specializes in cybercrime, wrote a book about the case called “Dark Market, How Hackers Became the New Mafia.”

“Keith Mularski is not without technical ability, but his real talent lies in convincing experienced cybercriminals that he is one of them and not a law enforcement officer,” Glenny told the AP.

His aw-shucks demeanor also makes him an ideal team player.

“He has an understanding of the whole grid, and then he develops relationships, whether it’s with victims, the private sector, and our international partners,” said David Hickton, the U.S. attorney in Pittsburgh.

Those partnerships are important because the United States doesn’t have extradition treaties to bring the Chinese and Russian suspects here for prosecution. Those defendants could be arrested if they travel into areas that cooperate with the U.S., but Hickton and Mularski said that’s not the only purpose served by those indictments.

“The best result is to be able to get cuffs on a guy,” Mularski said. “But you have to measure how you can impact each (criminal) organization.”

In the Russian case, Mularski got a federal judge in Pittsburgh to allow the Justice Department to monitor some 350,000 computers infected with malicious software, so the thievery could be stopped.

The Chinese indictment, meanwhile, was a “put up” to the Chinese government’s rumblings that the U.S. government should “shut up” about ongoing cyberspying allegations unless they could be proved, Mularski said.

Some cases produce a more tangible result.

The Dark Market case led Mularski to Max Ray Butler, a San Francisco hacker whose home computer was found by the FBI with 1.8 million stolen credit card numbers on it. Butler, who changed his name to Max Ray Vision, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 13 years in prison – the longest sentence yet handed down in a U.S. hacking case. He was also ordered to repay banks \$27.5 million, the cost of replacing all the cards he stole.

“This was all just really organized crime with a computer,” Mularski said. “It’s traditional sleuthing but in a 21st-century way.”

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Congress Is Overdue In Dealing With The Cybersecurity Threat

By Editorial Board

[Washington Post](#), July 14, 2014

THE INTERNET security company Symantec revealed recently that a group of hackers known as Dragonfly infiltrated malware into legitimate software belonging to three manufacturers of industrial control systems — the stuff that controls factories and power grids. In one case, the contaminated control software was downloaded 250 times by unsuspecting users before the compromise was discovered.

This kind of cyberattack is not new, but it is audacious and dangerous. One of the first such assaults was the Stuxnet campaign, which had sabotage as its primary goal, against the Iranian nuclear program. By contrast, Dragonfly was a multi-pronged infiltrator, aimed at cyber-

espionage and gaining long-term access to computers, with sabotage as a future option, perhaps flicking off the electrical power to a city or shutting down a factory. Dragonfly probably was state-sponsored from somewhere in Eastern Europe.

Not alarmed? Then take a look at a proposal from the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association. According to Bloomberg, Wall Street’s biggest trade group has suggested setting up a high-level U.S. government-industry council to deal with cyberthreats. What do they fear? Attacks that “destroy data and machines” and could lead to runs on financial institutions, loss of confidence in the banking system and “devastating” consequences for the economy. The group predicts attacks could result in “account balances and books and records being converted to zeros,” Bloomberg reported on July 8.

A torrent of cyberattacks — disruption, espionage, theft — is costing U.S. business and government billions of dollars. This is reality, not science fiction. In March, Chinese hackers broke into the U.S. government agency that houses the personal information of all federal employees.

For several years, it has been clear to many in government and the private sector that the nation needs to vastly improve protection of its private networks and that only government has the sophisticated tools to do that. But Congress has balked at legislation that would ease the necessary cooperation.

Thus it was encouraging to see the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence vote 12 to 3 last week to approve a cybersecurity bill that would begin to bridge the gap. Its prospects in the full Senate are uncertain. A similar bill passed the House last year.

Understandably, the legislation has triggered alarms about invasion of privacy. There are legitimate fears that the National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command will, in pursuit of cybersecurity, scoop up too much information about Americans. Certainly, the disclosures by former contractor Edward Snowden about how much the NSA vacuumed up in telephone and Internet data have undermined confidence in the government. But this supercharged privacy debate should not stand in the way of a good cybersecurity bill. Rather, it is a reason for Congress to build in workable and sufficient privacy protections and get on with passing legislation that is long overdue.

NATIONAL SECURITY NEWS

US, Germany Vow Cooperation Despite Espionage Spat

By Bradley Klapper

[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

VIENNA (AP) — The United States and Germany put a brave face on an escalating espionage dispute, stressing on Sunday the importance of their cooperation to solving several global crises but offering little indication they've fully mended ties.

After a meeting on the sidelines of nuclear talks in Vienna, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry each extolled the value of the two NATO allies' work together on issues such as Iran and Israeli-Palestinian violence.

Steinmeier directly addressed the difficult time in the key trans-Atlantic partnership, without explicitly mentioning the reports of two German government officials recruited by American intelligence. The accounts have rocked relations, coming on the heels of revelations about widespread U.S. spying in Germany.

"Relations between Germany and the U.S. are necessary and indispensable, and that's for both of our sides," Steinmeier told reporters in German. Still, he acknowledged the recent "difficulties" and urged that relations "revive on the basis of trust and mutual respect."

Kerry said their discussions touched on Iran, Iraq and violence in the Middle East, where Steinmeier is going Monday.

"The relationship between the United States and Germany is a strategic one and enormous political operation," Kerry said. "We are great friends. And we will continue to work together in the kind of spirit we exhibited today."

Kerry, mustering up his best German, then offered Germany "good luck" in Sunday's World Cup soccer final against Argentina. But he made no mention, even indirectly, of the two countries' espionage troubles.

The most significant consequence of the spy reports was Germany's demand three days ago for the CIA chief in Berlin to leave the country.

That followed published accounts over the last two weeks that American intelligence recruited two Germans — a man who worked at the country's foreign intelligence agency and a defense ministry employee.

Those reports only added to growing friction and frustration over the last year since information leaked by former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden suggested U.S. interception of Internet traffic in Germany and eavesdropping on Chancellor Angela Merkel's cellphone calls

Washington has tried to bury the most recent dispute, speaking little about the substance of the allegations in public and trying to downplay much of the matter as standard intelligence procedures.

That hasn't played well in Germany, a country that prizes the sanctity of personal information and bears deep suspicion of government intrusion given its history of Nazi-era abuses and by East Germany's Stasi security service.

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U.S. And Germany Work To Play Down Tensions Over Espionage

By Nicole Lundeen

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Amid New Spy Scandal, Kerry Calls U.S. And Germany 'Great Friends'

[Reuters](#), July 13, 2014

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US-German Spy Dispute Prompts Pledge To Improve Relationship

By Patrick Donahue And Sangwon Yoon

[Bloomberg News](#), July 14, 2014

The top U.S. and German diplomats discussed a dispute over American espionage practices in a bid to resolve their alliance's most serious diplomatic conflict in a decade.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier met privately yesterday for about an hour while in Vienna for negotiations over Iran's nuclear program.

"The German-American relationship is essential and indispensable and that goes for us both," Steinmeier told reporters in the Austrian capital. "We'll continue to work on our relationship on the basis of trust and mutual respect."

Chancellor Angela Merkel renewed her objections to what she called the U.S.'s Cold War-style intelligence gathering even as she sought to prevent the dispute to get in the way of other joint projects. The U.S. and Germany have tried to find common ground over trade and Iran's nuclear program.

"The relationship between the U.S. and Germany is a strategic one," Kerry said in the joint statement with Steinmeier. "We have enormous political cooperation. And we are great friends."

The ministers joined counterparts from the U.K., France, and Iran in attempt to overcome a stalemate threatening their July 20 deadline for a long-term deal over the Persian Gulf country's nuclear work.

Their talk followed the German government's expulsion of the Central Intelligence Agency's station chief from the American Embassy in Berlin last week. That move was prompted by two additional German probes into American spying. The U.S. tried to head off the expulsion by offering an intelligence-sharing agreement resembling one available to nations known as the Five Eyes – the U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia and New Zealand, according to a U.S. official.

Germany went forward with the expulsion anyway as authorities pursue leads to possible double agents working within the government for the U.S. The revelations have compounded anger in Germany over mass surveillance and tapping Merkel's mobile phone.

"We don't live in the Cold War anymore, where everybody probably mistrusted everybody else," Merkel told broadcaster ZDF on July 12. "The notion that you always have to ask yourself in close cooperation whether the one sitting across from you could be working for the others – that's not a basis for trust."

Still, the German leader dismissed a suggestion that the country may scrap negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the European Union and the U.S.

"We have differing perceptions on the work of intelligence services, but other political areas like the free-trade agreement are absolutely in our interest," Merkel said. "We work very close together with the Americans. I want that to continue."

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Bid To Deliver Aid To Syria May Set Stage For A U.N. Clash

By Somini Sengupta

[New York Times](#), July 14, 2014

The United Nations Security Council was potentially headed for a showdown on Monday over getting food and medicine to millions of needy Syrians.

The would-be diplomatic row is a measure of how difficult it is for the world powers to agree on much, least of all on the crisis in Syria, where Russia and the West support opposing sides in the civil war.

The draft resolution would authorize the United Nations to send aid convoys over four specific border crossings, even without Syrian government consent, but only after United Nations monitors inspect what was loaded onto the trucks.

The monitoring mechanism is tricky. It potentially sets a precedent, requiring aid workers in future crises to jump through hoops to deliver food and medicine. It is ostensibly intended to assuage the Syrian government's fear of arms being smuggled in, though in truth the supply of guns and rockets seems to be far greater than, say, grains and medicine.

The United Nations humanitarian relief coordinator, Valerie Amos, told the Council last month that aid delivery has become even more difficult since its last resolution, passed in February, urging the warring parties in Syria to lift blockades. Government forces in particular have repeatedly seized medicine from aid convoys, she said.

The measure's passage is far from certain. The draft text is not under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, meaning there is no immediate threat of enforcement.

It proposes vaguely to take "further measures in the event of noncompliance," according to a copy of the measure obtained by The New York Times. That would require another resolution.

But that could rile Moscow. The Russian ambassador, Vitaly I. Churkin, complained last week of “politicized elements” in the draft text and suggested that it left open the possibility of military intervention.

A Western diplomat said Russia objected in particular to language that the United States has pushed for: describing the humanitarian crisis in Syria as “a threat to peace and security in the region.”

That is something of a flashback to a sweeping 2011 Council resolution on Libya, authorizing member nations to take “all necessary measures” to protect civilians, which effectively authorized a military solution. Russia and China abstained on that measure. The United States voted for it.

Mr. Churkin said last week that he was wary of any language that could suggest justifying military action in Syria. The current draft contains no such explicit suggestion.

It does propose opening four border crossings that the United Nations has identified as most fruitful in getting relief to a large share of the four million people in need inside the country. Two of the crossings are along the frontier with Turkey, the third with Iraq, the fourth with Jordan.

Of the four crossings, three have been in control of militant groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and the Islamic Front. ISIS is fighting for control of the fourth.

The measure would “establish a monitoring mechanism, under the authority of the United Nations secretary general, to monitor, with the consent of the relevant neighboring countries of Syria, the loading of all humanitarian relief consignments of the United Nations humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners at the relevant United Nations facilities, and any subsequent opening of the consignments by the customs authorities of the relevant neighboring countries, for passage into Syria across the border crossings.”

The measure says the United Nations would inform the Syrian authorities, who control barely a third of the country’s territory, according to the United Nations, but it would not wait for their permission. United Nations officials have said the government has not given consent to its agencies to cross into parts of the country that it does not control. As a result, aid has reached only those living in government-held areas.

Russia has already vetoed four separate draft resolutions on Syria, the most recent aimed at referring the warring parties to the International Criminal Court.

Battle Over Syria’s Aleppo Nears

By Emma Beals

[USA Today](#), July 13, 2014

After more than three years of civil war in Syria, government troops are advancing to retake Aleppo, the country’s largest city, and possibly deliver a crushing blow to the rebellion against the regime of President Bashar Assad.

Defeating the rebels would give Assad a major victory as he prepares to be sworn in for a third term next week.

“It will be a huge loss for the revolution if Aleppo falls, as it became the biggest stronghold for the rebels after the fall of Homs,” said Baraa al-Jabli, 20, of Aleppo, who works with the opposition.

Assad’s gain would also be a loss for President Obama, who has called for the Syrian president to step down, citing mass atrocities against his own people, so new elections can be held. Obama recently proposed \$500 million to aid more moderate rebels in southern Syria, a move that follows complaints by Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and other critics that the president has been too timid in supporting the rebellion.

This week, both sides began preparing for what could be a fierce battle in Aleppo, the last urban area that Syrian rebels partly hold. If the rebels are ousted, that could end the uprising that began in March 2011 against Assad’s rule and quickly turned into a civil war that has killed more than 100,000 civilians.

The Islamic Front, a coalition of rebel groups, has called for reinforcements to defend the city, sections of which have been held by rebels since 2012.

Oubai Shahbandar, a spokesperson for the Syrian National Coalition, said Assad’s forces are “almost entirely dependent upon Iranian military forces and Lebanese Hezbollah militias.”

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory of Human Rights, an opposition-affiliated organization, said military reinforcements are arriving from Iran’s Republican Guard and from Lebanon’s Hezbollah to cut the rebels’ supply lines.

“Syria is really its four big cities. If (Assad) can retake Aleppo — the last big city contested by rebels, he will feel that he has destroyed the rebellion and retaken Syria,” said Joshua Landis, director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Oklahoma.

The rebels not only face Syrian forces, they’re also fighting the al-Qaeda splinter group called the Islamic State, which recently pushed into the Syrian countryside surrounding Aleppo. Last month, the militant group claimed control of a large part of Iraq and parts of Syria to create an Islamic territory that straddles both countries.

“We have Assad in front of us and (Islamic State) behind us — what can we do?” said Abo Yussef of the Liwa al-Tahwid brigade of the Islamic Front in Aleppo.

Holding the line against the Islamic State farther north in the province is tying up troops and splitting the rebels’ limited military presence, he said.

In Aleppo, rebels struggle with their limited weaponry, said Col. Abu Bilal, military commander for Liwa al-Tahwid.

“Everybody knows the rebels don’t have high-quality weapons,” he said. “We don’t have enough ammunition. Aircraft and the airplane normally fly very high and bomb.”

Rebel groups, however, are increasingly coordinated, he said. "We have a strategy to stop them surrounding Aleppo," he said. "I think it will be a long battle."

The \$500 million in aid proposed by Obama last month to train and arm the Syrian opposition would go to approved rebel groups as part of a larger effort to protect U.S. allies in the region — Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon — from a growing threat of Islamic extremists fighting the Syrian regime.

Obama unveiled the plan amid a series of internal problems within the military arm of the Syrian National Coalition — a sign of the difficulties within the opposition and the constant frustrations facing Western nations that have attempted to aid the rebels. Obama has said Western support is complicated by concerns that moderate rebels get the help, not the extreme groups such as the Islamic State.

The rebel coalition renewed its calls for arms as a way to stop Assad and thwart the extremists.

"The Syrian opposition has made clear to the international community and its allies that an immediate infusion of military aid is necessary to stop (Islamic State) terrorists from spreading and to halt the Assad regime and Iranian-backed militias from creating a humanitarian disaster on an unprecedented scale," Shahbandar, the coalition spokesman, said.

The threat posed by the Islamic State remains clear in the minds of Syrians who lived under its brutal rule for the latter half of 2013 before pushing the militants toward the eastern part of Syria.

The Islamic State claims it's building an Islamic territory, "but it is hurting people," al-Jabli said. He said civilians have been executed for not observing Islamic religious customs.

For rebels, the battle is not just for control of the city, it's a fight for survival. Most of those in the rebel-held part of the city simply have nowhere else to go. After months of relentless bombing in Aleppo by government forces, a pre-election campaign by the Syrian government allowed those remaining the option to be "pardoned" and return to government-controlled areas.

For many, this isn't an option.

"The fighters' willingness to fight is at an all-time high," al-Jabli said.

Contributing: Mohammad Haj Ali in Amman.

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Countering The ISIS Threat To Jordan

By David Schenker

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Tensions Mount Between Baghdad And Kurdish Region As Kurds Seize Oil Fields

By Abigail Hauslohner

[Washington Post](#), July 12, 2014

BAGHDAD — Iraqi Kurds seized control of two oil fields on Friday, vowing to use the oil to meet Kurdish consumption needs and raising tensions between the country's political and ethnic factions as they struggle to form a new government.

The Kurdistan Regional Government, which governs a largely autonomous region in northern Iraq, said Kurdish forces moved into two northern oil fields Friday morning to preempt what it alleged were orders by the government in Baghdad to "sabotage" a new pipeline that would be used to export oil via Kurdish territory.

Iraq's Oil Ministry accused the Kurds of seizing the Bai Hassan and Kirkuk area oil fields illegally, in violation of Iraq's constitution.

"They are ignoring the government of Baghdad, and they are threatening the unity of Iraq," said Assem Jihad, a ministry spokesman.

Kurdish authorities constructed the pipeline in recent years, without Baghdad's assent, but had not yet put it to use.

Since Sunni militants swept into northern Iraq last month, rendering a critical stretch of oil infrastructure inoperable, the new pipeline has become imperative, the Kurdistan Regional Government said in a statement.

"From now on, production at the new fields under KRG control will be used primarily to fill the shortage of refined products in the domestic market. This will ease the burden on ordinary citizens caused by the failure of the federal authorities to protect the country's vital oil infrastructure in the region," the KRG said.

The Iraqi government is concerned that the Kurds, who have vowed to push forward with a referendum on their region's independence, will seek to sell Kirkuk's oil unilaterally.

Kurdish forces consolidated their control of the contested city last month after Iraqi forces fled the area in the face of advancing Sunni militants from the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

The jihadists, who have since shortened their name to the Islamic State, now control an enormous swath of territory that lies between the Kurdish autonomous region in the north and southern provinces still under the control of the Iraqi government.

The conflicting allegations between the central government and the Kurds on Friday highlight Baghdad's growing isolation as the country edges closer to fracturing into what some analysts describe as a Kurdish region, a Sunni region and a Shiite region.

On Wednesday, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, a Shiite, accused the mainly Sunni Kurds of collaborating with the Islamic State by harboring terrorists in the Kurdish capital, Irbil. He also halted all cargo flights into Iraqi Kurdistan.

The Kurds responded Thursday by withdrawing their ministers from Maliki's cabinet.

On Friday, Maliki appointed five new ministers to replace the Kurds, the Associated Press reported. The appointments included a Shiite replacement for Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, a Kurd.

Kurds, Sunni Arab leaders and also some of Maliki's former Shiite allies have increasingly urged Maliki to step down. Critics accuse Maliki, a Shiite, of administering a sectarian government that isolated Sunnis and contributed to the eruption of Iraq's current crisis.

Sectarian killings have been on the rise in the past month.

Human Rights Watch said Friday that Iraqi security forces and affiliated militias appear to have executed more than 250 Sunni prisoners — a war crime — since the Sunni militants launched their assault in northern Iraq last month.

The group said it had collected evidence of five prison massacres between June 9 and June 21, most of them occurring as Iraqi security forces fled the Islamic State's offensive.

If the murders were carried out on a systematic scale, or sanctioned by the government, it would amount to a crime against humanity.

On Friday, Iraq's top Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, called on Iraqi fighters to respect the rights of all Iraqis, regardless of sect, in an apparent effort to quell the bloodshed.

Sunnis have blamed Sistani for inflaming sectarian tensions when he called on Iraqis to take up arms against the Sunni militants. Thousands of Shiite volunteers have since heeded his call, joining Shiite militias and heading to the country's front lines.

Kurdish Forces Seize Control Of Two Key Iraqi Oil Fields

By Sarah Kent

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 12, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Iraqi Kurds Bide Time On Secession, Despite Sectarian Strife

By Joe Parkinson

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 12, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Iraqi Kurds Take Over 2 Northern Oil Fields

By Sinan Salaheddin

[Associated Press](#), July 11, 2014

BAGHDAD (AP) — Kurdish security forces took over two major oil fields outside the disputed northern city of Kirkuk

before dawn Friday and said they would use some of the production for domestic purposes, further widening a split with the central government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

The takeover of the Bai Hassan and Kirkuk oil fields were the latest land grabs by Kurds, who have responded to the Sunni militant insurgency that has overrun large parts of Iraq by seizing territory of their own, effectively expanding the Kurdish autonomous zone in the north. Those moves have infuriated al-Maliki's government while stoking independence sentiment among the Kurds.

Kurdish fighters known as peshmerga pushed into the city of Kirkuk, a major hub for the oil industry in the north, and the surrounding area weeks ago in the early days of the Sunni militant blitz. But until now they had not moved into the oil fields in the area. On Friday, however, the fighters took over the Bai Hassan and Kirkuk fields and expelled local workers, the Oil Ministry in Baghdad said.

Oil Ministry spokesman Assem Jihad denounced the move as "a violation to the constitution" and warned that it poses "a threat to national unity."

The Kurdish Regional Government said its forces moved to secure the fields after learning of what it said were orders by officials in the Oil Ministry to sabotage a pipeline linking oil facilities in the area. It said production would continue, and that staff can return but will operate under Kurdish management.

Production from the fields will be used to fill the shortage of refined products in the domestic market, it said, in a reference to a fuel crunch in the Kurdish region. It also said the Kurdish Regional Government will claim its "constitutional share" of revenues from the fields to compensate for Baghdad's cutting off the 17 percent of the state budget — some \$20 billion in this year's projected budget — that is supposed to be given to the Kurdish region.

The central government withheld the funds after the Kurds began moving oil from fields inside the autonomous zone to Turkey independently against Baghdad's wishes.

The Kurds have said their earlier moves into disputed lands were intended to protect the areas from Sunni militants after the collapse of the Iraqi military in the face of the insurgency the past month. But the territory they seized has large Kurdish communities and has long been claimed by the autonomy zone.

In past weeks, the president of the Kurdish zone has said the areas won't be returned — including the highly disputed, flashpoint city of Kirkuk — and he called for Kurdish lawmakers to prepare to hold an independence referendum in the area, a move strongly opposed by Baghdad and the United States. Sunni Arabs and ethnic Turkmen who also claim Kirkuk as theirs have warned of a backlash if Kurds try to monopolize the oil in the region.

The Kurds and Baghdad have feuded for years over oil resources, disputed territory and a host of other issues. Yet,

they have also found room for compromise, and the Kurds have provided critical backing to help al-Maliki become prime minister.

But their ties are rapidly unraveling as the country fragments in the face of the Sunni militant blitz, led by the Islamic State extremist group. The country is effectively being cleaved along ethnic and sectarian lines — the swath of militant-held Sunni areas, the Shiite-majority south and center ruled by the Shiite-led government in Baghdad and the Kurdish north.

The conflict has also fueled fears of sectarian bloodshed between Shiites and Sunnis. On Friday, Human Rights Watch said Iraqi security forces and government-affiliated militias appear to have killed at least 255 prisoners in six cities and villages since June 9. It said five of the mass killings took place as the security forces were fleeing as militants advanced, and that the vast the prisoners killed were Sunni. Most members of the security forces and militias are Shiite.

The six incidents appear to be aimed at avenging the deaths of Shiites captured and killed by the Islamic State group.

In recent days, the divisions between Baghdad and the Kurds have grown increasingly bitter. On Wednesday, al-Maliki accused the Kurds of harboring Sunni militants.

The Kurds responded by declaring their politicians will boycott Cabinet meetings, renewing demands that al-Maliki step down.

Baghdad, in turn, suspended all cargo flights to the Kurdish region's two main airports. And on Friday, al-Maliki appointed temporary replacements for all five Kurdish ministers in his Cabinet, said Deputy Prime Minister Hussain al-Shahristani.

Al-Shahristani said he himself was appointed acting foreign minister to stand in for Hoshiyar Zebari, who was one of the most prominent Kurds in the government and has been Iraq's top diplomat for more than a decade.

The dispute comes as al-Maliki is struggling to fend off an attempt to remove him from his post by political factions — including the Kurds but also from former Shiite allies who blame him for the failures to confront the Sunni militant offensive and have long accused him of monopolizing power.

In Baghdad, national lawmakers are struggling broker an agreement on a new government and leadership, including the posts of prime minister, president and speaker of parliament, after April elections.

The legislature is scheduled to meet Sunday for its second session amid calls for the quick formation of a new government that can confront the militants and hold the country together. Al-Maliki, whose State of Law bloc won the most seats in the elections, has shrugged off calls to step aside.

The United States and other world powers, as well as Iraq's top Shiite cleric, have pressed for a more inclusive government that Iraqis of all stripes can rally around.

On Friday, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani again urged lawmakers to move swiftly toward a compromise, calling on them to "rise above selfish aims."

"The challenges ... threaten civil peace and the unity of the social fabric and forecast a divided and disputed future for Iraq," Abdul-Mahdi al-Karbalaie, a cleric who represents the reclusive al-Sistani, told worshippers in a sermon Friday in the holy city of Karbala.

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Rift With Kurds Widens As Iraqi Leader Ousts Foreign Minister

By Alissa J. Rubin

[New York Times](#), July 12, 2014

BAGHDAD — The dangerous struggle between the leadership of Iraq and the country's Kurdish minority intensified Friday, as the Kurds seized two oil production facilities in Kirkuk Province and the prime minister announced that he was appointing a temporary replacement for the foreign minister.

The prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, a Shiite, moved to replace the current foreign minister, Hoshiyar Zebari, a Kurd, with Hussain Shahristani, a Shiite from Mr. Maliki's bloc. Mr. Maliki was responding to a decision by Mr. Zebari and other Kurdish cabinet members to boycott cabinet meetings in protest of Mr. Maliki's searing criticism of the Kurds this week.

In a televised address on Wednesday, Mr. Maliki charged that the Kurds were harboring Sunni militant opponents of the central government and were even allowing members of the group known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, which swept through northern Iraq in June, to organize operations from Kurdistan.

The replacement of Mr. Zebari infuriated the Kurds, but it also appeared to solidify their resolve to move ahead with the constitutional procedure to select a new government, including a president, prime minister and Parliament speaker.

"With this step, the prime minister doesn't leave any room for power sharing," said Faleh Mustapha, who serves as the foreign affairs minister for the Kurdish regional government — a separate position from that of Iraqi foreign minister. "Had our ministers resigned from the government or if we had withdrawn entirely from the government, it would be different, but we are still participating in the political process," he said.

The oil production facilities in Kirkuk Province, on the border of the Kurds' semiautonomous region in the north,

were previously run by the Iraqi government and had a primarily Arab staff. The fields were taken over at dawn by the Kurdish pesh merga soldiers, and the Arab employees were asked to leave, according to Iraq's Oil Ministry and eyewitnesses in Kirkuk.

"These two are among the main wells producing oil in Iraq," said Assam Jihad, an Oil Ministry spokesman. "They are the spine of Iraq's oil wealth and produce 400,000 barrels a day."

"Half of this production goes to the local market and the other half goes for export," he said. "We condemn this constitutional breach and the violation of Iraq's sovereignty."

Iraq currently has a caretaker government, but lawmakers have been unable to agree on candidates to fill the top positions. Although it is not stated in the Constitution, the speakership typically goes to a Sunni, the presidency to a Kurd and the prime minister slot to a Shiite. Each group has a number of factions that first must agree on a candidate, and then ensure that the candidate has at least the tacit approval of the majority of the members of other groups.

Mr. Maliki's appointment of Mr. Shahrstani, a former oil minister, as foreign minister was made public by the Kurdish news media and then confirmed by members of Parliament from Mr. Maliki's bloc. By replacing the current foreign minister so quickly after the protest gesture of Kurdish cabinet members, Mr. Maliki was sending a clear message that he would not tolerate dissent from partners in the government.

Iraq's Top Shiite Cleric Warns Feuding Politicians

[AFP](#), July 11, 2014

Karbala (Iraq) (AFP) – Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the highest religious authority for Iraq's Shiite majority, urged politicians Friday to stop quarrelling and avoid further delays in picking a new leadership.

In a sermon delivered by his representative in the holy Shiite city of Karbala, south of Baghdad, Sistani reiterated his appeal for Iraq's fractious politicians to unite in the face of a jihadist-led offensive that has plunged the country into its worst crisis in years.

"The current and future challenges and risks Iraq is facing... require all political blocs to adopt a brave, patriotic and honest stance," Sheikh Abdul Mahdi al-Karbalai said, rendering Sistani's sermon during Friday prayers.

Parliament is due to meet on Sunday in a fresh bid to select a new speaker, president and prime minister – jobs that according to an unofficial agreement are allotted to a Sunni Arab, Kurd and Shiite Arab respectively.

The previous session ended in chaos, with some deputies walking out after trading accusations over the month-old crisis sparked by the militant onslaught.

Sistani's sermon said the situation required parliament to be "respectful" and urged MPs "not to overrun constitutional deadlines more than it already has."

"We've always asked politicians appearing in the media to refrain from hateful speeches and mutual recrimination, which further complicate the situation, but unfortunately we find that some are continuing."

Sistani, an octogenarian who lives in the nearby holy city of Najaf, is revered within Iraq's Shiite majority and his stature dwarfs that of any single politician.

But Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, himself a Shiite Arab and the leader of the religious party Dawa, has given limited attention to the cleric's appeals in recent days.

The premier has publicly lashed out at the Kurds for expanding their territory on the back of the jihadist onslaught and has also reneged on his vow not to seek a third term in office, despite being seen at home and abroad as an increasingly divisive figure.

U.N. Asks Europe To Take Syrian Refugees As Region Saturated

By Tom Miles

[Reuters](#), July 11, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Displaced Swell Syria Coastal Population By 50%: ICRC

[AFP](#), July 11, 2014

Beirut (AFP) – The population of Syria's coastal provinces, relatively untouched by the country's war, has shot up by 50 percent, sheltering one million displaced people, the International Committee of the Red Cross said Friday.

"Over a million people have arrived in Latakia and Tartus since the beginning of the conflict, swelling the local population by 50 percent," the ICRC said in a statement.

ICRC water engineer Patrick Luisier warned of the impact the influx has had, creating difficulties for both for the displaced and locals.

"Local resources are severely stretched and the authorities are struggling to cope with the most recent influx of families fleeing Aleppo and other areas directly affected by the violence," he said.

Most of the displaced who have sought shelter on the eastern Mediterranean coast are living in temporary shelters.

"Many families arrive here with very little, and living conditions in most shelters are difficult," Luisier added.

Syria's coastline is the heartland of President Bashar al-Assad's regime and of his minority Alawite sect.

With much of Syria engulfed in fighting and daily bombardment, few areas have remained relatively calm, among them much of Latakia and Tartus provinces.

The ICRC said it is distributing food, blankets, mattresses, cooking sets and hygiene kits in the coastal region.

In June, the ICRC and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent assisted 160,000 displaced people in Latakia and Tartus.

Syria's conflict began in March 2011 with peaceful protests demanding Assad's ouster that morphed into an armed uprising after the regime unleashed a brutal crackdown against dissent.

Guiding Germany's Young Muslims Off The Road To Jihad

By Alison Smale

[New York Times](#), July 12, 2014

BERLIN — BARELY five feet tall, Claudia Dantschke was dwarfed by the lectern when she spoke at a recent gathering of German experts on Islam, its challenges to democracy and especially the luring of teenagers from Europe to join the war in Syria.

But that certainly did not stop Ms. Dantschke from being heard. Stocky, plainly dressed, she is a breathless fountain of words, one of Germany's most prominent experts on its roughly four million Muslims, yet one who keeps her activities and research so firmly anchored in the community that she says she is rarely viewed as a threat.

Ms. Dantschke, 51, has counseled scores of families trying to prevent their sons and even some of their daughters from embarking on the path to jihad with extremist Muslim groups in Syria. The war is no abstraction in Germany, just a drive of a day or two away. That is particularly true for Turks born and raised here, who need no passport and no interpreter to enter Turkey and then hop over the border.

Officially, at least 320 young men from Germany have made their way to the war, though Ms. Dantschke thinks the number is closer to 500. About 20 to 25 of them, including one just 16 years old, have been killed, and around 100 have returned, officials say. Although Ms. Dantschke believes that only about 15 of those have real battlefield experience, the authorities fear what they might do with any skills they picked up.

Ms. Dantschke has gained a growing role in Germany's response because she was one of the first to raise alarms about the threat of radical Islam — in the 1990s, when few here even acknowledged Turkish “guest workers” as permanent residents. “We experienced hate propaganda against other groups in the population, intimidation of advertisers and violence and lack of transparency about organizational ties and positions of some Turkish Islamic groups,” she said.

Her life is woven from random threads of recent history: an upbringing in Communist East Germany that fostered a thirst for things foreign; a rigorous education as an Arabist; a jolt, with Germany's reunification, from secure state employment to joblessness; a rare entree into Berlin's Turkish community; two decades of fighting first right-wing and then Islamic extremism.

“I got to know West Germany through the Turks,” Ms. Dantschke said in a recent interview, noting that neither Turks nor East Germans knew West German ways.

The outcome is someone who knows the often insular Turkish and Muslim communities here from the inside, but also sets great store by family, perhaps from an early life of inward resistance in her family to Communism.

Puffing on one of her frequent cigarettes, she smiled at the recollection. “I know what it is like to live in a dictatorship,” she said.

ONCE, her father talked of seeing beggars on a business trip to the Soviet Union. The teenage Ms. Dantschke refused to believe it. Later, she herself saw food ration cards in the Russian city of Novosibirsk. “He was trying to teach me reality,” she said. “And I believed the school and state indoctrination more than my parents.”

Using methods originally devised to wean young East Germans off far-right ideologies, Ms. Dantschke tries to combat Islamists' appeal to German youths, an attraction that has intensified over the past year. Recruiters give away Qurans or proselytize as fundamentalist Salafi preachers. Jihadis post German-language videos extolling their new life. Ms. Dantschke monitors it all.

“The family is really the only window out of this circle,” said Ms. Dantschke, who has written several handbooks and essays on Salafi beliefs, the radicalization of youths and extreme Islamic groups. “If you leave the family alone, then radicalizations have free space.”

Families must be prepared to stick with her program for years, she said, citing the experience of reclaiming young people from the far right. Of the more than 500 youths who have gone through the program, she said, only four have regressed.

One tough message to deliver, she said, is telling a mother or father that the serene behavior that sets in when a drifting teenager first finds radical Islam is no cause for joy.

Next, Ms. Dantschke warned, the child often insists on regular prayer, or conventional dress and diet for the family. If less religious parents object, they only confirm the predictions of the teenager's new Islamic mentors, reinforcing their credibility.

From the 1990s until just recently, Ms. Dantschke lived, by her own description and that of friends, hand-to-mouth, working as a journalist and translator, or on social projects that teetered from one government or foundation handout to the next.

That made her — well before the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, a plot hatched in part in Germany — a “deep connoisseur” of Muslim groups, said Bernd Wagner, a criminologist who is also from East Germany. By 2001, he had engaged Ms. Dantschke to combat right-wing extremism at his Center for Democratic Culture in Berlin, where she now runs her program, Hayat.

THE greater recognition of the need to integrate Muslims into German society means that Ms. Dantschke’s voice now carries to the state and federal governments, and to the national news media.

She was born in 1963 in Leipzig, two years after the raising of the Berlin Wall. Her mother, a nurse, had been abandoned by her husband, a cartographer who fled to the West. Ms. Dantschke’s father, an engineer, fell for the deserted woman. Claudia arrived, but her parents never formally married.

Like many in the East, including Chancellor Angela Merkel, nine years her senior, the young Claudia plotted from age 12 a path that might yield a job with the coveted perk of foreign travel. Her 13th birthday present, a photo book of New York City, expensive at 27 East German marks, fired her ambitions even more. She devoured it thousands of times.

Original plans to study French or Spanish led eventually to Arabic, and after graduation from college in 1985, she took a job with the state news agency ADN on its Arabic desk. That came with another perk, a Berlin apartment, which she finally landed months before the Wall fell in November 1989, and still retains.

Reunification in October 1990 found her jobless. She stumbled into travel journalism for a Turkish travel agency in West Berlin. The owners had a slot on local cable television, and asked Ms. Dantschke to fill it. “I had no idea about TV,” she said. “Next day, I was on camera.”

In the summer of 1992, that job led her to Ali Yildirim, then the Berlin bureau chief for the Turkish newspaper Milliyet, who noticed that she was covering the Turkish community with a fresh eye. “I asked how much she got,” he said. “She said, ‘Nothing.’ I said, ‘I’ll double that.’ “

She and Mr. Yildirim remain friends, but after years of toil for little or no pay, she gave priority to her social work.

“I am content,” she said. In stark contrast to the way she mapped out life in East Germany, “I never think about tomorrow,” she added. “Something has always turned up.”

Including, finally, that foreign travel.

Last year, she made it to New York. “I kept saying: ‘I was never here. Why does it feel so familiar?’ Then I realized, through that book, I was always here.” The next goal is to return, by sea.

“But only on a cargo boat,” she said. “Not one of those luxury liners.”

Morocco Goes On High Alert Over Terror Threats

By Aziz El Yaakoubi

[Reuters](#), July 11, 2014

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UN Demands That Yemeni Shiite Rebels Leave City

By Edith M. Lederer

[Associated Press](#), July 12, 2014

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. Security Council on Friday demanded the immediate withdrawal of a Yemeni Shiite rebel group that took control of a key city near the capital, Sanaa, this week, along with all other armed groups involved in the fighting.

The Hawthi rebels captured Amran, about 45 miles north of Sanaa, on Tuesday after weeks of fighting with the conservative Sunni Hashid tribal confederation, one of the country’s largest, which is allied with Yemen’s Muslim Brotherhood group. Witnesses said bodies littered the ground and the Hashid fighters were nowhere to be seen.

The council demanded in a press statement that the Hawthith and other armed groups disarm, swiftly implement existing cease-fire agreements and hand over weapons and ammunition seized in Amran to authorities loyal to the national government.

Council members also demanded “that the current turmoil should not extend to other parts of the country, including Sanaa.”

Yemen, the poorest Arab nation, is facing multiple challenges including confronting the world’s most dangerous al-Qaida offshoot in several cities, a secessionist movement in the south and the Hawthith rebellion in the north.

The Hawthith waged a six-year insurgency in the north against President Ali Abdullah Saleh which officially ended in 2010, but fighting has often reignited, and attempts at lasting cease-fires have failed.

Arab Spring protests in 2011 forced Saleh to step down after 33 years and his successor, President Abed Rabo Mansour Hadi, has been struggling since then with a transition to democracy, promoting national reconciliation and restructuring the military and security to ensure loyalty to his government. Hadi has accused Saleh of trying to stage a “coup” to abort the transition process.

The Security Council “noted with concern that spoilers continue to stoke the conflict in the north in an attempt to obstruct the political transition.”

In February, the council unanimously approved a resolution authorizing sanctions against individuals and organizations threatening peace, security or stability in

Yemen and established a committee to decide who should face sanctions and to monitor their implementation, and a panel of experts to assist with investigations.

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Afghans Express Relief At Election Deal

By John Daniszewski And Rahim Faiez

[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Amid relief that a dangerous rift in the country's troubled democracy has been averted, Afghan officials praised a deal between presidential contenders brokered by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and said Sunday they hope to finish a full ballot audit within weeks.

Kerry unveiled the breakthrough deal Saturday night, with both hopefuls promising to abide by the results of the audit, followed by plans for the winner to form a government of national unity with participation of the losing side. The agreement followed a marathon series of shuttle meetings between the two candidates who took part in the June 14 runoff — former Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah and former Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai.

The two stood by Kerry's side when the bargain was revealed on national television and then spoke endorsing the agreement.

With many Afghans saying the deal exceeded their expectations from Kerry's two-day mediation, the chairman of the country's Independent Election Commission told reporters at a news conference that the commission is ready to start auditing all 8 million votes cast from 23,000 polling station within a few days and hopes to complete the process in three weeks.

Money dealers said that the value of the Afghan currency improved after the deal, and ordinary Afghan citizens in the capital and political leaders were univocal in their praise — although some cautioned that it must still be implemented and that the way ahead is still difficult.

The chairman, Ahmad Yousuf Nouristani, said additional auditors would need to be trained, but the audit can begin this week in the presence of representatives from both candidates as well as national and international observers. Audits can take place around the clock, with an aim of getting through about 1,000 polling stations results per day, he said.

The deal offered a path out of the impending political crisis in Afghanistan. Until Kerry stepped in, aided by U.N. representative Jan Kubis, both candidates had been claiming victory and even were talking of setting up competing governments.

There had been fears that a falling out between supporters of Ahmadzai and Abdullah could lead to civil war

in a country already contending with a serious threat from Taliban fighters, who are in the midst of a summer offensive.

Insurgent attacks across the country killed 11 Afghan security force members, authorities said Sunday, while a suicide car bomb wounded three NATO troops.

The deadliest attacks happened overnight in Afghanistan's eastern Laghman province, when insurgents raided Afghan police and army checkpoints in Aliangar district, said Sarhadi Zwak spokesman for the provincial governor. Zwak said the dead from the assault included six police officers and one soldier, while security forces killed 15 insurgents.

In the western province of Herat, insurgents attacked a police checkpoint early Sunday morning, killing one police officer, said Raouf Ahmadi, a spokesman for the provincial police chief. He said officers killed four insurgents in the assault in Shindand district.

An attack late Friday on another checkpoint in the district killed three police officers, he said.

Meanwhile in eastern Nangarhar province, authorities say a suicide car bomber wounded three NATO troops in an attack late Saturday in the province's Behsud district. NATO said the attacker was killed and there were no other fatalities.

Newspapers in the capital Sunday all highlighted the Kerry effort, with commentators saying it amounted to a renewal of the international commitment to backing Afghanistan's young democracy.

"People were seriously concerned about the situation, and worried about the return of civil war. Yesterday was glad news — everybody was happy," said Nasrullah Sadeqizada, a member of parliament from central Afghanistan, and himself a member of the Hazara ethnic group. "It means that America and the international community are not leaving Afghanistan on its own."

Kabir Ranjbar, president of the Lawyers Democracy Union, said he was waiting up until midnight for the announcement. "I was so worried. It was such happy news, with Kerry in the middle and the two candidates on either side of him. The fast action of the experienced U.S. diplomat was very important at this moment. It was a proper, important and sensitive act. ... If not for the U.S. coming in, we would be left with the warlords."

A shopkeeper in Kabul, Mohammad Gul Kakar, said business has been slow and "Today we believe prosperity is on the way. Thanks to John Kerry for bringing the two candidates face to face."

While the ballot audit continues, President Hamid Karzai remains in office. Karzai had been expected to turn over the reins of his presidency on Aug. 2, but the inauguration of a new president will now await the ballot audit.

Associated Press writer Amir Shah in Kabul contributed.

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An Embrace And A Handshake: How John Kerry Brokered Peace Between Afghan Rivals

By Lesley Wroughton And Maria Golovkina

[Reuters](#), July 13, 2014

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Afghanistan Breathes Sigh Of Relief Over Agreement To Recount Votes

By Hashmat Baktash, Shashank Bengali

[Los Angeles Times](#), July 14, 2014

A surprise agreement to recount all 8 million votes from last month's presidential election has dramatically changed the outlook — at least in the near term — for a country struggling to stand on its own as the nearly 13-year U.S.-led war draws to a close.

When front-runner Ashraf Ghani and his rival Abdullah Abdullah, who alleged the election was stolen, shook hands and embraced late Saturday, it not only eased the danger of Afghanistan splitting violently again along political, ethnic and regional lines.

The agreement, brokered by Secretary of State John F. Kerry, also underscored the United States' status as the indispensable power in Afghanistan. President Obama has sought to distance himself from Afghanistan and its frustrations, but in pointed discussions in recent days, he and Kerry reminded Afghan officials that their government and security forces would not survive without U.S. financial assistance.

After a month of belligerent talk, and Abdullah's threat to create a parallel government, Afghans were feeling a rare sense of relief Sunday, and a bit of hope.

"Over the past 13 years, the United States spent billions of dollars in Afghanistan and they shed their blood in supporting this country," said Basir Dadwar, a 43-year-old government employee in Kabul. "So it's their obligation not to leave us alone at this point."

The agreement Kerry announced after two days of intense negotiations with Ghani, Abdullah, President Hamid Karzai and other Western officials calls for an internationally supervised audit of all ballots and, once the results are announced, the creation of a national unity government that presumably would include members of both camps.

U.S.-led NATO forces will transport ballot boxes by air from the provinces to Kabul to be recounted — briefly

bringing international troops back into a central role after ceding nearly all the combat to Afghan forces.

After meeting Sunday with election authorities and representatives of both campaigns, U.N. officials said the recount would begin "without delay," and that the process of auditing the first ballot boxes — those already in Kabul — would begin within 24 hours.

"It would have been better if the impasse were resolved by Afghans, especially by President Karzai, but still it's a good sign," said Dadwar, a Ghani supporter.

Karzai agreed to postpone the Aug. 2 inauguration of a new leader to allow time for the audit to identify and discard all fraudulent votes, which is expected to take several weeks.

The delay has caused concern among some Western diplomats, who want a new president in office well ahead of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization summit in September and a major meeting of Afghanistan's donor countries in November.

U.S. officials need the new president to finalize a security agreement so that 10,000 American troops can stay in Afghanistan past Dec. 31 to conduct training and counter-terrorism operations. Both Abdullah and Ghani have pledged to sign that deal.

Experts called the audit deal a breakthrough, in light of how high tensions were running in the days before Kerry arrived. Last week, supporters of Abdullah rallied at Kabul's most important meeting ground, the traditional loya jirga tent where leaders gather to deliberate over the country's future, and pronounced Abdullah the next president.

Angry young men tore down a picture of Karzai, whom Abdullah had accused of supporting a conspiracy against him, in a bellicose move that the candidate quickly condemned. But it laid bare the divide in Afghanistan between Abdullah's supporters, who hail mainly from the country's smaller ethnic groups, and the powerful, southern-based Pashtun group to which Karzai and Ghani belong.

Ghani adopted a more measured tone, but has consistently maintained that he won the election. A preliminary tally by election officials gave him a 1 million-vote margin in the June 14 runoff, after he had finished a distant second to Abdullah in the first round of voting.

Although the outlines of the new unity government were not announced, both Abdullah and Ghani agreed to abide by the deal, and on Saturday referred to each other as colleague and brother.

"It's a shockingly good result, under the circumstances," said Graeme Smith, an author and Afghanistan expert with the International Crisis Group research organization.

"There's still a long way to go before we get a new presidential administration, but the chances are good that Afghanistan will make history with its first peaceful hand-over of power from one elected president to another, and that's no small feat," Smith said.

The relief in Kabul was almost palpable. Baryalai Noori, a 42-year-old salesman with a long beard and bushy hair, said the city's streets and markets were busier Sunday after several tense weeks. He quoted an Afghan expression not often heard these days: "We feel our wings are open today."

Plenty of obstacles remain. The election authorities who must conduct the recount under U.N. supervision have been tainted by serious accusations of favoring Ghani. Abdullah's campaign presented evidence against one senior election official who eventually resigned.

In 2009, Abdullah pulled out after a first round of voting that was marred by fraud, rather than face Karzai in a runoff. The scale of the cheating appears to be greater this time around, and analysts said that without a transparent recount and a credible unity government, Afghanistan could slide into ethnic violence even deadlier than that inflicted by Taliban insurgents.

"Both candidates have their supporters, and one side who fails to win a majority shouldn't be kept out of the government," said Noorullah Noori, a 25-year-old ironsmith who voted for Abdullah.

"We're happy now that the U.S. broke the impasse — otherwise, there is no telling what steps people would take in response to the fraud."

Special correspondent Baktash reported from Kabul and Times staff writer Bengali from Panchgani, India.

Kabul Prepares To Start Huge Audit Under Kerry Deal

By Nathan Hodge And Ian Talley
[Wall Street Journal](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Afghans To Alter The Government

By Matthew Rosenberg
[New York Times](#), July 14, 2014

KABUL, Afghanistan — The deal that Secretary of State John Kerry brokered to ease the Afghan election crisis with a sweeping audit of the vote was quietly built on an even more profound reshaping of the entire government system, American and Afghan officials confirmed Sunday: The sides have agreed to gradually create an empowered prime minister post after years of an all-encompassing presidency.

Nearly a decade after American officials pushed a Constitution that enshrined near-dictatorial powers for the president, it is a tacit admission that changing to a more parliamentary system — a fraught undertaking at any time — is now seen as crucial to holding the country together after years of mounting political crises and ethnic and factional hostilities, officials said.

The change was a central goal for the candidate Abdullah Abdullah, who has brought the entire political

system to the brink with accusations of rampant fraud and threats to form a breakaway government, according to officials who were close to the negotiations.

They, like other American and Afghan officials who confirmed the agreement, spoke on the condition of anonymity because the details had not yet been worked out. They stressed that only a "framework" had been accepted in talks with Mr. Kerry, but they all agreed on its outlines.

The candidate who is declared president after a complete vote audit in the coming weeks would then appoint either the loser, or that candidate's nominee, to become a "chief executive" for the government, with powers to be agreed on later. Then, in the following two or three years, the Constitution would be amended to create a parliamentary democracy with a prime minister as head of government and a president as the head of state.

That timeline puts important decisions off into a very indefinite future, and will revive a debate that deeply divided Afghan officials a decade ago, with some arguing then that a parliamentary system risked instability.

With no assurances even that the auditing for fraud will go smoothly over the next month, or that the result will be widely accepted, the change then would require a successful parliamentary election and the Afghan equivalent of a constitutional convention, all under the continuing threat of Taliban offensives to seize territory.

More immediately, the two candidates, Mr. Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani, despite the recent tensions, are in the coming weeks to divvy up cabinet posts, governorships and other jobs as Afghan and international elections officials review each one of the more than eight million votes cast in the June 14 runoff.

Both Mr. Abdullah and Mr. Ghani pledged to accept the results and form a national unity government when they announced the deal with Mr. Kerry on Saturday. But the only details they gave were about the audit; all three made vague references to a "political framework" without elaborating.

But Afghan and American officials said Sunday that repeated election crises had made it clear that the Afghan government in its current form rewarded the winner of presidential elections too richly, and cut out the loser too thoroughly for a country with a history of civil strife that has often cut along ethnic and regional lines. Though the plan does not explicitly account for those differences, officials said, the hard lessons of the recent weeks were a signal that Afghanistan's divides could no longer be denied out of existence.

In essence, Afghan and Western officials had concluded that the only way to hold Afghanistan together in the coming years, as NATO-led combat forces withdraw and the West steps further into the background, was to embrace what divides its people in hopes of creating a government that could keep them united.

Though the deal brokered by Mr. Kerry appeared to be a major potential victory for Mr. Abdullah, some in his camp expressed caution on Sunday. They said that if Mr. Ghani ended up winning, he would probably be able to control the majority in any constitutional convention, and might limit the changes made.

"I wouldn't call this a winning situation for us, not yet," said an Abdullah campaign official. "We don't know yet what is going to happen. We only have an idea. But it is better than what we had when last week started."

Afghan and American officials said they had been asked by their superiors not to discuss the political component of the agreement brokered by Mr. Kerry. One Western official, who was not briefed on its details, was told that it was too sensitive and that officials wanted time to make sure everyone was on board before talking more widely about it.

But not everyone got the message. Mohammad Mohaqiq, Mr. Abdullah's vice-presidential running mate, told the BBC Persian service on Sunday that in the national unity government agreed upon with Mr. Kerry, the loser of the election would become the chief executive in the government. The post would become the prime minister in two years, once the Constitution was amended, the report quoted him as saying. Other Afghan and American officials confirmed those claims, and added some details in interviews.

Similar setups, with dual poles of power in the presidency and in Parliament, exist elsewhere, like France. But it is a revolutionary break from what the United States created in Afghanistan. The irony here was that it was largely through the efforts of President Hamid Karzai, the one Afghan who American officials were most eager to be rid of after the election, that Afghanistan's imperial presidency did not stoke the country's divisions.

From the outset of his tenure, Mr. Karzai sought to carefully balance his government. He was a southern Pashtun, and so he put an ethnic Tajik in the No. 2 spot, and ensured that leaders of the Hazara and Uzbek minorities had prominent roles.

A sense of national responsibility helped drive Mr. Karzai's decisions, by most accounts. But there was also self-interest: He found over the years that the old Northern Alliance, a mainly Tajik alliance of militias that fought the Taliban, remained too dominant a force in Kabul to ignore.

Loyalists of the Northern Alliance, including Mr. Abdullah, who once served as Mr. Karzai's foreign minister, were spread among the army, police and intelligence service. Mr. Karzai could not operate without some kind of alliance with them, though that also meant keeping some of Afghanistan's most notorious and corrupt former warlords in his government, earning him criticism and scrutiny from the United States and other Western backers.

Still, Mr. Karzai has expressed deep opposition to the idea of a parliamentary system, fearing it would tear the country apart. In fact, his rivalry with Mr. Abdullah, who challenged him in the 2009 presidential elections, was centered on the issue, and he is widely believed to have backed Mr. Ghani, a former finance minister and World Bank official, in this year's runoff.

Asked about the deal brokered by Mr. Kerry, Aimal Faizi, a spokesman for Mr. Karzai, refused to confirm the details. "The candidates have not said it publicly yet so no comment from palace," he said.

What brought Mr. Ghani around to agreeing to the creation of a parliamentary system was harder to discern. Abdullah Poyan, a spokesman, would say only: "We never refused a national unity government. We know this is very sensitive."

Though Mr. Ghani had a vast constituency behind him in his fellow Pashtuns, the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, he had scant support among northern Tajiks, which would have presented a potentially life-threatening problem for him should he have won a disputed election amid accusations that his team had committed fraud.

As one senior member of the Northern Alliance asked Mr. Ghani before the election: "If you win, who will drive you to the palace? You need allies."

For American officials, as well, the support for the idea of revamping the Afghan government was born of necessity. This year's election crisis was the third in five years, including the 2009 presidential election and parliamentary elections a year later, both of which were marred by widespread fraud.

In fact, it was Mr. Kerry who had to come to Kabul in 2009 to talk Mr. Karzai into agreeing to a runoff against Mr. Abdullah, who subsequently dropped out of the race. "You can say that the idea here is to make sure that Afghans don't have to have negotiations to create an inclusive government each time they have an election," one American official said. "The political system itself, in the way it is set up, should be set up to be more inclusive."

Though there have been differences of opinions among American officials about it, the United States did not always see it that way.

At a 2004 constitutional loya jirga, or grand council, it was American officials who pushed hardest for a strong president, arguing that a parliamentary system would be too risky. American support helped Mr. Ghani and other Pashtuns overcome the resistance of Mr. Abdullah and his allies in the old Northern Alliance in that debate.

According to a diplomatic cable from 2003 that was released by WikiLeaks, Robert Finn, who was then the American ambassador, was reported to have told his French counterpart that "Afghanistan needed a strong president given all the vectors of power."

Carlotta Gall contributed reporting.

Iraq's Political Stalemate Persists As Militants Inch Closer To Baghdad

By Alissa J. Rubin And Suadad Al-salhy

[New York Times](#), July 14, 2014

BAGHDAD — As Iraq's deadlocked Parliament was again unable to reach a deal to name a new speaker on Sunday, Sunni militants carried out a raid near Baghdad, the Iraqi capital — a symbolically significant attack signaling their intent to move closer, even if only by a few miles, toward the city.

A severe sandstorm delayed flights, preventing northern Iraq's Kurdish lawmakers from traveling to Baghdad. The sand was so thick at times that it was hard to see across the Tigris River. Inside the Parliament, the atmosphere was similarly gloomy as last-minute deals between the largest Shiite bloc and the Sunnis appeared to be falling apart.

The post of Parliament speaker, which by custom is occupied by a Sunni, had been expected to go to Salim al-Jabouri, who in turn would name two deputies, a Kurd and a Shiite.

But it seems that a previous commitment by Mr. Jabouri to consider supporting Nuri Kamal al-Maliki for a third term as prime minister is beginning to fray. That, in turn, means that Mr. Jabouri can no longer count on the support of Mr. Maliki's bloc of lawmakers.

With such a hazy outlook, the inability of the Kurds to make it through the brown sandy fog provided a useful excuse for the postponement of the negotiating session.

As lawmakers took stock, militants of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, were already moving into Dhuluiya, a Sunni town 46 miles northeast of Baghdad. They bombed a crucial bridge over the Tigris to prevent soldiers from the nearest base from reaching the town and then easily overwhelmed the police station, killing six officers, according to a town resident and an official at the Interior Ministry, who declined to be named because he was not allowed to speak to the news media.

The local tribes are divided in their support of ISIS; a majority oppose them and called for help from the army. Some troops were sent from the two nearest bases in Samarra and Balad, but the soldiers from Balad, who were closest, could not get across the river at the most convenient crossing because it had been bombed.

The militants attacked Dhuluiya around 4 a.m. and took over the police station, said a doctor in the town who would give only his surname, Issa. "They brought a big pickup truck and loaded it with explosives and then blew apart the west side of the bridge so no support will come from Balad," the doctor said.

Then the ISIS militants withdrew from the town's center and were holding about 20 percent of Dhuluiya. Police officials suggested that the militants withdrew from the town's

center because they knew that sooner or later the army would arrive and they would not be able to fight them. The people in the area that the militants control appear to support them, residents and provincial police officials suggested.

The area just south of Samarra in Salahuddin Province remained dangerous on Sunday, with shelling overnight and a roadside bomb in Ishaki that killed four civilians and wounded two, suggesting that ISIS had not given up on the Samarra area where there is a shrine that is sacred to Shiites.

Iraqi employees of The New York Times contributed reporting from Tikrit and Diyala Province, Iraq.

Iraq's Political Impasse Stretches On

By Matt Bradley

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Iraq Parliament Postpones Decision On New Leaders

By Sinan Salaheddin And Qassim Abdul-Zahra

[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq's deadlocked parliament failed Sunday to overcome the deep divisions hampering the formation of a new government, making no progress on choosing new leaders who could help hold the nation together and confront the Sunni militant blitz that has overrun much of the country.

The legislature is under pressure to quickly choose a new speaker of parliament, president and prime minister — the first steps toward a new government. The international community has pressed lawmakers to put their differences aside, while the United Nations has warned of chaos if the political impasse drags on for too long.

But just 30 minutes into Sunday's parliament session, acting speaker Mahdi al-Hafidh announced he was breaking off the proceedings until Tuesday "due to the absence of any agreement on the names of the nominees for the three posts."

"There are still deep differences," he said. "We need more discussions to agree on the names."

Hopes had been raised that lawmakers might at least vote on a speaker of parliament after Sunni blocs announced late Saturday that they had agreed on a candidate for the post, Salim al-Jubouri. But even that proved difficult, and lawmakers dispersed amid mutual recriminations.

"We have presented our candidate for the post of the parliament speaker," said leading Sunni lawmaker Osama al-Nujaifi. "We hold other blocs responsible for the delay."

Another Sunni legislator, Saleh al-Mutlaq, said that Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki agreed to support al-Jubouri's candidacy on the condition that Sunnis back al-Maliki for a

third consecutive term. "This will not happen as we do not accept that," al-Mutlaq told The Associated Press.

Mohammed Saadoun, a lawmaker from al-Maliki's State of Law bloc, confirmed that al-Jubouri will not receive support without Sunnis first guaranteeing they will back al-Maliki for prime minister. "All sides that get our votes should be clear and give their votes to us," he told AP.

Under an informal arrangement that took hold after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, the speaker's chair goes to a Sunni, the presidency to a Kurd and the prime minister's post to a Shiite. The greatest disagreement is over prime minister, the most powerful position in the country.

Al-Maliki has held the post since 2006, but is now under pressure to step aside. His opponents, and even many of his former allies, accuse him of trying to monopolize power and alienating the Sunni community, and are pushing him to not seek a third consecutive term. Al-Maliki has so far refused to withdraw his candidacy, and points to his State of Law bloc's capturing the most seats in April elections to claim he has a mandate.

The candidates aren't the only point of contention. There is also disagreement on whether to choose the speaker, president and prime minister individually, or to agree to all three as a sort of package deal — which has been the case in the past.

The urgency for Iraq's lawmakers to bridge their differences and forge an agreement stems from the threat the nation faces from the Sunni militants who swept across much of northern and western Iraq over the past month, raising the prospect of an Iraq cut in three along ethnic and sectarian lines.

On Sunday, the insurgents barreled unopposed into the town of Duluiyah, some 80 kilometers (45 miles) north of Baghdad, seizing the mayor's office, police station, local council and courthouse, a police officer said. They also blew up a bridge that links the town with the predominantly Shiite city of Balad nearby.

The Iraqi military launched a counterattack that drove the militants from part of Duluiyah, but clashes were still raging around the police station and mayor's office, the officer said, adding that six members of the security forces and six pro-government Sunni militiamen had been killed in the fighting.

A medical official in the nearby city of Samarra confirmed the casualty figures.

Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

The insurgents are led by the Islamic State extremist group, which has declared the establishment of an Islamic state ruled by Shariah law in the territory it has seized straddling the Iraq-Syria border.

The jihadi group has been joined in Iraq by an array of other Sunni militant factions, including the Army of the Men of

the Naqshbandi Order — a collection of former members of Saddam Hussein's now-outlawed Baath party.

An audio recording purportedly from Naqshbandi leader Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri surfaced overnight, in which he hailed the militants' "historic victories" in recent weeks and reserved special praise for the Islamic State group.

"Our great Iraqi people along with their brave forces have achieved a great victory through a tough and bloody struggle since more than 11 years," the man reported to be al-Douri said in the nearly 15-minute recording. The authenticity of the audio could not be immediately confirmed, though it sounded like previous recordings made of al-Douri.

The fugitive al-Douri is the highest-ranking member of Saddam's toppled government to escape the 2003 U.S.-led invasion and elude security forces. He was the "king of clubs" in the deck of playing cards issued by the U.S. to help troops identify the most-wanted members of Saddam's regime.

In the recording, the man believed to be al-Douri said the militant offensive marked a "historic and great turning point in the nation's march of jihad to achieve its freedom and unity and to build prosperous future for coming generations."

He praised the tribal leaders and other militant groups who have taken part in the fighting, but especially "the heroes and the knights of al-Qaida and the Islamic State, to whom I send a special salutation full of appreciation and love."

Associated Press writers Ryan Lucas and Murtada Faraj contributed to this report from Baghdad.

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Iraq Militants Make Ground In Push Towards Baghdad

[AFP](#), July 14, 2014

Baghdad (AFP) – Militants seized part of the Iraqi town of Dhuluiyah Sunday in fighting that killed six people, an official said, as a new drive towards the capital entered its third day.

Four policemen were among the dead in the fighting for the town, which the militants took in a lightning offensive last month before its recapture by government forces in one of their rare successes of the conflict, district official Marwan Mitaab said.

The assault on the town, just 80 kilometres (50 miles) north of Baghdad, began early on Sunday and has since overrun more than half of it, including the police station and two local government buildings, Mitaab said.

A Dhuluiyah resident said that a large part of the town has been overrun, reversing gains made by police and residents, who expelled militants from the town last month.

After a period in which battle lines have been relatively stagnant, jihadist-led militants seem to be making a renewed push to gain ground, after overrunning a vast swathe of northern and north-central Iraq in their offensive that began in second city Mosul on June 9.

Security forces held off major attacks near Anbar provincial capital Ramadi and the strategic Euphrates valley town of Haditha on Friday and Saturday.

But militants were able to overrun two towns in Diyala, northeast of Baghdad, on Saturday, despite a security force operation aimed at regaining territory in the confessionally mixed province.

The violence comes with Iraq's fractious parliament due to meet later Sunday under heavy pressure to set differences aside and make progress on forming a new government to help counter the militant drive towards Baghdad.

U.S. Sees Risks In Assisting A Compromised Iraqi Force

By Eric Schmitt And Michael R. Gordon

[New York Times](#), July 14, 2014

WASHINGTON — A classified military assessment of Iraq's security forces concludes that many units are so deeply infiltrated by either Sunni extremist informants or Shiite personnel backed by Iran that any Americans assigned to advise Baghdad's forces could face risks to their safety, according to United States officials.

The report concludes that only about half of Iraq's operational units are capable enough for American commandos to advise them if the White House decides to help roll back the advances made by Sunni militants in northern and western Iraq over the past month.

Adding to the administration's dilemma is the assessment's conclusion that Iraqi forces loyal to Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki are now heavily dependent on Shiite militias — many of which were trained in Iran — as well as on advisers from Iran's paramilitary Quds Force.

Shiite militias fought American troops after the United States invaded Iraq and might again present a danger to American advisers. But without an American-led effort to rebuild Iraq's security forces, there may be no hope of reducing the Iraqi government's dependence on those Iranian-backed militias, officials caution.

The findings underscore the challenges ahead for the Obama administration as it seeks to confront militants with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, which has seized major cities in Iraq, all but erased the Syrian-Iraqi border and, on Sunday, staged a raid less than an hour's drive from Baghdad.

At the center of the administration debate is whether to send more military advisers, weaponry and surveillance systems — and, if so, in what numbers, at what cost and at

what levels of risk — to a country that American combat troops left in 2011, but that now teeters on the brink of collapse.

While sending American advisers to Iraq would expose them to risks and could embroil them again in conflict, waiting to act may also limit the administration's ability to counter ISIS and encourage the formation of a more inclusive government in Baghdad.

"There's risks to allowing things just to try to resolve themselves, particularly when there are interests that could affect our country," Lt. Gen. Joseph L. Votel, the head of the military's secretive Joint Special Operations Command, told the Senate Armed Services Committee last week when asked why the Americans should not let the warring factions in Iraq fight one another.

The Pentagon's decision this month to rush 200 troops, plus six Apache helicopter gunships and Shadow surveillance drones, to the Baghdad airport was prompted by a classified intelligence assessment that the sprawling complex, the main hub for sending and withdrawing American troops and diplomats, was vulnerable to attack by ISIS fighters, American officials have now disclosed.

"It's a mess," said one senior Obama administration official who has read the draft assessment and who, like two other American officials briefed on it, spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the continuing review and the delicate nature of the assessment.

The 116-page draft is now being reviewed by Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, the head of the military's Central Command, which oversees operations in the Middle East. General Austin could make changes or request additional information from the assessment teams in Iraq, but a final version is expected to be sent to Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and other top Pentagon officials this week, officials said.

Rear Adm. John F. Kirby, the Pentagon press secretary, declined on Sunday to comment on the draft assessment, saying in a statement, "Though the initial work of the assessment teams is largely complete, senior leaders have yet to formally receive or review it."

The assessment does not contain specific recommendations. Those will be developed separately by the Central Command and the military's Joint Staff once the final report is forwarded to the Pentagon and shared with President Obama and his top national security aides.

As ISIS advanced across northern and western Iraq, six teams of American Special Operations forces were rushed in to assess an Iraqi Army that was trained and equipped by the United States at a cost of more than \$25 billion, but which experienced a drop-off in training after the American withdrawal and has been greatly handicapped by Mr. Maliki's push to appoint commanders based more on political loyalty than military skill.

The assessment, which took two weeks to prepare under the guidance of Maj. Gen. Dana J. H. Pittard of the Army, graded the strengths and weaknesses of units down to the brigade level, examining their equipment, ammunition, sectarian makeup, morale, leadership and other indicators. Each unit's overall capability was rendered in a blunt color-coded chart: green if capable; red if not.

One of the assessment's conclusions was that Iraqi forces had the ability to defend Baghdad, but not necessary hold all of it, especially against a major attack. Already, the capital has been targeted by ISIS car bombs.

Several retired Army generals who oversaw the effort to build the Iraqi Army before the United States withdrawal said American advisers still could make an important contribution.

"We must not only commit the right number of advisers, but they must go to the right places — in the field with Iraqi security forces," said Michael D. Barbero, a retired lieutenant general who was in charge of training the Iraqi forces from 2009 to 2011.

"The advisory mission has inherent risks, but they can be mitigated," he added. "You can put security with them. You can be selective about where you put the advisers. We can apply the lessons learned from dealing with the insider threat in Afghanistan."

Rick Welch, a retired Army Special Forces colonel who worked with tribes in Iraq, said that advisers could encourage the Iraqi government to focus its attacks on ISIS and not its Sunni political opponents.

"Advisers could focus the military effort with more precision and discourage attacks on the Sunni population, which would remove one of the grievances of the Sunnis and help the political discussions go forward," said Mr. Welch, who added that advisers should be embedded with Sunni tribal leaders as well as Iraqi military units.

James M. Dubik, a retired Army lieutenant general who oversaw the training of the Iraqi Army in 2007 and 2008, said that Iraq's security forces could make gains against ISIS even if only half its divisions were effective, but that an advisory effort was very important.

"Even if half was whipped into good enough shape," he said, "that would be enough to turn the tide."

The new report's findings not only reinforce the initial confidential military assessments of the Iraqi forces but also align with public comments in recent days by senior Pentagon officials, notably Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

At a Pentagon news conference on July 3, General Dempsey noted the while Iraqi security forces had stiffened and were capable of defending Baghdad, they were not capable on their own of launching a counteroffensive and reversing the ISIS gains.

Mr. Obama has ruled out sending combat troops back to Iraq. And General Dempsey also emphasized any

American military involvement in Iraq would be different than in the past.

General Dempsey has signaled, however, that airstrikes are still an option.

In an interview with National Public Radio on June 27, General Dempsey ticked off three potential aims: targeting "high-value individuals who are the leadership" of ISIS; protecting critical infrastructure, like dams; and "blunting attacks by massed" ISIS forces — a possible assault on Baghdad, for instance.

Holder Expresses Concern About Terrorist Bomb Makers

By Brian Knowlton

[New York Times](#), July 14, 2014

WASHINGTON — Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. on Sunday expressed "extreme, extreme concern" over reports that bomb makers from Yemen responsible for the 2009 underwear-bomb plot are now in Syria cooperating with foreign militants there, possibly to formulate new, nearly undetectable explosive devices.

"That's a deadly combination, where you have people who have the technical know-how along with the people who have this kind of fervor to give their lives in support of a cause that is directed at the United States and directed at its allies," he said in an interview taped in London for the ABC News program "This Week."

Mr. Holder, asked about news reports that the Yemeni bomb makers are working to design an explosive device small enough to fit into a cellphone or a laptop computer — and that this was behind a recent tightening of security for many passengers flying to the United States — seemed to confirm as much without explicitly saying so.

"This is not a test," he said. "This is a something — we're doing something in reaction to things that we have detected."

In recent weeks, more than a dozen airports in Europe, the Middle East and Africa have started to require passengers to turn on their electronic devices while being screened by security personnel to demonstrate that the devices are not filled with explosives.

The United States, which requested those measures, has not said which airports are affected.

Al Qaeda's affiliate in Yemen has been linked to at least three unsuccessful attempts to introduce explosives onto airliners. In the best-known attempt, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a Nigerian, tried in 2009 to detonate a bomb sewn into his underwear but was subdued by passengers.

Mr. Holder has been in Europe for urgent consultations with his counterparts there about security concerns, largely flowing from the spreading conflict in Syria and Iraq, which has left extremists in control of broad parts of both countries.

In Oslo last week, he implored European countries to adopt tougher laws and American-style tactics, including undercover stings, to prevent potential terrorists from traveling to Syria or Iraq, where they could receive advanced training before returning to the West.

Asked on Sunday whether that threat was a “clear and present danger,” Mr. Holder responded: “I think it is. In some ways, it’s more frightening than anything I think I’ve seen as attorney general.”

He said the F.B.I. was investigating “dozens” of Americans who had gone to Syria and then returned home. United States authorities estimate that 7,000 foreigners have traveled to the region to join Syrian militants in their efforts to overturn the government of President Bashar al-Assad.

For now, the leading militant group that has extended its grip through large areas of the region — the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria — is preoccupied with consolidating its gains there, the attorney general said.

But, Mr. Holder added, “I think it’s just a matter of time before they start looking outward and start looking at the West and at the United States in particular.”

“I think we are at a dangerous time,” he said.

Eric Holder On Threats From Syria: “It’s More Frightening Than Anything I Think I’ve Seen As Attorney General.”

By Jaime Fuller

[Washington Post](#), July 14, 2014

Attorney General Eric Holder went on ABC’s “This Week with George Stephanopoulos” to discuss Republican complaints about the White House and the Justice Department.

Holder, who gave the interview in London, also discussed international issues, namely Syria, where reports indicate that terrorists are working to build undetectable explosives.

“It’s something that gives us really extreme, extreme concern,” Holder said. “In some ways, it’s more frightening than anything I think I’ve seen as attorney general.”

Most of the interview was devoted to domestic issues, however.

He saved his toughest response for Sarah Palin — who said last week that President Obama should be impeached for his administration’s decisions on immigration.

“She wasn’t a particularly good vice presidential candidate,” he said, amid a slew of Sunday show interviews that focused intensely on undocumented immigrants, who have been debated on the Hill and across the country this past week. “She’s an even worse judge of who ought to be impeached and why.”

Holder also dismissed Speaker of the House John Boehner’s lawsuit against the president, sparked by the administration’s handling of the Affordable Care Act.

“It’s a more, I think, a political gesture than a truly legal one,” Holder said. “Filing a lawsuit against the president that has no basis is not going to improve the quality of life for the American people.”

His response mirrored the exasperation Obama expressed over Boehner’s lawsuit in a speech in Denver last week: “You’re going to use taxpayer money to sue me for doing my job while you don’t do your job?”

Holder went on to say why he thought Republicans had been at such odds with Obama and him. “There’s a certain level of vehemence, it seems to me, that’s directed at me [and] directed at the president,” he said. “You know, people talking about taking their country back. ... There’s a certain racial component to this for some people. I don’t think this is the thing that is a main driver, but for some there’s a racial animus.”

He echoed and expanded on a speech he made in 2009 about race in America and his experience in politics. “I think we are still a nation that is too afraid to confront racial issues,” he said.

Holder’s Sunday show appearance was a rare one — he tends to avoid them at all costs, as Politico’s Glenn Thrush noted in a recent profile. Given that, Stephanopoulos made sure to ask Holder for his opinion on every political issue with a legal spin.

Regarding several of the state election laws being challenged by the Justice Department, Holder said, “I’m attorney general of the United States. I will not stand for — I will not allow people to take away that which people gave their lives to give, and that is the ability for the American people to vote.”

He also offered an opinion in the debate over the appropriateness of the Washington Redskins’ name, saying it “ought to be changed.”

“I think it is an offensive name,” he said.” And the Redskins are ... a team with a storied history that has huge amounts of support in Washington, D.C. And I think in the 21st century, they could increase their fan base, increase their level of support if they did something that is so, from my perspective, so obviously right.”

Obama Contends With Arc Of Instability Unseen Since ‘70s

By Jay Solomon And Carol E. Lee

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Kerry Tells Netanyahu US Still Ready To Broker Gaza Truce

[AFP](#), July 14, 2014

Vienna (AFP) – US Secretary of State John Kerry on Sunday phoned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to renew a US offer to help mediate a truce as Israel stepped up its military campaign against the Gaza Strip.

Kerry “highlighted the US concern about escalating tensions on the ground,” a senior State Department official said.

The top US diplomat also told the Israeli leader that he was engaged with regional leaders “to help to stop the rocket fire so calm can be restored and civilian casualties prevented”.

Kerry had condemned the militant rocket attacks from Gaza into southern Israel, and “stressed Israel’s right to defend itself”.

But he also “underscored the United States’ readiness to facilitate a cessation of hostilities, including a return to the November 2012 ceasefire agreement.”

The Palestinian death toll from the punishing Israeli air campaign hit 166 on Sunday, with another 1,120 people wounded, the emergency services said.

Despite increasing calls for a ceasefire, Netanyahu said the military was hitting Hamas “with growing force,” warning there was no end in sight.

“We do not know when this operation will end,” he told ministers.

Saturday’s death toll was the highest yet with 56 people killed, including 18 people who died in a single strike on a house in Gaza City, Palestinian medics said.

Top diplomats from Britain, France, Germany and the United States were due to discuss truce efforts in Vienna on Sunday on the sidelines of talks on Iran.

Britain’s Foreign Secretary William Hague said earlier as he arrived for talks that “there is an urgent need to bring an end to the violence in Gaza.”

Israel has warned that preparations are under way for a possible ground incursion, with Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman saying a decision was expected later Sunday, at a meeting of the security cabinet.

But commentators said Israel was not in a rush to begin a ground operation.

More Than 15,000 Flee Homes In Northern Gaza

By Nicholas Casey And Joshua Mitnick

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Netanyahu Defends Israeli Offensive In Gaza On U.S. Television

By Doina Chiacu

[Reuters](#), July 13, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Israel Extends Offensive As Gazans Seek Shelter

By Caroline Alexander And Jonathan Ferziger

[Bloomberg News](#), July 14, 2014

Israel’s airstrikes against Hamas entered a seventh day as militants in the Gaza Strip kept firing cross-border rockets and thousands of Palestinians fled their homes in advance of a possible ground invasion.

Israeli forces dropped leaflets yesterday and left voice and text messages urging residents in the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiya to leave because it intends to attack “terrorists and terror infrastructure,” the army said. About 17,000 Gazans of all ages sought refuge in shelters run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, spokesman Chris Gunness said on Twitter.

As trucks carrying tanks traveled south to the Gaza border, Israel edged closer to its first ground assault on the territory since 2009 and world leaders appealed for a ceasefire. The Palestinian Authority appealed to the United Nations yesterday for international protection.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at his weekly cabinet meeting in Jerusalem that Israel will act “vigorously in order to achieve the goal of the operation – the restoration of quiet for a long period while inflicting a significant blow on Hamas and the other terrorist organizations.”

According to Gaza’s Health Ministry, 169 Palestinians have died since Israel intensified its airstrikes on the territory last week while militants fired rockets on Israeli communities. At least 1,125 have been injured.

More than 130 rockets hit Israel yesterday and about 1,100 have been launched since July 8, according to the Israeli military. One of them hit an Israeli power facility that supplies Gaza, cutting electricity to 70,000 Palestinians in the territory, the military said in a text message.

Netanyahu is facing increasing pressure within his cabinet to mount a full-scale attack on Gaza using ground troops instead of relying primarily on its air power. While Israelis largely support the bombing of Hamas targets, the prime minister runs the risk of appearing weak if Gaza rockets keep hitting Tel Aviv and other Israeli cities, said Yoram Meital, chairman of the Chaim Herzog Center for Middle East Studies and Diplomacy at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Beersheba, Israel.

“At some point he’s going to be forced to live up to his rhetoric unless enough pressure can be brought to bear to produce a cease-fire,” Meital said.

Amid the barrage from Gaza in southern Israel yesterday, at least one missile was fired from Syria in the north and landed in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, causing a blaze responded to by firefighters, the army said. Israeli forces responded with artillery fire.

Israel’s Shin Bet security agency, meanwhile, warned that hackers in Gaza and elsewhere were planting phony messages in its name about terrorist attacks that didn’t happen, which could cause viruses or siphon data if opened. It also advised journalists to double-check reports they receive for authenticity.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry pushed for a truce in a call with Netanyahu, a U.S. official said on condition of anonymity to discuss the conversation. Kerry said the U.S. was willing to facilitate a cessation of hostilities, the official said.

Hamas-controlled Gaza has become a regular battleground for Israel and Palestinians since the Israelis evacuated the territory in 2005 after a 38-year occupation. Hamas uses the strip as a platform to attack Israel, which together with Egypt sharply restricts the movement of people and goods to and from the enclave. Two major Israeli air and ground offensives against Hamas’s military capabilities since 2009 have only temporarily quashed the rocket fire.

The U.S. and European Union classify Hamas as a terrorist organization.

The benchmark Tel-Aviv 25 Index closed up 1.3 percent in Tel Aviv yesterday as investors bet the clashes will have a limited effect on the economy and energy companies raised estimates for gas reserves off Israel’s coast.

The violence is straining the Palestinian health system, and the World Health Organization appealed for \$60 million to help prevent its collapse. Deputy Prime Minister Ziad Abu Omar and Health Minister Jawad Awad will head to Gaza for the first time since the Palestinians formed a Hamas-backed government in June, according to a government statement.

Dozens of civilian deaths in Gaza have prompted calls from world leaders for Israeli restraint. “There are always going to be civilian casualties, which we regret,” Netanyahu told Fox News Sunday. “But we have to defend our people, and that’s what we’ll do.”

No Israelis have died from rocket fire, although a 16-year-old teenager was badly hurt in an attack yesterday, Channel 2 TV said. Netanyahu accused Hamas of exposing Gaza civilians to danger by putting militants and weapons in mosques and hospitals, and near schools.

“We don’t know how long the campaign will carry on,” he said in comments to his cabinet, according to an e-mailed statement from his office. “It may take a long time.”

Israeli soldiers entered Gaza briefly on Saturday night to destroy a rocket-launching site and four were slightly wounded in an exchange of fire with militants, the army said. It was the first ground deployment since hostilities intensified though not the full-fledged ground incursion that Israeli officials, including Netanyahu, have signaled may come.

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Israeli Commandos Clash With Hamas Gunmen In Gaza Raid

By Nidal Al-Mughrabi And Ari Rabinovitch
[Reuters](#), July 13, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Palestinians Flee Gaza’s North As Cease-Fire Seems Elusive

By Steven Erlanger And Isabel Kershner
[New York Times](#), July 14, 2014

GAZA CITY — Several thousand Palestinians, defying the urging of Hamas to remain in their homes, fled from areas in northern Gaza early Sunday after Israel warned them through fliers and phone calls of major attacks to come.

Israel and Hamas seemed to signal little public interest in international appeals for a cease-fire as they continued their barrages. More than 100 rockets were fired out of Gaza into Israel on Sunday, with two intercepted over the Tel Aviv area, while the Palestinians expressed anger over the previous day’s Israeli bombings of a center for the disabled and a strike that killed 17 members of one extended family.

For the Gazans fleeing the north, some traveled in vehicles, some by donkey cart and some on foot. With some waving white flags, residents of areas around Beit Lahiya ventured south to seek shelter in United Nations-run schools, cramming into classrooms and piling desks out on balconies.

Rafik Said al-Sultan, 44, came with his extended family, walking two hours to this school, carrying the youngest of his nine children, Omar, 17 months. “We left because of the terrifying bombing in the night and because of the fliers that warned that any moving body after noon will be struck,” he said.

The leaflets warned residents in the north to evacuate their homes before what Israel’s military spokesman described as a “short and temporary” campaign against rocket launchers there sometime after noon. Hamas asked

residents to remain in their homes and ignore "Israeli propaganda," but many fled anyway.

Mr. Sultan looked over at the young woman next to him, and said: "I don't need another tragedy; this is the fiancée of my son." Three days ago, his son, Odai, 21, was killed in an Israeli rocket strike on the taxi he was driving, after having picked up two fares. Mr. Sultan said that he had no idea why it was attacked, and that it must have been the wrong car.

Isra Abbas, the fiancée, 17, was to marry Mr. Sultan's son in September. "The 1948 Nakba is now happening every four years," she said angrily, referring to the Palestinian exodus during the Arab-Israeli war.

"We pray to God there will be a truce, for our children and ourselves," Mr. Sultan said, looking around the crowded classroom. "We can't live here; there are no beds and few bathrooms, and men and women are here together."

Down the hall, his nephew, Muhammad al-Sultan, 26, had come with his wife and two young daughters on a donkey cart early in the morning after air attacks on his farmland. He conceded that many rockets were fired toward Israel from the area around Beit Lahiya. "Many rockets go from there," he said. "But Israel lands more on us."

The assistant principal of the school arrived early Sunday morning, and the courtyard was already full of refugees, she said. "It was a shock," she said, estimating that for the 31 classrooms she already had about 1,000 people. The principal, who argued briefly with a man whose family she said she had to turn away because the place was full, said she could not be quoted by name without United Nations permission.

On Sunday afternoon, a spokesman for UNRWA, the United Nations agency that deals with the refugees and operates the school, said that about 4,000 people were sheltering in eight schools, and that there was a capacity for 35,000 if necessary. Robert Turner, director of UNRWA operations, said "more are arriving by the minute," mostly from areas around Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun.

For Israel, poised between international appeals for a cease-fire and a decision on whether to send ground forces into Gaza, the goal now is to ensure a lengthy period of quiet from Gazan rockets, which badly wounded a 16-year-old in Ashkelon on Sunday. That can be achieved only by seriously degrading Hamas's fighting capabilities, whether by military means or through diplomacy, Israeli officials say, and part of the strategy, they say, is causing substantial "pain" to Hamas and its leaders, whose houses, only some of which have weapons stores, Israel is bombing here.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, who appeared on American talk shows on Sunday, emphasized that the Israeli Army was "prepared for any possibility" and that Israel wanted "sustainable quiet." In remarks before the weekly cabinet meeting, he said, "I don't know when the operation will end; it might take much more time."

There is little appetite for a return to the cease-fire of November 2012, which lasted little over a year and a half. Yuval Steinitz, the minister for strategic affairs, told Israel Radio that the immediate goal is "quiet," but "the strategic goal is demilitarization." He added, "We have to finally not be satisfied with a temporary filling, but do a root canal."

But as the bombing and rocketing continued, there was growing international pressure on Israel to settle for a cease-fire, called for by France, Britain and a nonbinding resolution of the United Nations. Those calls were intensified by the bombing of a center for the disabled early Saturday, killing some of the residents, and the mass funeral on Sunday of 17 members of one extended family, killed in a bombing late Saturday as Israel tried to kill Gen. Tayseer al-Batsh, the Hamas police chief. General Batsh, who was seriously wounded, was visiting his aunt's house after attending prayers in a mosque. Two bombs reduced the three-story house to rubble, neighbors said, and sent body parts at least 100 yards.

Local officials and relatives searched Sunday for more bodies before burying the family and a neighbor in a row of 18 graves dug in the same compound. Mahmoud al-Batsh, 48, a relative, said it was considered too dangerous now to bury them in the cemetery, which is near the border with Israel in northeast Gaza. "The Jews don't differentiate between the police commander and ordinary citizens," he said. Some argued in the heat whether the row of graves, dug Sunday morning and lined with cement blocks, was sufficiently aligned with Mecca.

In addition to members of the extended family, including seven children, a neighbor also was killed. Scores were wounded by shattered glass and explosive compression. There was no advance warning, residents said; Israeli officials have said they do not warn prime targets who they are trying to kill.

Munzer al-Batsh, the police commander's brother and a gardener, said at the scene: "The Jews eliminated an entire family: grandfather, father, mother, even the children, who were sleeping in the homes. They were civilians." He said he heard the bombs but could not see for the smoke and dust. When it cleared, he said: "There was a three-story house wiped out. I couldn't remember at first that there was a house there."

The death toll among Palestinians is 158, at least half of them noncombatants, and more than 1,100 people have been hurt, the health ministry said.

Abdallah al-Frangi, the Fatah official appointed governor of Gaza last month under a unity government with Fatah and Hamas, was there, too. He condemned the conflict, which he said Israel had started, and asked the United States to intervene. "The Americans are the people who can do it if they want," he said. "Netanyahu doesn't want to negotiate with the Palestinians and doesn't want a

Palestinian state next door.” Asked why he could not convince Hamas to stop firing rockets, Mr. Frangi said: “We cannot ask Hamas while Israel is continuing this aggression. If Israel will stop, I’m sure Hamas will stop.”

But Israeli military officials want to hit Hamas hard to ensure a longer lull before another round. “This operation has the potential for bringing a longer period of quiet by causing critical damage to the infrastructure,” a senior military official told reporters on Sunday.

Some Israeli security experts argue that Israel’s goals cannot be achieved without a ground invasion. If the objective is “to clean the territory,” said Gabi Siboni of the Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University, “the way to do it is to activate all your forces.” Hamas has a huge arsenal of weapons of all types, including anti-aircraft and anti-ship missiles, besides its thousands of remaining rockets, according to military officials. Many of the rockets and launchers are buried deep underground, they say, making it hard to destroy them from the air.

But Hamas is not an easy enemy to fight on the ground in a crowded urban setting. Hamas has built a network of tunnels and booby traps, and has long threatened to capture Israeli soldiers as bargaining chips for the release of prisoners. But it is also hard to eliminate rocket launchers from the air. Most rockets are loaded underground and launched through narrow slits in the areas between crowded houses, and those who launch them enter and exit the tunnels from other houses.

Hamas has its own motivations, said Mkhaimar Abusada of Al-Azhar University here. “Hamas has been politically isolated” since the military coup in Egypt closed down the tunnels and the Rafah crossing, he said. And Israel has tightened controls over Gaza since the November 2012 agreement after it discovered a Hamas tunnel into Israel six months ago, he said. At the same time, “the unity government with Fatah has done nothing for Gaza or Hamas,” which can no longer pay full salaries to its 40,000 employees.

“So Hamas’s main goal from this conflict is to end the siege,” Mr. Abusada said. “It can no longer survive this way, feeling suffocated by Israeli and blockaded by Egypt and ignored by Abu Mazen,” the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas. For now, Mr. Abusada said, with Hamas political figures in hiding, the military wing is calling the shots. Any cease-fire deal, he said, will have to be done with the Hamas political chief, Khaled Meshal, who lives in Qatar.

As for a ground operation to destroy Hamas’s rocket capability, “Israel would have to go deep into Gaza, and that would be very costly to civilians, and I don’t think the United States and the West are willing to absorb that much bloodshed,” Mr. Abusada said.

Steven Erlanger reported from Gaza, and Isabel Kershner from Jerusalem. Reporting was contributed by

Fares Akram from Gaza, and by Kareem Fahim and Merna Thomas from Cairo.

Thousands Of Gazans Flee Homes As Israel Promises To Press The Fight

By William Booth And Griff Witte

[Washington Post](#), July 14, 2014

GAZA CITY — Tens of thousands of panicked residents fled their homes in the northern Gaza Strip on Sunday after the Israeli military dropped leaflets from the sky warning those who stayed behind that they were risking their lives because a large, intense operation was imminent.

Residents in Gaza were whipsawed by growing anxiety and frustration. More than 17,000 people poured into makeshift shelters as Israeli commandos entered the coastal enclave early Sunday to knock out a Hamas rocket-launch site. A brief gun battle with Hamas militants ensued and left four Israeli soldiers lightly wounded.

The brief incursion by commandos followed the single deadliest Israeli bombing of the six-day campaign.

Israeli missiles hit a house where Gaza’s police chief, Tayseer al-Batsh, was praying Saturday night. The explosions killed 18 members of his extended family, including six children, and sent the top Hamas law-enforcement officer into intensive care, where he was clinging to life Sunday.

The latest violence in Gaza came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu indicated that Israel has no interest in halting its assault. Israel’s objective, he said at his weekly cabinet meeting, is to inflict “a significant blow on Hamas” that will yield “the restoration of quiet for a long period.”

That goal closely tracks Israel’s ambition in two previous offensives against Hamas — in the winter of 2008-2009 and in late 2012 — both of which succeeded in setting back the Islamist movement’s capabilities, but not for very long. In each case, Israel won just a few years of relative calm, even as Hamas’s rocket range and weapons arsenal expanded.

The cycle has come to be known in Israel as “mowing the lawn” — a temporary disruption of Hamas’s ability and will to fire rockets.

Pressure is growing in Israel to make sure that this time is different.

“The army should not stop until they wipe out Hamas,” said Avner Peretz, 46, just minutes after the windows in his brother-in-law’s house were blown out by a Hamas rocket attack in the southern Israeli town of Netivot over the weekend. “The last two conflicts, we came out looking like the losers. This time, we need to be the winner.”

So far, there's no doubt that Israel has inflicted far more damage than Hamas, but that's consistently true in this deeply asymmetrical fight.

There have been 166 residents of Gaza killed in the current Israeli operation, including 36 children and 24 women, according to the Gazan Health Ministry. The United Nations estimates that three-quarters of the dead are civilians.

Hamas and its allies have fired hundreds of rockets into Israel — including 130 on Sunday — but most have either landed in open areas or been shot down by Israel's sophisticated anti-missile system, Iron Dome. Several Israelis have been seriously injured by the rocket fire, but none have been killed.

Israel Radio reported late Sunday that two rockets were fired at Israel from Syria, apparently from Syrian army positions. Israel responded with artillery fire.

The U.N. Relief and Works Agency on Sunday called the situation in Gaza “devastating and unpredictable.”

In central Gaza, where Israeli missiles hit the house where the police chief was staying Saturday, there are 17 fresh graves, the bodies marked by mounds of earth, with cinderblock for headstones.

The police chief may not have been widely liked in Gaza — his police are aggressive and zealous in their defense of Hamas — but he was respected. The incidence of ordinary crime in Gaza is low.

One of his nephews, Ahmed al-Batsh, 26, lay in a hospital bed in Gaza, his head swaddled in bandages and his neck and back peppered with shrapnel. “More will die,” he said.

He blamed the United States for supplying Israel with \$3 billion a year in military aid. “These bombs are bought by America,” he said, staring through one good eye.

Israeli officials and analysts say there's little chance that Israel will try to destroy Hamas entirely, given the enormous cost and risk involved. But they say Israel has several key advantages it lacked the last two times it traded blows with Hamas.

Hamas is far more isolated internationally. The Gaza leaders have alienated their former patron in Damascus, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, by siding with that country's rebels.

And Hamas lost its closest ally last year when Mohamed Morsi, the Islamist president of Egypt, was ousted and replaced by a military-backed government that sees Hamas much the same way Israel does: as an enemy.

“Egypt is doing just about everything it can to make sure Hamas gets hurt by the Israelis,” said Itamar Yaar, a former top official with Israel's national security council. “They'll be happy if Hamas disappears.”

Egyptian authorities once looked the other way as Hamas used tunnels beneath the Gaza border to load up on rockets. But Egypt has essentially shut down all tunnel traffic.

Hamas's long-range rockets could be especially tough to replace. The group can produce its own shorter-range weapons for hitting southern Israel, but it has smuggled — through the border tunnels — rockets from its backers in Iran that are able to target Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and other major population centers in Israel's central core, Israeli officials say.

A senior Israeli air force official said Sunday that Hamas began the current conflict with “hundreds” of longer-range rockets and that the air force has made it a priority to destroy as many as possible.

But the official acknowledged that eliminating the arsenal is impossible.

“You can't stop the rockets,” said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to freely discuss Israel's strategy and tactics. “You can only make them decide to stop shooting. They have thousands of rockets, and you can't attack all of them.”

Hamas's battered finances may be adding to Israel's leverage. Hamas has been unable to pay government workers for months. Yaar said Hamas may be willing to promise a period of calm in exchange for Israeli cooperation in reviving the devastated Gazan economy.

But such a deal would require cease-fire talks.

Michael Herzog, a former top Israeli military official who has conducted past negotiations, said Sunday that Hamas wants a reopening of the border crossing with Egypt, the release of prisoners and money to pay Gaza's 40,000 government employees.

Israel, meanwhile, wants a guarantee of several years of peace, at least, without appearing to reward Hamas's militant behavior.

“It's challenging to bring this conflict to a conclusion, because the two parties have totally different pictures of how they want it to end,” Herzog said.

In Gaza, ordinary citizens were just hoping for a night's rest. Many of those who abandoned their homes in the north walked to Gaza City, with children waving white flags and mothers carrying mattresses. Farmers brought their donkeys.

“We came with nothing,” said Abdul Karim al-Attar, a farmer who arrived with his brothers, their wives and children, 38 in all.

Witte reported from Tel Aviv. Ruth Eglash in Jerusalem and Islam Abdel Karim in Gaza contributed to this report.

Israel Warns Of More Strikes, 1000s Take Shelter

By Joel Greenberg

[McClatchy](#), July 14, 2014

JERUSALEM — Thousands of people in the Gaza Strip fled their homes and took shelter in United Nations schools Sunday after the Israeli army ordered them to evacuate in

advance of intensified air strikes in the northern part of the coastal enclave.

As the reported Palestinian death toll climbed past 160 in Israel's offensive against the militant Islamist group Hamas, which controls Gaza, there were fresh diplomatic efforts to broker a ceasefire but no signs of a breakthrough.

Israel's security cabinet met to consider its next moves, and Secretary of State John Kerry spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a bid to prevent further escalation.

But the mass displacement in the northern Gaza Strip threatened to turn the worsening fighting into a humanitarian crisis, with aid groups reporting damage to power and water lines from Israeli bombardments and hospitals running out of supplies.

Christopher Gunness, spokesman for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, said that "thousands of people are on the move," and that about 17,000 displaced people had sought shelter in the agency's schools.

People came on foot, by donkey cart and in vehicles piled with bedding and personal belongings, quickly filling school compounds that were hastily turned into temporary shelters.

"The situation in the Gaza Strip remains devastating and unpredictable," Gunness said.

Gaza militants continued firing rockets deep into Israel, reaching the outskirts of the northern port city of Haifa, about 100 miles away. Sirens wailed in the Tel Aviv area and near Jerusalem as people took cover in shelters and safe rooms.

In the southern coastal city of Ashkelon, a 16-year old was seriously wounded by shrapnel when an incoming rocket exploded as he returned home after venturing out to get a haircut, his father said.

UN officials said that at least 70 percent of the Palestinians killed in the strikes on Gaza were civilians, and they included at least 32 children. More than 1,100 have been injured, according to UN figures.

The Israeli human rights group B'tselem said that 52 people, many of them civilians, died in strikes that targeted family homes of suspected militants. B'tselem said such attacks violated international law. The army asserts that the houses were used by militants to direct their activities and therefore legitimate military targets.

In a strike late Saturday that targeted Tayseer al-Batsh, the Gaza police chief, at least 18 people were killed and he was seriously wounded, according to local reports. People who had left an adjacent mosque were apparently also hit in the strike, leading to the large number of casualties, an Israeli military official said.

The army said it was checking the circumstances of another strike Saturday that hit a home for the handicapped in the town of Beit Lahiya, killing two disabled women living in

the building. Televised images of the site showed mangled wheelchairs among the rubble.

In remarks before the weekly meeting of his cabinet, Netanyahu put the blame for the civilian casualties squarely on Hamas, accusing it of hiding behind civilians.

"Hamas uses the residents of Gaza as human shields and it is bringing disaster to the citizens of Gaza, so the responsibility for any harm to the citizens of Gaza – which we regret – is borne solely by Hamas and its partners," he said.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas asked the UN for international protection for the Palestinians, handing a letter with the request to the UN's Middle East envoy, Robert Serry.

"Our patience has run out," Abbas said. "Israel's aggression against the Palestinian people must stop."

The Israeli army said that it called on residents of the northern Gaza Strip to leave their homes before a planned escalation of air assaults.

Warnings were delivered by phone, and leaflets dropped in the area told residents to leave "for your own safety."

"Whoever violates these orders and does not vacate his home immediately puts his life and the lives of his family members in danger!" the leaflets said.

While Israeli infantry and tank forces remained mobilized at the borders of the Gaza Strip, there were no signs of imminent movement toward a ground invasion.

A seaborne raid by Israeli commandos on a long-range rocket launching site near the Gaza coast met resistance from Palestinian militants, and four soldiers were lightly wounded, the army said.

The raid appeared to be retaliation for an attempted seaborne raid by Hamas last week, in which five militants were killed as they tried to attack an Israeli army base just north of the Gaza Strip's border with Israel.

Thousands Flee Gaza As Israel Ramps Up Offensive

By Mariam Hamed

[USA Today](#), July 14, 2014

Thousands of residents fled northern Gaza on Sunday at the urging of the Israeli military as its ground troops briefly crossed the border on a mission to destroy a launching site.

The tumult came as the death toll from Israel's six-day Operation Protective Edge offensive rose to more than 160, with more than 1,000 injured, the Palestinian Health Ministry said.

"Civilians are requested to evacuate their residences immediately for their own safety," the Israeli leaflets dropped by air warned. They listed specific areas that would "prove to be most dangerous."

Israeli airstrikes hit more than 200 homes and buildings across Gaza on Sunday. Despite calls from the United Nations and world leaders, there were no signs the two sides will agree to a cease-fire soon.

"We don't know when the operation will end," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a Cabinet meeting Sunday. "It might take a long time."

Lt. Col. Peter Lerner, spokesman for the Israeli Defense Forces, said the military has hit 1,300 targets since the offensive began July 7. He said Gaza militants have launched 904 rockets at Israel. Of these, 160 were intercepted by Israel's "Iron Dome" anti-rocket system, Lerner said.

Nasr Kafarna, 43, a farmer in northern Gaza who lives near the border, says he has been on edge for the past week. After Israeli troops crossed into Gaza early Sunday, he fears for the worst.

"I worry this is all-out war now," he said. "We haven't recovered from the last one – we aren't ready for another one."

The death toll in the first week of this offensive has topped the estimated 133 killed in the last outbreak of hostilities in 2012. That Israeli operation, also to stop rockets being lobbed over the border, lasted eight days. The current conflict follows the murders of three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank and the killing of a Palestinian teenager last month in what is being called a revenge death.

Residents say tensions are high in the densely populated, 140-square-mile strip of land squeezed between Israel and the Mediterranean Sea.

"Every time after you hear the sound of a missile hitting sometime, you look up the names of the dead with extreme fear, not knowing whose name you are going to find," said Sabab Farahat, 22, of Gaza City. "Our hearts ache even for the names of the people we do not know."

"I want to go back to my normal life, go to my university and the market and meet my friends," Farahat added. "I really miss normal life."

On Saturday, Israeli airstrikes hit two mosques – Israel's government said Hamas hides arms in those places of worship.

Iyad Mortaga, 34, of Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, says she is just in a state of disbelief over what is happening and the deaths from the operation.

"I really don't know how all this came to pass," she said, adding she had attended afternoon prayer at the Dar Al Salam Mosque before it was hit.

"My neighbor – we learned of his death two hours after the bombing," she said. "Now I can't go to pray in the mosque and I am afraid to go to any mosques."

In Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Yigal Palmor told USA TODAY, "Israel isn't interested in a temporary cease-fire. ... We're not looking for a Band-Aid solution but a long-term plan that will neutralize and take off

the table completely all possible threats of rocket fire from Gaza."

Gershon Baskin, the Israeli who negotiated the 2011 prisoner swap for Gilad Shalit, the Israeli soldier Hamas kidnapped in 2006, said he maintains open channels with many in the Palestinian leadership and both sides remain far apart. He said Israel's military is concerned about Hamas' arsenal of anti-tank rockets.

"The Hamas have tunnels and bunkers all throughout the north and center of Gaza, and they are planning to emerge out of nowhere and hit the Israelis with the hopes of being able to grab some soldiers and hold them hostage," Baskin said.

He said a senior official in the Palestinian Authority involved in attempts to get Hamas to agree to a cease-fire told him that Hamas won't stop until after Israel launches a ground invasion. "They want to hurt Israel badly, something they have so far failed to do" with their rockets," Baskin said.

Contributing: Michele Chabin in Jerusalem

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Israel Pounds Northern Gaza Strip After Warning Residents To Flee

By Batsheva Sobelman, Rushdi Abu Alouf, Henry Chu
[Los Angeles Times](#), July 14, 2014

Prompting thousands to flee, Israel warned some residents of the crowded Gaza Strip to leave their homes Sunday and then unleashed an aerial bombardment of sites it says are used by Islamic militants to launch rockets at major Israeli population centers.

About 17,000 people from the Beit Lahiya area in the northern Gaza Strip streamed for protection into United Nations-run facilities. Israeli warplanes hammered the vacated area Sunday afternoon and evening, hitting alleged launch sites and homes of members of extremist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The assault was carried out mostly by air, but the Israeli navy also reportedly fired shells from the sea.

Despite the concentrated attack, militants continued to fire rockets at a broad swath of Israel, setting off warning sirens in Tel Aviv and the coastal city of Haifa. A teenager became the second Israeli civilian to be severely wounded in six days of fighting when two rockets landed in the city of Ashkelon. No Israelis have been killed by the rocket strikes.

In Gaza, the death toll rose to at least 167, fueling international alarm over the lopsided casualty count. The U.N. says the majority of the victims have been civilians. Seventeen members of one extended family were killed late Saturday when a home and nearby mosque were hit. More than 1,000 people have been injured.

Neither side appeared to pay any heed to a unanimous statement from the U.N. Security Council calling for the

fighting to stop. In a phone call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday, Secretary of State John F. Kerry reiterated Washington's offer to help broker a return to the cease-fire that ended the last confrontation between Hamas and Israel in 2012, a senior State Department official said.

Netanyahu insists that no external pressure will deter Israel from continuing its offensive for as long as it deems necessary.

"We don't know when the operation will end. It could take much longer," Netanyahu said before a Cabinet meeting Sunday, adding that Israel would continue to act "in a patient and level-headed manner" until it achieved its goal of restoring quiet.

Israeli troops have begun massing along the border with Gaza for a possible land incursion. The government has completed its call-up of 40,000 reservists to bolster its regular forces, the military said.

In the first report of Israeli boots on the ground in Gaza, military officials confirmed a lightning raid overnight Saturday by naval commandos who crossed the border to take out a site believed to be the source of large volleys of rockets launched at cities in southern and central Israel.

The commandos went in under aerial and naval cover and reportedly killed three Palestinian militants in a shootout. Four commandos were lightly wounded, the military said.

Dan Meridor, a former Israeli intelligence minister, said that Israel should consider quitting while it's ahead.

In an interview on Israeli television, Meridor said Israel had achieved its goal of restoring enough deterrence to quiet Gaza's militants for an extended period. On both defensive and offensive levels, Israel is "clearly winning at this point," but the longer it continues, the greater the risk of complications that could trigger reversals on the ground and in public opinion.

Meridor suggested that Israel announce a pause in strikes, call on Hamas to respond in kind and wait for about 10 hours. "If they agree, this is the best way to end. If they don't, Israel will gain international legitimacy to continue," he said.

Demilitarizing Hamas could be a long-term objective but not one likely to be achieved under fire, the former minister said.

Fears of an imminent large-scale ground invasion of Gaza rose when Israeli forces dropped leaflets on Beit Lahiya on Sunday morning telling residents to evacuate by noon to avoid being hurt in a short, temporary but hard-hitting military campaign in the area.

Mohammed Aziz Alsalmih, 47, also received a recorded message from the Israeli army on his phone advising him to seek safety elsewhere. He put his wife and nine children, mattresses, blankets and bags of clothes onto a donkey cart and drove away.

"What can I do? I cannot ignore it and risk my family," Alsalmih said. "Two years ago, in 2012, we had to leave our house and take refuge in a U.N. school. The scene is repeated today. I pray for God to protect my family and to stop the war."

Shortly after the noon deadline, Israeli warplanes hammered homes of suspected militants in Beit Lahiya in a rapid succession of strikes. More were carried out in the evening.

Thousands sought refuge in a school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. Chris Gunness, a spokesman for the agency, urged all sides to respect the status of U.N. installations.

The Egyptian government said it would open its crossing into Gaza for U.S. citizens to leave the enclave Monday. A group of Egyptian political parties called on the government in Cairo to open the crossing indefinitely to help Gazans who have relied on it for supplies to get through. The transit point has been closed since last summer, after the installation of a government in Cairo hostile to Hamas.

Israel opened its Gaza checkpoint for foreign nationals to exit the strip Sunday.

Late Sunday, a rocket was fired into Israel from Syria but caused little or no damage. Israeli forces fired artillery in response, the military said.

More than 800 rockets have been fired at Israel since Tuesday, about 150 of them intercepted by the mobile Iron Dome missile-defense systems deployed throughout the country, military officials said. During the same period, Israel has struck more than 1,000 targets in the densely populated Gaza Strip.

One rocket launched by Palestinian militants Sunday smashed into an electricity network that supplies power to Gaza, causing a blackout affecting about 70,000 residents in the territory, the Israeli military said. The electric company said it would repair the damage and resume service when security conditions permitted.

A much-awaited concert by Canadian rocker Neil Young planned for Thursday in Tel Aviv was canceled.

Previously, Young came under heavy political pressure from activists and musicians urging him to boycott Israel for its treatment of Palestinians. On Sunday, the Israeli producer stressed that the concert was canceled for safety reasons.

Special correspondents Sobelman reported from Jerusalem and Abu Alouf from Gaza City. Times staff writer Chu reported from London. Special correspondent Amro Hassan in Cairo contributed to this report.

Follow Henry Chu for international news at #HenryHChu on Twitter.

Thousands Of Palestinians Flee Northern Gaza

By Karin Laub And Josef Federman

[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Thousands of Palestinian residents of the northern Gaza Strip fled their homes on Sunday and sought safety in U.N. shelters, heeding warnings from the Israeli military about impending plans to bomb the area in the sixth day of an offensive against Hamas that has killed more than 160 people.

The fighting showed no signs of slowing, despite international calls for a cease-fire and growing concerns about the mounting civilian death toll in Gaza. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and voiced U.S. “readiness” to help restore calm, while Egypt, a key mediator between Israel and Hamas, continued to work behind the scenes.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for an immediate cease-fire in a statement issued late Sunday by his spokesman’s office.

Ban “strongly believes that it is in the interest of both sides that steps toward dangerous escalation be replaced with immediate measures to end the fighting, thus preventing further casualties and greater risks to regional peace and security,” it said.

Ban condemned Hamas’ indiscriminate firing of rockets against Israeli civilian targets as “a violation of international law,” it said. He abhorred “the image of Israeli families hovering in shelters in fear of their children’s safety” and demanded “an immediate cessation of these indecent attacks.”

At the same time, the U.N. chief is “deeply worried about the impact on Palestinian families of Israeli military action. Too many Palestinian civilians have been killed, and any Israeli ground offensive will undoubtedly increase the death toll and exacerbate civilian suffering in the Gaza Strip,” it said.

Ban noted that despite the U.N. Security Council’s demand for a cease-fire, “the situation in and around the Gaza Strip appears to be worsening,” it said.

Amid the diplomacy, Israel said it was pushing forward with preparations for a possible ground invasion of Gaza. Thousands of troops have massed along the border in recent days.

“We don’t know when the operation will end,” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his Cabinet on Sunday. “It might take a long time.” He said the military was prepared “for all possibilities.”

Israel launched the offensive last Tuesday in what it said was a response to heavy rocket fire out of Hamas-controlled Gaza. The military says it has launched more than 1,300 airstrikes, while Palestinian militants have launched more than 800 rockets at Israel. The Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza says 166 people have been killed, including dozens of civilians. There have been no Israeli fatalities, though several people have been wounded, including a

teenage boy who was seriously injured by rocket shrapnel Sunday.

Early Sunday, the Israeli air force dropped leaflets around the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahia ordering people to evacuate their homes. Israel says much of the rocket fire has come from the area, and overnight Sunday, the military carried out a brief ground operation on what it said was a rocket-launching site that could not be struck from the air. Four Israeli soldiers were lightly wounded before returning to Israel.

The U.N. refugee agency for Palestinians, UNRWA, said some 17,000 Palestinians had headed to special shelters set up in 20 United Nations schools in Gaza.

“The fact that in a span of almost a few hours, 10,000 people sought refuge in these 15 schools is an indication to the difficult situation on the ground,” said Sami Mshasha, a UNRWA spokesman.

Some raced by in pickup trucks, waving white flags. “Once we received the message, we felt scared to stay in our homes. We want to leave,” said one resident, Mohammed Abu Halemah.

Shortly before nightfall, Israel carried out a series of airstrikes in the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahia. Hamas’ Al-Aqsa TV station reported four airstrikes in a 10-minute span, and a large plume of black smoke could be seen over the area from the Israeli border. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Hamas, an Islamic militant group sworn to Israel’s destruction, has remained defiant, and it continued to fire rockets into Israel throughout the day. It urged people in northern Gaza to stay in their homes and has so far rejected proposals for a cease-fire as unsatisfactory.

“They want us to put down our arms and leave the resistance,” said Moussa Abu Marzouk, a top Hamas official, on his Facebook page. “They started the battle, and we will stay on our land and fight to protect our future.”

Despite Israeli claims that it has inflicted heavy damage on the group, Hamas says it is largely unscathed, and Palestinian medics say most of the dead have been civilians.

The outbreak of violence follows the kidnappings and killings of three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank, the kidnapping and killing of a Palestinian teenager in an apparent revenge attack, and wide-ranging Israeli moves against Hamas militants and infrastructure in the West Bank. Hamas has demanded that hundreds of recently arrested activists be freed as part of a cease-fire.

Many of the airstrikes have been on the homes of wanted Hamas militants, putting their families at risk. In an attack on Saturday, the target of one such airstrike, Gaza’s police chief, survived, while 17 members of his extended family were killed.

Israel accuses Hamas of using Gaza's civilians as human shields, putting people in the densely populated territory in danger.

"The leadership of Hamas and the other organizations has chosen — at a time when they are using the population of Gaza as human shields — to hide underground, to flee abroad and to deliberately put civilians in the line of fire," Netanyahu said.

Despite Israel's claims, the international community, including many of Israel's allies, have begun to express concerns about the growing civilian death toll.

The Israeli military said that one of the rockets fired by Gaza militants Sunday night "hit an electricity infrastructure in Israel that supplied electricity to the Gaza Strip, causing a power outage to some 70,000 Gaza civilians."

In Vienna, Kerry spoke Sunday with Netanyahu and highlighted U.S. concerns about the "escalating tensions," the State Department said.

Kerry "described his engagement with leaders in the region to help to stop the rocket fire so calm can be restored and civilian casualties prevented, and underscored the United States' readiness to facilitate a cessation of hostilities," the State Department said.

Egypt, meanwhile, said President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi spoke to the U.N. chief Ban Ki-moon. El-Sissi's spokesman quoted Ban as praising Egyptian efforts to halt the fighting and affirming that "Egypt is the most capable party to effectively participate in reaching a calm between the two sides." Netanyahu's office declined comment on diplomatic efforts.

Other countries were also involved. Germany's foreign minister said he would head to the region on Monday, while French President Francois Hollande tried to rally Arab and Muslim leaders to push for a cease-fire.

Hollande held telephone talks over the weekend with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Tunisian President Moncef Marzouki.

Marzouki spokesman Adnane Mancer said the French and Tunisian presidents agreed that Marzouki would try to talk to Hamas leaders and urge a cease-fire, while Hollande would try to do the same with other parties. A French presidential official said Hollande was talking to Israeli, Palestinian and other Arab officials.

On Sunday, Palestinians with foreign passports began leaving Gaza through the Erez border crossing. Israel, which cooperated in the evacuation, said 800 Palestinians living in Gaza have passports from countries including Australia, Britain and the U.S.

Rawan Mohanna, a 21-year-old chemistry major at the University of Texas, said she had arrived in Gaza with her family a month ago because her older sister was getting married to a Gazan.

Mohanna, who lives in Dallas, said her family is now returning to the U.S. with mixed feelings because her newlywed sister and other relatives were staying behind.

"It's bittersweet that we get to leave but they are still there and they can't get out," she said.

On Sunday night, Israel's military said rockets were fired at Israel from both Syria and Lebanon in separate incidents. There were no injuries or damage, but Israel fears militant groups along its northern frontier may try to open a second front. The rocket attacks were the second such barrage on Israel from its northern neighbors in recent days.

The Israeli military said it retaliated by shooting toward the source of fire.

In Egypt, security officials said they had foiled a new attempt to fire rockets at Israel by militants in the northern Sinai Peninsula which borders Israel.

Federman reported from Jerusalem. Angela Charlton in Paris, Kirsten Grieshaber in Berlin, Ian Deitch and Yousur Alhlou in Jerusalem, Ibrahim Barzak in Amman, Jordan, and Mohammed Daraghmeh in Ramallah, West Bank, contributed reporting.

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Abbas To Ask UN To Put Palestine Under International Protection

[AFP](#), July 14, 2014

Ramallah (Palestinian Territories) – Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas is to ask the United Nations to put the state of Palestine under "international protection" in light of the worsening violence in the Gaza Strip, the PLO said Sunday.

"President Abbas will present a letter to the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, addressed to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, to officially put the State of Palestine under the UN international protection system and to form a legal committee for immediate follow-up," it said in a statement.

Everyone Says John Kerry Should Stay Out Of The Middle East

[The Daily Beast](#), July 13, 2014

John Kerry wants to broker a deal to stop the violence between Israel and Hamas. But officials and experts on both sides are warning he could do more harm than good.

The Israelis and the Palestinians are resisting Secretary of State John Kerry's repeated offers to travel to the Middle East and try to help negotiate a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. Experts on both sides believe he doesn't have the credibility or ability to do any good if he shows up there.

The White House and State Department have been saying publicly all week that the U.S. is ready and willing to step in and play the role of honest broker to try to stem the escalating cycle of violence gripping Israel and the Gaza strip. The latest variation of the offer came in a personal phone call Thursday between President Obama and Israel Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu.

"The United States remains prepared to facilitate a cessation of hostilities, including a return to the November 2012 ceasefire agreement," a White House read out of the call stated.

White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said Friday the administration wants to do the same thing it did in Nov. 2012, when Obama sent then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to the region. She helped negotiate a ceasefire agreement, giving the credit to Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi.

"The United States used our relationship with countries in the region including Egypt and Turkey and others to bring both sides to the table and create an environment where a cease-fire could be declared and enforced. So we're looking to do something similar again," Earnest said.

Unfortunately, the U.S. relationships with Egypt and Turkey have both deteriorated since 2012. Morsi was ousted in a military coup and imprisoned, and the new Egyptian leadership has significantly less influence with Hamas. The Turkey-Israel relationship is also in shambles, hurting Ankara's ability to be constructive player.

And Clinton is gone, replaced by a Secretary in Kerry who may have already used up whatever diplomatic capital he had with the Israelis and the Palestinians. Kerry traveled to Israel 11 times and spent 26 days there since taking office last year, as part of a grueling and ultimately unsuccessful effort to push the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority into a peace agreement.

But Kerry is trying to get in the game; he spoke with Netanyahu Wednesday and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas on Thursday.

"During both of those calls, the Secretary reiterated our concern over the escalating tensions and restated his own willingness and the willingness of the United States to engage robustly in helping to stop the rocket fire so we can restore calm as soon as possible," State Department Spokeswoman Jen Psaki said Thursday, noting that Kerry as also been in touch with leaders in Egypt and Qatar.

"I don't really see the U.S. as having a particularly strong hand in trying to stop the Israelis from doing anything they want to do in Gaza."

Kerry may be feeling confident coming off what appears to be a successful effort to broker a way forward to resolving Afghanistan's disputed presidential election. But Kerry doesn't have the same leverage on either Israel or Hamas. And the violence in the region has already begun.

Besides, neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians are exactly rolling out the welcome mat for Kerry. American, Israeli, and Palestinian experts and officials this week said Kerry should resist the urge to inject himself into the middle of the crisis.

"Should John Kerry, given his commitment and the direness of the situation, pack his bags?" asked Aaron David Miller, former Middle East negotiator, at an event this week at the Woodrow Wilson Center.

"No," said Shibley Telhami, an Arab-Israeli author, University of Maryland professor, and occasional advisor to the U.S. government. "We have to figure out a role to play, but the question is, where's the influence going to come from? Who's got the leverage with the two parties? ... I don't really see the U.S. as having a particularly strong hand in trying to stop the Israelis from doing anything they want to do in Gaza."

Robert Danin, Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, said that a Kerry visit would be a poor substitute for a more comprehensive effort by all of the other officials in the U.S. government to engage both sides at the working level. That could be much more effective than a high-profile, one-off high-level Kerry visit.

"Now is a time for active American diplomacy at the level below John Kerry," he said. "I think we've gotten trapped into a mindset that either John Kerry does it or it doesn't get done."

Yossi Kuperwasser, Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs, told reporters this week that negotiations between Israel and Hamas are not on the table anyway. "There will be no negotiations until Hamas stops firing rockets into Israel. That's it," he said.

Some experts link the current round of violence directly to Kerry's failed Middle East Peace process. Ziad Asali, president of the American Task Force for Palestine, told The Daily Beast that Kerry's effort raised expectations on both sides. When the talks crashed, it created a sense of hopelessness that contributed to the environment in which the violence took place.

Lee Smith wrote this week in Tablet magazine that Kerry's failed peace process actually lit the match for the violence by pushing the two sides into negotiations during a period when both Israelis and Palestinians had little trust in the Obama administration and reason to doubt American credibility in the region.

"At a time of relative peace and quiet, the White House put the Israelis and Palestinians under the spotlight with a buzzer set to go off at the end of April. What both soon realized was that whatever they decided, the Americans weren't going to be around to give them cover," he wrote.

Telhami disagreed, saying there was no direct link between Kerry's failed diplomacy and the current violence

because the ingredients that started the crisis were always present.

"If anything, John Kerry succeeded in extending the period of hope for a little bit longer," he said.

Danin concurred with Telhami, but said that the United States is now looking for a big move because their entire plan for engaging the Middle East ended when the negotiations ceased.

"I don't think it's fair to blame John Kerry for the violence. It exists anyway," he said. "But what there is right now is a diplomatic vacuum. [When] the diplomacy culminated in April, there was no Plan B. There should be some sort of diplomatic fallback position short of an all or nothing approach."

In Divided Jerusalem, Rail Line For Arabs And Jews Is Among The Fractures

By Jodi Rudoren

[New York Times](#), July 14, 2014

JERUSALEM — So much here seems so broken right now: the peace process, the moral compass.

The Palestinian reconciliation pact is in tatters. The Israeli police force is having a crisis of public confidence. Houses of suspected Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip have been pulverized into piles of debris by Israeli airstrikes. Red alerts signaling long-range rockets from Gaza have canceled cultural events in Jerusalem and disrupted a wedding in a Tel Aviv suburb.

Also, literally torn asunder is the Jerusalem light rail, certainly a minor casualty compared with the mounting death toll in Gaza, but one laden with symbolic meaning. The rail was once celebrated — at least by Israeli Jews — as an artery of coexistence in an otherwise hostile, divided city. But it turns out that many Palestinians resent it as part of what they see as Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem — yet another example of how the two sides in this long-running conflict live disparate realities.

Since it opened three years ago, the light rail snaked through Arab and Jewish neighborhoods, forcing residents who hardly interacted otherwise to stand side by side, perhaps overhearing a cellphone conversation.

But after this month's predawn abduction and killing of a Palestinian 16-year-old in what the authorities charge was a revenge attack for the earlier abduction and murder of three Israeli teenagers, rioters in the Palestinian neighborhood of Shuafat destroyed the light-rail stations there.

The route's 23 stops have been cut to 16, and Arab faces have all but disappeared from the sleek silver trains gliding along the invisible Green Line that, before 1967, was the heavily guarded border between Israel and Jordan. CityPass, the company that runs the rail, has no timeline for restoring service; electronic signs and ticket machines were

ripped out, traffic signals smashed, tracks uprooted and underground control rooms set ablaze.

"They did a good job breaking and burning everything," said Ozel Vatik, the spokesman for CityPass.

It may seem superficial to focus on this vandalism when the entire Israeli-Palestinian conflict has plunged to a depth not seen in a decade. Certainly more substantive is the escalation between Israel and Gaza, and the political divisions that may make curbing the violence this time more difficult.

But symbols are also important. In a city of 500,000 Jewish residents and 300,000 Arab residents — one often called "mixed" though "divided" is a more apt description — the light rail was, for some, a sign of progress: A rare sliver where devout and hedonistic, new arrivals and ancestral natives, soldiers and tourists and, yes, Palestinians and Jews paid the same \$2 fare and watched out the same windows as they passed the ancient stones of Jerusalem's Old City and the modern marvel of Santiago Calatrava's "Bridge of Strings."

But to the Palestinians who obliterated the Shuafat station and the neighboring one at Es-Sahl — and to many of their neighbors — the light rail was seen not as a symbol of coexistence, but of oppression.

"It doesn't belong to us," said Emad Jouni, 39, a social worker. He once rode the light rail to his office, but now, he says: "I will take buses, I will go by feet. I don't care."

Mr. Jouni, who joined thousands at the funeral for Shuafat's slain son, Muhammad Abu Khdeir, said the neighborhood never believed the trains were meant to serve it. People thought it passed through only so Jews could reach Pisgat Ze'ev, built on land to the north that Israel seized in 1967 and later annexed but that is considered by much of the world to be illegally occupied.

It probably does not help that the company plans to first fix the tracks to allow trains to resume running to Pisgat Ze'ev, and only in a second stage to stop again in Shuafat.

"Even if it seems like we benefit," said Muhammad's cousin Thawra, a 19-year-old nursing student at Hebrew University, "at the end of the day, it's for them, because they don't want us here."

Opened in 2011 after the usual development delays plus problems particular to the region — like a squabble over whether the East Jerusalem station names should be Hebrew or Arabic — the light rail cost an estimated \$1 billion to build. Before the recent crisis, it had 140,000 riders daily.

They did not hold hands and sing "Kumbaya." Last year, Yossi Klein Halevi, a respected American-Israeli author, wrote about barely managing to stop a religious Jew from assaulting a young Arab man who was riding the rail with a young Jewish woman. Mr. Halevi, who himself is religious, was hit with pepper spray by a gathering mob, and, after

identifying the culprit to the police, was told, “You’ve lost the world to come, and also this world.”

Nearly a year before the Shuafat riots that shattered the city’s light-rail spine, Mr. Halevi wrote, “the streets of Jerusalem seem increasingly threatened with anarchy.”

One day last week, before the intensification of Israel’s battle with Gaza, trains were still running, just not in Shuafat, and they were still packed. Two women’s rapid-fire Hebrew exchange was peppered with the words “intifada,” “ Hamas” and “sheket” — quiet. An American with the head scarf of the modern Orthodox reported via cellphone that there seemed to be extra security guards.

A man in a black velvet skullcap nodded and moved his lips as he traced the lines in a Hebrew prayer book with his fingers. A backpacker took up too much room. There was chatter in Russian, French, Amharic — but not Arabic, not this day.

In the flexible space between cars, a handsome soldier stood with his weapon, unsmiling. Had he been part of the search crews that finally found the three boys’ bodies under a pile of rocks? Among the commandoes who arrested some 400 Palestinians in night raids? Might he soon be heading to Gaza if Israel’s battle with Hamas expands into a ground invasion?

The train now starts in Jerusalem’s north, one stop before Ammunition Hill, a former Jordanian military post that saw a fierce fight in 1967. It passes Damascus Gate, the entry to the Old City’s Arab bazaar.

After City Hall, breathing space disappears as passengers crowd the cars lumbering between the cafes and shops of Jaffa Road, and to the famed Mahane Yehuda food market. Last stop: Mount Herzl, Israel’s national cemetery, named for the founder of Zionism — a short walk from the forest where Muhammad’s charred body was found.

There, waiting amid the lunchtime crowd that day, was a Muslim woman in her 30s, her hijab taupe with sequins forming hearts. Fashionable sunglasses were propped on her forehead, a colorful leather bag slung over a shoulder. Did she feel vulnerable, in this sea of Jews, at this tense time? Or just annoyed to be waiting 10 minutes for a train?

The woman and her companion, who seemed too young for his cane, boarded quickly and secured two fold-down seats. As they talked, her grin revealed a deep dimple in one cheek.

They got off at Mahane Yehuda, whose spice bins lace Palestinian and Israeli cuisine alike.

Irit Pazner Garshowitz and Carol Sutherland contributed reporting.

No Iran Breakthrough With Kerry In Vienna

By Bradley Klapper And George Jahn
[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

VIENNA (AP) — Joint efforts by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and three other Western foreign ministers failed Sunday to advance faltering nuclear talks with Iran, with the target date for a deal only a week away.

“There has been no breakthrough today,” said British Foreign Secretary William Hague after meetings with Kerry and the foreign ministers of France, Germany and Iran.

The trip gave Kerry a chance to ease an espionage dispute with Germany. After meeting with German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, both stressed the importance of their cooperation in solving global crises, yet offered little indication they have fully mended ties.

Separately, Kerry spoke by telephone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the escalating Mideast violence. Like the others, he also met with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

“We’re working, we’re working, we just got here,” said Kerry, chiding reporters asking about progress as Sunday’s meetings wound down.

But the dispute over Iran’s enrichment program appeared to be defying the Western foreign ministers’ combined diplomatic muscle.

Tehran says it needs to expand enrichment to make reactor fuel but the U.S. fears Tehran could steer the activity toward manufacturing the core of nuclear missiles. The U.S. wants deep enrichment cuts; Iran wants to greatly expand enrichment.

“There is a huge gap” over enrichment, said Hague, in comments echoed by the other foreign ministers.

Steinmeier and French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius left Sunday, a few hours after they arrived.

Kerry und Hague stayed on for another day of diplomacy. Still, the dispute and other differences strongly indicated that six world powers and Tehran will need to continue negotiations until July 20 and could decide to extend their talks past that informal deadline for a deal.

Such an agreement would buy time to negotiate a pact limiting the scope of such programs in exchange for a full end to nuclear-related sanctions against Tehran.

“Obviously we have some very significant gaps still, so we need to see if we can make some progress,” Kerry told reporters before a meeting with European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, who is convening the talks.

“It is vital to make certain that Iran is not going to develop nuclear weapons, that their program is peaceful. That’s what we are here trying to achieve.”

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said “positions are still far apart,” and the ministers had come to “try to narrow differences.”

Steinmeier said he and other Western foreign ministers had made clear in meetings with Iranian officials that “the ball is Iran’s court.”

"It is now time for Iran to decide whether they want cooperation with the world community or stay in isolation," he told reporters.

The show of Western unity notwithstanding, Kerry's presence was most important. With the most significant disputes between Washington and Tehran, his visit gave him a chance to discuss them directly with Zarif.

Lower-ranking officials represented both Russia and China, possibly reflecting their view even before Sunday that talks past July 20 are unavoidable.

But Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi suggested any extension would be relatively short, saying "there is not much willingness" by either side to go a full six months. He, too, earlier spoke of "huge and deep differences."

Kerry arrived in Vienna after a diplomatic bounce in Afghanistan, where he persuaded rival presidential candidates to agree to a full audit of their recent runoff election. They also agreed to a power-sharing arrangement.

But the nuclear dispute could prove harder to solve.

Iranian hardliners oppose almost any concession by moderate President Hassan Rouhani's government. In the U.S., Republicans and Democrats have threatened to scuttle any emerging agreement because it would allow Iran to maintain some enrichment capacity.

Outside the negotiation, regional rivals of Iran, including Israel and Saudi Arabia, are extremely skeptical of any arrangement they feel would allow the Islamic republic to escape international pressure while moving closer to the nuclear club.

An interim deal in January effectively froze Iran's program, with world powers providing sanctions relief to Tehran of about \$7 billion. The two sides also agreed to a six-month extension past July 20 for negotiations to reach a comprehensive deal if necessary.

Kerry also spoke Sunday with the three European foreign ministers about worsening violence in the Middle East, with each likely to push harder than the American for a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas.

Fabius said a cease-fire "is the absolute priority."

Kerry did not directly address German-U.S. tensions caused by revelations about widespread American spying in Germany. "We are great friends," he told reporters, extolling the "enormous" importance of cooperation on the world stage between Washington and Berlin.

Steinmeier was more direct. Calling good bilateral relations "indispensable," he acknowledged recent "difficulties" and urged that relations "revive on the basis of trust and mutual respect."

Margaret Childs contributed from Vienna.

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U.S., Iran Say Disputes Remain In Nuclear Talks As Deadline Looms

By John Irish And Lesley Wroughton

[Reuters](#), July 13, 2014

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Kerry Says "Significant Gaps" Remain In Iran Nuclear Talks

[AFP](#), July 14, 2014

Vienna (AFP) – US Secretary of State John Kerry on Sunday said that "significant gaps" remained in negotiations seeking to broker a historic but elusive-looking deal on Iran's suspect nuclear programme.

"Obviously we have some very significant gaps. We need to see if we can make some progress ... it is vital to make certain that Iran is not going to develop a nuclear weapon, that their programme is peaceful," he told reporters as he arrived for the talks in Vienna.

West Sees Significant Gaps With Iran On Nuclear Deal

By Laurence Norman

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Iran Nuclear Talks May Be Extended

By David Jackson

[USA Today](#), July 13, 2014

The United States, its allies and Iran face a key deadline next Sunday – maybe.

Negotiators are already talking about an extension of the July 20 deadline for a deal in which Iran would forgo the means to make nuclear weapons in exchange for elimination of economic sanctions.

The parties have been operating under a temporary, six-month agreement that took effect Jan. 20.

The Associated Press, reporting from the site of talks this week in Vienna, reports that "deep differences separate the two sides and six world powers and Iran appear set to extend their talks past July 20. That would give more time to negotiate a deal that would limit the scope of such programs in exchange for a full lifting of nuclear-related sanctions imposed on Tehran."

Secretary of State John Kerry, who is in Vienna, told reporters: "Obviously we have some very significant gaps still, so we need to see if we can make some progress."

Kerry added: "It is vital to make certain that Iran is not going to develop nuclear weapons, that their program is peaceful. That's what we are here trying to achieve."

Iranian officials say their nuclear program is designed for peaceful energy purposes, and they have no interest in nuclear weapons.

Reports the Associated Press:

"Kerry arrived Sunday. Britain and Germany also sent their foreign ministers to Austria's capital for talks over the next few days, as has Iran.

"But the top diplomats from China and Russia are sending lower-ranking officials instead. That may reflect their view that an extension is unavoidable."

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Kerry And Iranian Negotiator Both See Constraints At Home In Nuclear Talks

By David E. Sanger

[New York Times](#), July 14, 2014

VIENNA — Secretary of State John Kerry arrived here early Sunday in an attempt to rescue negotiations with Iran that have stalled on the question of how large a nuclear infrastructure that nation will be permitted to have over the next decade or two. But he quickly confronted the fact that the problem might be less at the negotiating table here than with mullahs in Tehran and members of Congress in Washington.

During 11 days of intensive negotiations in a palace just steps from where Beethoven and Mozart once lived and worked, a team of sophisticated, westernized negotiators from Iran's new government have given a bit of ground on how some of the country's facilities will be used and how others will be inspected, according to officials who have been in the rooms where the wording was being discussed.

But the Iranians appeared taken a bit by surprise when their Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, gave a speech in Tehran last week that went into extraordinary detail about how much nuclear enrichment capacity Iran would need — statements that seemed to circumscribe their ability to come up with face-saving ways to dismantle a good portion of Iran's facilities while still portraying their program as moving forward.

The Americans face their own constraints at home: A letter from key members of the Senate to President Obama describes what a deal to prevent Iran from producing a weapon should look like, and suggests that anything short of that would not lead to the lifting of sanctions, the only incentive the American team can dangle in front of the Iranians.

It was a reminder for Mr. Kerry that there is not one negotiation underway to strike this deal, but three. Mr. Kerry and his counterparts from five other nations are struggling to

reach an accommodation with Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's American-educated foreign minister, who has been camped out for the past 11 days in the Coburg Palace, which has become a luxury dormitory for the American, West European, Russian and Chinese negotiators, who are living and working just doors away from one another.

But Mr. Zarif has a parallel negotiation underway with Ayatollah Khamenei and the generals of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, which runs the military side of the nuclear program and barely trusts its foreign minister. Mr. Obama, meanwhile, has been in a constant behind-the-scenes struggle with members of Congress who argue for more sanctions and more pressure. Mr. Obama has threatened to veto such efforts for fear they will undermine chances for a deal he believes would be a more lasting solution than permanent sanctions or military action against Iran's nuclear sites.

"It may be the most complex negotiation I've ever seen," said an American official who has been advising the White House on strategy, declining to speak on the record about the details of the discussion. "Everyone is using the constraints they face back home as a reason to avoid compromise. And the fact of the matter is that there are many generals in Iran and many members of Congress in Washington who would like to see this whole effort collapse."

Mr. Kerry, who arrived here after grappling with the electoral crisis in Afghanistan, said little in public other than to make clear he was evaluating the process to determine whether to recommend to Mr. Obama that the talks be extended beyond the July 20 deadline.

"Obviously, we have some very significant gaps still," he told reporters on his way into the palace. "It is vital to make certain that Iran is not going to develop a nuclear weapon, that their program is peaceful." While Mr. Kerry is not talking about extending the talks — which is permitted under an interim agreement reached in November — that now seems inevitable.

"We are trying to find solutions to narrow the difference," Iran's deputy foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, said to a state-run Iranian news service in an interview here. "Given this context, it's possible that negotiations will be extended by a few days or weeks."

American officials will not talk about an extension, for fear it will derail their chances of making progress by the deadline next Sunday. But for Mr. Obama, the downside of an extension is small. The relatively modest number of sanctions lifted since November, under the preliminary deal, have not resulted in the wide-scale dismemberment of the sanctions regime predicted by Israeli officials. Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency say the Iranians have scrupulously observed their part of the temporary deal, blending down the fuel that the United States feared was closest to conversion to bomb grade.

But every one of the steps the Iranians have taken so far is easily reversible. And the American negotiators, led by Wendy Sherman, the undersecretary of state for political affairs, are haunted by memories of how quickly North Korea reversed a dismantlement program that it negotiated with President George W. Bush seven years ago.

Indeed, when it comes to stopping a country from getting a weapons capability, history suggests there are deterrents, but no certainties. There are just educated assessments about how much warning time can be created by limiting a country's access to certain technologies, reducing the amounts of fuel that can be quickly converted to bomb-grade fuel, and by exposing the history of weapons-making efforts. Those bets failed in North Korea and Pakistan; they succeeded in South Africa and South Korea, both of which ultimately decided that a bomb program was not worth the long-term economic and political cost.

But it is far from clear that Iran's leadership — divided between those who want a long-term accord with the West and those who seek a restoration of Iranian influence in the Middle East — have made a decision. Mr. Zarif represents the faction that seems "genuinely convinced," in the words of one American negotiator, "that a weapons capability doesn't buy them much."

Indeed, Mr. Zarif said on NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday: "I will commit to everything and anything that would provide credible assurances for the international community that Iran is not seeking nuclear weapons, because we are not. We don't see any benefit in Iran developing a nuclear weapon."

But Ayatollah Khamenei, in describing Iran's long-range needs, talked of a 10-fold increase in enrichment capacity — something so large that it would, if carried out, give Iran a "breakout time" to produce weapons-grade fuel of just weeks. He was vague about when Iran intended to create that industrial capacity. A senior American official briefing reporters on Saturday said that Iran would have to accept sharp limits on its number of working centrifuges — meaning fewer than the 10,000 it has today — for a decade or more.

That is at the core of the problem. Robert Einhorn, who was a central player in developing the American strategy until he left the administration last year, noted recently that "rather than prepare the political ground for some concessions, the Iranian leadership has locked itself into a narrative that they need an industrial capability to produce all their own nuclear power fuel."

The one power reactor that Iran is running today receives its fuel from Russia under a long-term contract; it would take years, if not decades, to build additional reactors.

Mr. Obama is getting tied down, as well. If a deal is struck, he will need Congress to revoke sanctions. But that is a hard vote for Democrats as well as Republicans, and a letter to Mr. Obama now being circulated in the Senate by

Robert Menendez, the New Jersey Democrat who chairs the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Lindsey Graham, who sits on the Armed Services Committee, lays out a series of protections they say they will insist upon if Congress is to relax sanctions as part of any deal.

Among them are robust inspections arrangement that "lasts at least 20 years" and "access to any and all facilities, persons or documentation" sought by the International Atomic Energy Agency to suspected past work on weapons.

Two years ago, the Obama administration was talking in similar terms, and sometimes still does. But officials close to the negotiations say they will need some negotiating leeway, and fear Congress is cutting it off.

"We're in the position now where you have to ask whether the perfect is the enemy of the good," said Daryl G. Kimball, the executive director of the Arms Control Association, which strongly backs a deal.

Iranian Foreign Minister: "We Don't See Any Benefit In Iran Developing A Nuclear Weapon"

By Ben Wolfgang

[Washington Times](#), July 14, 2014

A top Iranian official says his country is not seeking a nuclear weapon and is so much "stronger" than its neighbors and potential foes that nuclear bombs simply aren't necessary.

In an interview with NBC's "Meet the Press" airing Sunday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Java Zarif said his nation intends to cooperate fully with the U.S. and its allies and adhere to the deal it struck with the international community last year.

That deal calls on Iran to slow its nuclear program in exchange for relief from some economic sanctions.

"I will commit to everything and anything that would provide credible assurances for the international community that Iran is not seeking nuclear weapons, because we are not. We don't see any benefit in Iran developing a nuclear weapon," the foreign minister said. "We need to go out of our way in order to convince our neighbors that we want to live in peace and tranquility with them, because the politics of geography — the fact that we're bigger, the fact that we're stronger, that we're more populous, the fact that we have better technology, the fact that our human resources is by far more developed than most of our neighbors — all of these provides us with inherent areas of strength that we don't need to augment with other capabilities."

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, an outspoken critic of the deal with Iran, called those claims "a joke" and said Iran cannot and must not be trusted.

"Of course they're developing nuclear weapons," Mr. Netanyahu said on "Fox News Sunday." "This is a sham and I don't think anybody could take this seriously."

Iranian Nuclear Negotiator Employs A Disarming Charm

By Paul Richter

[Los Angeles Times](#), July 14, 2014

No threats. No bluster. No blame.

"I won't engage in blame games or spin," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted Sunday. "Not my style. What I will engage in is a sincere effort to reach an agreement."

With international negotiations over Iran's nuclear program a week from their deadline to produce an agreement, U.S. officials have been taking an ever-tougher public line, trying to build pressure with complaints about Iranian demands that they warn could cause the talks to break down.

But Zarif, Iran's chief negotiator at the seven-country negotiations here, isn't replying in kind. On the contrary.

As the negotiations have heated up, Iran's Western-trained emissary has been turning on the charm, with smiles and assurances that Iran is willing to cooperate with world powers if given a fair chance to develop its nuclear technology.

Western officials regard Zarif's approach as a kind of stylistic jujitsu intended to make Iran appear non-threatening and Western countries look like bullies.

"It's perfectly attuned to this world audience Iran is trying to convince that the talk of a threatening nuclear program is way overblown," said a Western official close to the talks, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject.

Zarif was the center of the attention Sunday as he met in Vienna with foreign ministers from Britain, France and Germany, and then privately with Secretary of State John F. Kerry. The two men didn't comment after the two-hour meeting, which Kerry had said was aimed at finding out whether Iran would live up to its promises to make necessary compromises.

Zarif has been insisting that no one is more eager than Iran to do a deal.

Two weeks ago, as this sixth round of talks began, Zarif released a slick video showing him strolling around a serene Persian courtyard promising that Iran was fully committed to a diplomatic resolution.

"In the next three weeks, we have a unique opportunity to make history," he said in the video, which was released in multiple languages.

In an interview Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press," Zarif said Iran was willing to go to any lengths to cooperate with world powers "to ensure that nobody is concerned about Tehran's nuclear program."

There is no value in forcing Iran to dismantle its centrifuges and other equipment because given that it already

has the know-how, it could rebuild the equipment at any time, he said.

Zarif contended that Iran needs only an industrial-scale program because its contract with Russia for enriched uranium to fuel power generators runs out in seven years. Western officials dispute this, arguing that Iran could easily obtain contracts for nuclear fuel for power generation, and that it has no need to expand its uranium enrichment output nearly twentyfold, as it is asserting.

Zarif won't be able to persuade the six world powers across the negotiating table to give up all concern about Iran's nuclear program. All of them, including Russia and China, would prefer that Tehran not obtain the bomb.

However, the countries have varying views on how strict they believe the curbs should be on Iran's nuclear program. If Zarif can make U.S. demands look excessive, he may be able to persuade the group to allow more lenient terms, or put the blame on Washington if the talks break down.

If the failure is laid at the door of the Obama administration, many countries in Europe and Asia may be eager to throw off the international sanctions on Iran and resume oil purchases and other trade.

"If it's the United States that seems intransigent, Iran can make the case that it deserves sanctions relief," said Alireza Nader, an Iran specialist at Rand Corp.

Other Iranian officials aren't making the same effort. Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has continued to thunder condemnation of the West. But having Khamenei take the tough line while Zarif speaks softly may move Iran toward its diplomatic goals.

Just as Khamenei has accused the United States and Israel of playing "good cop, bad cop," "you could say that Khamenei and Zarif have the same roles," Nader said. "It's skillful diplomacy."

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Iran Elevating Nuclear Envoy Shows Gravity Of Talks

By Kambiz Foroohar, Jonathan Tirone And Sangwon Yoon

[Bloomberg News](#), July 14, 2014

Iran has for the first time sent President Hassan Rouhani's brother as a special observer to the nuclear talks in Vienna, signaling the importance of the final week of negotiations before a July 20 deadline.

The presence of Hossein Fereydoun, Rouhani's younger brother, who also serves as a special adviser to the president, came to light after he was photographed in one of the sessions between Iran and European foreign ministers. Fereydoun's presence was also reported by Iran's state-run Islamic Republic News Agency.

“He’s the president’s eyes and ears,” said Ali Vaez, an Istanbul-based analyst for the International Crisis Group, in an e-mailed reply to questions.

Thirteen days into negotiations between world powers and Iran, significant gaps remain over the Persian Gulf nation’s uranium-enrichment capacity. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry arrived in the Austrian capital July 13 along with his counterparts from France, Germany and the U.K.

“This is perhaps the last chance in a long time to resolve the conflict over Iran’s nuclear program in a peaceful manner,” German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier told reporters yesterday in Vienna after meeting with diplomats at the negotiations. “There is little time remaining. The ball is in Iran’s court.”

The presence of Fereydoun, who had previously served as a diplomat at Iran’s United Nations mission in New York, may signal a greater desire by Iran to reach a deal. In a photograph of the meeting, posted by European Union spokesman Michael Mann on Twitter, Fereydoun is sitting next to Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. He doesn’t share the same family name as Hassan Rouhani, who changed his appellation after he became a cleric.

Iran and world powers are divided over the extent of the country’s enrichment program. The U.S. and its allies seek a cut in Iran’s current capacity and curbs on future production.

An interim accord that capped some Iranian nuclear activities in exchange for limited sanctions relief expires next week. Iran has said it would resume some of its suspended nuclear activities if a deal cannot be reached. The U.S. Congress has threatened to impose harsher sanctions.

“We are trying to find solutions to narrow the differences,” Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told state-run Isna news agency in Vienna. “Given this context it’s possible that negotiations will be extended by a few days or weeks.”

While diplomats in the Austrian capital tried to keep focus on the Iran nuclear talks, widening tension in the Middle East also crept into the agenda. U.K. Foreign Secretary William Hague and French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius called for a cease-fire in fighting between Israel and Hamas militants in the Gaza strip that has killed more than 100 civilians.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke with Kerry by phone during which the Secretary of State offered to help facilitate a cease-fire, according to a U.S. official who asked not to be named following diplomatic rules.

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Israel’s Netanyahu On Iran: ‘Of Course, They’re Developing Nuclear Weapons.’

By Jaime Fuller

[Washington Post](#), July 14, 2014

Ongoing Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip prompted many interviews on the Sunday shows, perhaps most prominently with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He went on “Fox News Sunday” to discuss the strikes and foreign policy in the Middle East more generally.

The conversation quickly turned to Iran. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif had made an appearance on NBC’s “Meet the Press” on Sunday morning, too, in which he expressed his intent to convince the international community that his country isn’t interested in nuclear armament — just nuclear energy. “We don’t see any benefit to developing a nuclear weapon,” he said. “I will commit to everything and anything that would provide credible assurances to the international community that Iran is not seeking nuclear weapons.”

Fox News host Brit Hume played this clip for Netanyahu. His response?

“It’s a joke,” he said. “Of course, they’re developing nuclear weapons. They’ve invested, if not billions, you can start counting it in maybe in hundreds of billions of dollars — for what, for creating medical isotopes for Iranian patients circling the Earth? What are they developing ICBMs for if not for nuclear warheads? What are they developing these — building these enormous underground nuclear facilities if not for nuclear weapons?”

He went on, “So, this is a sham. I mean, I don’t think anybody could take this seriously.”

Secretary of State John Kerry is in Vienna discussing Iran’s nuclear enrichment program with European and Iranian officials. They had hoped to broker a deal by the end of next week. “It is vital to make certain that Iran is not going to develop nuclear weapons, that their program is peaceful,” Kerry told reporters. “That’s what we are here trying to achieve.”

Regarding the Gaza airstrikes, Netanyahu said, “Our mission is to restore a sustainable quiet, a sustainable security to our people by seriously degrading Hamas and other terrorist groups’ capabilities in Gaza. I think we’re proceeding, and we’ll continue until that goal is achieved.

He added later, “I think the important thing to understand is that we can’t enable our population to be under continuous rocket fire. I mean, I just want your viewers to imagine the United States being bombarded not in one city or two cities, but in every city between New York and Colorado. Maybe 20 percent of the United States would be exempt from this; 80 percent of your citizens would have to be in bomb shelters or ready to go into bomb shelters within a minute to a minute and a half max.”

"No country can accept that, we can't accept it, and we'll take the necessary actions to stop it."

Former U.S. Mideast envoy Martin Indyk discussed the hope for a cease-fire among many in the United States.

"I think President Obama and Secretary Kerry want very much a cease-fire and are willing to do what they can to achieve that," he said, "but until Hamas decides that it's going to call off the rocket fire, it's hard to see how this comes to an end."

On CNN, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) said, "The restraint of the Israelis, in my view, is admirable."

"Because there haven't been more Israelis casualties isn't because Hamas, a terrorist organization, hasn't tried," he said. "They are indiscriminately targeting civilians, while the Israelis are going so far as warning the people in Gaza on the pending strikes. There's a dramatic difference."

Israeli forces instructed Gaza residents to leave before the strikes, but 166 civilians have died, and at least 1,000 people are injured. Israel says the airstrikes are a response to rockets fired by Hamas. Palestinian militants have fired about 800 rockets at Israel since Tuesday. Not since 2012 has the Israeli military waged such an extensive offensive against rockets launched from Gaza.

Netanyahu also went on CBS's "Face the Nation," where he said, "We're sorry for any accidental civilian deaths, but it's the Hamas that bears complete responsibility for such civilian casualties."

Palestinian Ambassador to the United States, Maen Rashid Areikat, also went on "Face the Nation." "Prime Minister Netanyahu forgets the fact that Gaza is still under military occupation," he said. "He forgets the fact that the Palestinian people are still under his military occupation, and, therefore, he cannot compare the situation there to any situation around the world. I think the root cause of all the violence that we have witnessed over the last 48 years since Israel occupied the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem in 1967, is due to the continued Israeli military occupation."

He added, "Our objective right now is to reach an immediate cease-fire, return to the 2012 understandings between Hamas and Israel. You have to also remember, so far Israel has carried out 1,300 airstrikes against the Gaza Strip. That's more than 1,000 tons of explosives on the more densely populated area on the face of the Earth."

Zarif, Iran's foreign minister, also commented on the Gaza airstrikes. He said, "The United States and the members of the Security Council have a moral and legal responsibility to put an end to this." When asked whether he would denounce the Palestinians launching rockets into Israel, he said he would "not condemn people who are defending themselves."

Iran Nuclear Talks Hit Critical Juncture With Kerry To Join

By Jonathan Tirone

[Bloomberg News](#), July 11, 2014

Nuclear talks with Iran reach a critical juncture this weekend with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry joining diplomats to see if an impasse in negotiations can be broken.

Kerry arrives in Vienna tomorrow, State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf said. Officials from China, France, Germany, Russia, the U.K. and the U.S. – the so-called P5+1 – are meeting with Iran in the Austrian capital in a bid to clinch a permanent accord over Iran's nuclear work before an interim deal expires July 20.

"If Kerry is to help resolve the deadlock, instead of trying to narrow the unbridgeable gap over Iran's enrichment capacity, he should try to broaden the options," Ali Vaez, an Istanbul-based senior analyst for the International Crisis Group, said in a written response to questions. "Both sides know that there is real cost to declaring failure."

Following 10 days of talks, diplomats haven't shown they are any closer to solving their most intractable disagreements. Iran says it wants to expand uranium-enrichment work that can be used to fuel nuclear reactors. The U.S. and its allies want the Persian Gulf nation to reduce enrichment activities, which can also yield material for nuclear weapons.

European Union foreign-policy chief Catherine Ashton, who together with Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif convened the talks, invited top diplomats to participate earlier in the week. The offices of French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and U.K. Foreign Secretary William Hague also confirmed participation.

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi wasn't certain he'd attend, said Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov is visiting Latin America with President Vladimir Putin and won't attend the meeting, his office said yesterday.

"It could be that they have reached a critical stage and think that having foreign ministers present could move things in the right direction," said Robert Einhorn, a former U.S. negotiator now at Washington's Brookings Institution, in a July 9 telephone interview.

Last year in Geneva, where diplomats agreed to a six-month accord capping Iranian nuclear activities in exchange for limited sanctions relief, foreign ministers also flew in to seal the agreement.

While Iran has said it's willing to modify a reactor and allow wider international inspections, it insists on keeping uranium-enrichment options open.

Iranian officials "don't want to carry out all the enrichment inside Iran but the other parties must know that if

some day they don't give us the fuel for power plants, Iran has the ability to produce it," Iran's Atomic Energy Organization chief, Ali Akbar Salehi, said earlier this week in Tehran

Options for compromise exist, Carnegie Endowment's nuclear-policy director George Perkovich wrote in an op-ed published today by the Washington Post. Russia, which built Iran's sole nuclear-power plant in Bushehr, could send "several years' worth" of nuclear fuel for Iran to keep on inventory, he wrote.

"Time may not allow for agreement on these and other outstanding issues before the July 20 deadline," Perkovich said. "The alternative – a breakdown in diplomacy and resumption of destabilizing nuclear activity in Iran – could be a tragedy of global dimensions."

Congressional leaders sent U.S. President Barack Obama a letter on July 9 saying that any deal "must verifiably ensure that Iran is denied an undetectable nuclear weapons breakout ability." Even if the sides reach a nuclear deal, sanctions tied to Iran's ballistic-missile work and support of terrorist groups may not be lifted, the letter said.

"There remains deep skepticism on both sides and influential forces aligning against a deal," Paul Ingram, Executive Director of the British-American Security Information Council, said in an e-mail. "Complete failure is highly unattractive but a comprehensive solution will also be elusive."

Analysis: Lavrov's Absence Clouds Iran Nuke Talks

By George Jahn

[Associated Press](#), July 12, 2014

VIENNA (AP) — Decisions by the foreign ministers of Russia and China to skip talks on Iran's nuclear program this weekend are further denting expectations that the stalled negotiations will produce a deal by July 20.

The U.S. — which is sending Secretary of State John Kerry to join three other ministers— is putting on a good face. State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf says the six powers talking with Iran remain "united in the negotiating room, as we always have."

But the absence of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is noteworthy, in light of suggestions by France that Moscow is deviating from joint negotiating stances with Iran.

The most important disputes over how deeply Iran must cut its nuclear program to gain sanctions relief are between Washington and Tehran, so Kerry's presence is important. He will be able to talk directly to Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who is already at the Vienna negotiations.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius and German Foreign

Minister Walter Steinmeier are also attending. But the absence of Lavrov and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi could be detrimental — it took foreign ministers or their deputies of all six nations to negotiate a preliminary deal with Tehran in November.

Lavrov is on a Latin American tour culminating with a July 15 Brazil summit of emerging major economic nations, including China. Still, his no-show comes at a troubling moment — just days after Fabius criticized Moscow for having "differences of approach" with the mainstream at the negotiations.

The French foreign minister didn't elaborate. But Kremlin-backed analysts blame the U.S. for stalling the talks by pushing unrealistic demands.

Vladimir Evseyev of the Russian state-run CIS institute says Washington's insistence that Iran shut down uranium enrichment facilities and negotiate on its missile program violates the accords outlining the scope of the talks. The U.S., he said, wants negotiations to "to be lengthy and painful," so as to keep sanctions in place for its own political agenda.

Diplomats familiar with the talks say Moscow shares Washington's desire to reach a deal but is significantly less demanding of Tehran. While the U.S. wants deep cuts in Iranian programs that could be used to make nuclear arms, Russia would settle for pervasive monitoring, they say.

Former U.S. State Department official Mark Fitzpatrick says the Russian absence might simply indicate that Moscow doesn't anticipate agreement by July 20.

But "if a deal does appear to emerge, I wouldn't be surprised to see Lavrov on the next plane to Vienna," says Fitzpatrick, now with the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

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Iran Preparing To Start Plant Needed For Interim Nuclear Deal: Sources

By Fredrik Dahl

[Reuters](#), July 11, 2014

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U.S. Congress Seen Backing Extension Of Iran Nuclear Pact

By Patricia Zengerle

[Reuters](#), July 12, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Open A Nuclear Fuel Bank

By Sam Nunn

[New York Times](#), July 12, 2014

WASHINGTON — As the United States and its negotiating partners continue nuclear talks with Iran in Vienna, the pressure is rising. The deadline for a final accord is July 20, and success hinges on Iran agreeing to verifiable commitments to prove to the world that its nuclear program is exclusively peaceful.

Unfortunately, at this critical point in the talks, a separate development that could support and reinforce an agreement with Iran has stalled. This development — the creation of an international fuel bank, to be owned and managed by the International Atomic Energy Agency — would allow countries full assurance that they could access nuclear fuel in the unusual case of an interruption of their supply.

A key element of any agreement with Tehran is the number and type of centrifuges Iran will have. Centrifuges can be used to enrich uranium from the level that is found in nature to a level that can fuel a nuclear power plant or to a level that could be used in a nuclear bomb. If a country has the capacity to make low-enriched uranium for a nuclear power plant, it also has the technical capability to make highly enriched uranium for a nuclear weapon. This is the key source of concern over uranium enrichment in Iran, given the country's repeated violations of international nonproliferation obligations and the work the Iranians have already done that could lead to the development of a nuclear bomb.

Iran is not the only potential problem. Uranium enrichment is also a concern globally: A world where more and more countries make their own nuclear fuel — and thus can also produce nuclear weapons materials — is a far more dangerous world, as we have seen from North Korea.

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, or I.A.E.A., over 30 countries are exploring whether to build their first nuclear power plant. Either these countries will import their fuel or make it themselves.

Despite Russia's commitment to supply the necessary fuel for Iran's only operating nuclear power reactor at Bushehr, Iran has claimed it needs national enrichment capability to protect against an interruption in its nuclear fuel supply. So, in principle, if Iran's concerns about security of supply are addressed, it should have no need for a large domestic enrichment program that would raise fears regionally and globally.

To address this issue, the Nuclear Threat Initiative pledged \$50 million in 2006 to help create a low-enriched uranium stockpile. The pledge — made possible with financial support from Warren Buffett — was later matched by more than \$100 million in contributions from the United States, the European Union, the United Arab Emirates, Norway and Kuwait.

The ability to acquire low-enriched uranium on a nonpolitical basis in case of interrupted supply could be a significant factor in the negotiations with Iran. After the international fuel market and national fuel resources, the fuel bank would provide a final layer of assurance. The I.A.E.A. bank is a last-resort source if the first two backups could not fill the gap.

In addition to its relevance for Iran, the fuel bank could be important for Ukraine, should its nuclear fuel supply from Russia be cut off. This would be an aggressive move, but not unthinkable. President Vladimir Putin of Russia was reported to have announced a nuclear fuel embargo in March, though it has not been carried out.

Unfortunately, at a time when the fuel bank could be a valuable asset for countries making decisions about their nuclear programs, the bank's completion is stalled.

In December of 2010, in a move that marked fundamental change, the I.A.E.A.'s board of governors instructed the agency's director general to establish the fuel bank. Seven months after that, Kazakhstan, which disbanded its nuclear arsenal after the breakup of the Soviet Union, offered to host the bank. Kazakhstan has the benefit of being located on the Caspian Sea, which offers a direct maritime route to Iran, and its Ulba Metallurgical Plant has been judged by the I.A.E.A. to have the necessary infrastructure to host the bank.

But in the three years since, the agency and Kazakhstan have not been able to finalize plans. The I.A.E.A. and Kazakhstan should work together to quickly resolve the remaining issues, including determining the seismic stability of the Ulba facility. Given the investment made by both sides in the viability of the site, implementing any required precautions to manage seismic risks should be the highest priority and demands good-faith cooperation.

If this site does not meet safety requirements, the parties must find another site in Kazakhstan or the I.A.E.A. must identify another national host to fulfill the 2010 mandate of its board of governors.

The fuel bank is not just a good idea; it's an urgently needed tool to help prevent a growing nuclear threat. We need to move swiftly, resolve the issues and open the bank. The fuel bank may be directly relevant to an Iran agreement. It can certainly play a big role in the future to help prevent a much more dangerous world.

Reports Say North Korea Fires Shells Into The Sea

[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's Yonhap news agency says North Korea has fired 100 artillery shells into the sea.

Yonhap said Monday that the shells fired from multiple rocket launch systems into waters north of the eastern sea border between the countries. It gave no further details.

Repeated calls to South Korea's Defense Ministry and Joint Chiefs of Staff were not immediately answered.

The reported firing came a day after North Korea test-launched two ballistic missiles into waters off its east coast in the latest in a series of weapons tests the country has been conducting.

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2 Koreas To Hold Talks On Asian Games

By Jung-Yoon Choi

[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — A Seoul official says the rival Koreas have agreed to meet to discuss North Korea's participation in the upcoming Asian Games in the South.

Unification Ministry spokesman Kim Eui-do says North Korea agreed Monday to meet at a border village on Thursday to discuss its plans to send athletes and cheerleaders to the games.

The participation in the games is part of measures North Korea recently proposed to lower tension between the rivals.

The announcement comes as the North has been conducting an unusually large number of missile and rocket tests.

Analysts say the launches indicate Pyongyang is aiming to keep bolstering its defense to cope with what it calls U.S. and South Korean threats unless the allies make major concessions such as scaling down their regular military drills.

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US Proposes Construction Freeze In South China Sea

[Associated Press](#), July 11, 2014

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. is calling for Asian nations to freeze new construction and establishment of outposts in the disputed South China Sea to lower the risk of a conflict.

The proposal was detailed Friday by senior State Department official Michael Fuchs. He voiced concern over the "increasingly tenuous situation" as an assertive China and five of its smaller neighbors vie for control of tiny islands and reefs in waters with plentiful fisheries and potential hydrocarbon reserves.

Fuchs said no claimant was solely responsible for the tensions, but criticized a pattern of "provocative" behavior by China.

He told a Washington think tank the claimants themselves would need to agree to the terms of the freeze.

Last month, the Philippines proposed a moratorium on construction in the South China Sea. China rejected it.

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Japan Seeks Talks With China At November Summit

[Associated Press](#), July 11, 2014

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's top spokesman says the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in November in Beijing would be a good opportunity for Japanese and Chinese leaders to hold their first talks in 1 ½ years amid sour relations.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said Friday that the summit would provide a "natural" environment for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping to meet on the sidelines.

He says the world's second and third largest economies must act as responsible members of the international community.

Relations between Japan and China have been tense over island disputes in the East China Sea and wartime history.

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The North Korean Puzzle

[New York Times](#), July 12, 2014

President Park Geun-hye of South Korea and President Xi Jinping of China showed no sense of urgency in tackling the North Korean nuclear issue when they met last week in Seoul, even as analysts keep warning that North Korea is preparing to conduct its fourth nuclear test.

Ms. Park and Mr. Xi said the "two countries reaffirm their firm opposition to the development of nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula" and reiterated the need to resume the six-party talks — involving North Korea, South Korea, China, the United States, Japan and Russia — to end the North's nuclear program. The talks have been suspended since 2009. But there was no sign that anything more concrete came of the meeting. (Some worry that Mr. Xi's five meetings with Ms. Park since he came to office last year is in part an effort to drive a wedge between South Korea and the United States. But Ms. Park is unlikely to be swayed.)

Ms. Park insists that South Korea will attend the talks only after North Korea commits to denuclearization. She raised the hurdle to the resumption of dialogue in March when she chose to deliver a speech in Dresden, Germany,

on her government's vision of Korean unification — which means unification under Seoul's auspices.

Her stance is a more overt departure from that of her predecessors, who did not openly threaten North Korean integrity. President Lee Myung-bak, for instance, proposed the denuclearization of North Korea in exchange for security assurance, normalization of relations and economic assistance. For his part, Mr. Xi is pushing for resumption of the talks but considers denuclearization as a long-term goal and will not support a forced unification.

Meanwhile, North Korea continues to produce more nuclear materials. China should keep pressing the North to curb its nuclear activities, and all parties should try to find a way to return to negotiations.

Vietnam's Overdue Alliance With America

By Tuong Lai

[New York Times](#), July 12, 2014

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam — OURS is a small country. We Vietnamese cannot and must not entrust our future to anyone, but we urgently need strategic allies at a moment in history when our priority is to defeat our present-day enemy: China.

China's move in May, to place an offshore oil rig on the Vietnamese continental shelf, and its arrogant statements in June, at an Asian security summit meeting known as the Shangri-La Dialogue, exposed China's sea piracy to the world. These developments should alarm anyone in Vietnam who still clings to the myth of brotherly love between our nation and China.

We cannot fight Chinese encroachment alone. Political isolation in a globalized world is tantamount to committing political suicide for Vietnam. And the key ally for Vietnam today is the United States — an alliance that the Vietnamese liberation hero Ho Chi Minh ironically always wanted.

The Vietnamese people have fought for thousands of years to maintain our culture and independence, in the shadow of a giant neighbor. But continuing blindness and stupidity have poisoned generations of Vietnamese leaders, even when their Chinese "comrades" blatantly started a border war in 1979 and invaded and occupied the Paracel Islands in 1974 and the Spratly Islands in 1988 — which for centuries both belonged to Vietnam. After the revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989, Vietnamese leaders tried to protect Communism from an embarrassing demise in Southeast Asia. At a now-infamous meeting in Chengdu, China, in 1990, Vietnamese leaders signed agreements that made our country even more dependent on China — a betrayal of our interests and a national shame.

For personal gain, some Vietnamese have even become traitors, blindly toeing the Chinese line. They are reminiscent of the reviled 18th-century king Le Chieu Thong, the last ruler of the Le Dynasty, who died in exile in China.

But the cowardice of Vietnamese leaders has never been so blatant as in the past 25 years. Vietnam's government has put a so-called communist-socialist bond with China above national interests and the well-being of its citizens. Our leaders have regarded invaders as friends.

Because of China's recent territorial grabs at sea and its complete disregard for international law, we are now back to square one. Without a major strategic realignment, Vietnam's island territories will simply be gobbled up by China. Our country must dispose of the myth of friendship with China and return to what Ho Chi Minh passionately advocated after World War II: an American-Vietnamese alliance in Asia.

Ho's sympathies with the United States and its platform of self-determination for all peoples went as far back as the Paris Peace Conference after World War I. Beginning in World War II, the Americans were the only foreign army to fight by Ho's side against fascism in Indochina; the Office of Strategic Services (the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency) helped to train and set up the first Vietnamese-American guerrilla unit at the end of 1944.

It wasn't a coincidence that Ho's inaugural address, when he declared the creation of an independent Vietnam in September 1945, referred to America's Declaration of Independence. He saw the noble values of democracy, freedom, equality and justice as the most important guiding principles for Vietnam.

In a series of eight letters and telegrams to President Harry S. Truman, and three to Secretary of State James F. Byrnes in 1945-46, Ho denounced French colonialism and clearly stated "our goal is full independence and full cooperation with the United States" and expressed the Vietnamese people's admiration for "the American people whose fine stand for the noble ideals of international Justice and Humanity, and whose modern technical achievements have so strongly appealed to them."

Regrettably, most of his letters were ignored. History is littered with many such missed opportunities. In this case, there were disastrous consequences.

When young Americans aimed their weapons at Vietnamese in a little country on the other side of the Pacific, they did it in the belief that it was their duty to stop the "red wave." On the Vietnamese side, young men and women sacrificed their lives fearlessly on the Ho Chi Minh Trail with guns and tanks provided by the Soviet Union and China — our so-called dear socialist brothers. But tragedies usually begin with misguided ideology and illusions of friendship. A peace treaty with the Soviet Union, signed in 1978, did little to help Vietnam during its border war in 1979 with China.

The fundamental issue facing Vietnam today is to choose the right strategic partners. Japan, and to a lesser extent South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and other smaller Asian nations offer good case studies. American atomic

bombs devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but postwar Japan still chose the United States as its key ally and economic partner and adopted core American values as its guiding principles.

In terms of economic and social development, the choice between the model of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore and that of North Korea, Cuba and Laos is abundantly clear.

The Chinese government's hypocrisy and double-dealing are well known and well documented. As our prime minister, Nguyen Tan Dung, recently put it bluntly: "Vietnam has always wanted peace and friendship with China. However, we cannot trade our sacred independence and sovereignty for some elusive peace or any type of dependence." His strong words heralded a new way of dealing with China. But much more is needed.

Vietnamese leaders need to move decisively by taking claims against China before international courts and once and for all relegating the idea of an ideological bond with China to the dustbin of history. Vietnam must fully implement and follow the true spirit of Ho's Declaration of Independence in 1945. And that means finally establishing the sort of close economic and military relations with the United States that Ho had wanted after World War II.

That is the only way to defeat the new Chinese expansionism propelled by its president, Xi Jinping, and for Vietnam to join the rest of the civilized world, with its ideals of democracy, freedom and justice for all.

France To Deploy 3,000 Troops To North Africa

By Ruth Bender

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

France To Shift Mali Troops To Battle Regional Terrorism

[Reuters](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Heavy Fighting Breaks Out Near Libya's Tripoli Airport, Seven Dead

By Feras Bosalum And Ulf Laessing

[Reuters](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Rival Factions In Libyan Capital Battle For Control Of Main Airport

By Kareem Fahim

[New York Times](#), July 14, 2014

CAIRO — Rival militias in the Libyan capital, Tripoli, fought for control of the city's main airport on Sunday, leaving at least six people dead and causing the cancellation of international flights, officials said.

The fighting, with rockets, machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades, was some of the fiercest in the capital in months and an urgent reminder of the chaos prevailing in the country: Nearly three years after the death of Libya's dictator, Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, the fighters who rebelled against him remained locked in a struggle for control of territory, resources and critical facilities, sidelining the central government.

The United Nations mission in Libya, which began to withdraw staff members last week because of security concerns, accelerated that withdrawal on Sunday, said a staff member who was not authorized to speak to the news media. A United Nations spokesman did not immediately return a call.

The deadliest of Libya's recent fighting has occurred in the eastern city of Benghazi, where troops loyal to an army general named Khalifa Hifter are battling other armed militias, as part of what Mr. Hifter says is a national campaign to eradicate Libya's powerful Islamist politicians and fighters. The clashes have opened new divisions across the country and aggravated Libya's violence.

Those divisions appeared to play a role in the Tripoli clashes on Sunday, which also involved militias with a history of animosity. The international airport in Tripoli, a strategic prize, has been under the control of fighters from the western mountain town of Zintan since 2011. Early Sunday, rival militias in western Libya, including those from the coastal city of Misurata, attacked the Zintani brigades at the airport and other sites in Tripoli. In addition to the six dead, at least 25 people were wounded.

Libya has become a source of intensifying alarm for its neighbors, including Egypt. They are worried about the flow of weapons from Libya's vast stores, as well as fighters, across their borders. Attempts to mediate disputes between rival factions in Libya, by international allies including by the United States, have so far failed.

In an unusually pointed statement on Saturday, the State Department expressed frustration with the relentless fighting, urging the quick seating of a new Parliament. "Libya's future will not be secured through force of arms," said Jen Psaki, a State Department spokeswoman, adding that "dangerous posturing" by the quarreling parties could lead to "widespread conflict."

Osama al-Fitory contributed reporting from Tripoli, Libya.

NATIONAL NEWS

Governors Slam Inaction On Highway Funding Officials From Both Parties Call for Congress to Consider Raising Gas Tax to Ensure More Stable Revenue for Roads

By Peter Nicholas And Siobhan Hughes

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Firms Can Write Off New Equipment Under House Bill That Obama Says He Will Veto

By Stephen Ohlemacher

[Washington Post](#), July 14, 2014

The House voted Friday to make permanent a temporary tax break that makes it easier for businesses invest in new equipment, one of many expired tax breaks that Congress must deal with by the end of the year.

The tax break allows businesses to more quickly write off the costs of new equipment, making it popular among business groups. But the White House has threatened a veto because the bill would add \$287 billion to the budget deficit over the next decade.

The House approved the bill by a vote of 258 to 160.

The tax break, known as bonus depreciation, has been around for years, though it has always been temporary. The latest version was enacted in 2008 to help jump-start the economy.

"It's easy, if you want to grow the economy, encourage job creation and increase federal revenue, you support making bonus depreciation permanent," said Rep. Patrick J. Tiberi (R-Ohio), who sponsored the bill. "Permanency gives job creators the certainty they need to plan and invest in their businesses, including hiring employees."

The White House said the tax break "was never intended to be a permanent corporate giveaway."

Typically, when a business buys equipment or property, it can deduct the cost over a period of years, depending on how long the equipment is projected to last. The tax break allows businesses to write off a larger share of the cost in the first year, immediately reducing tax bills.

The tax break expired at the beginning of the year, along with more than 50 other temporary tax breaks that Congress routinely extends.

The Republican-led House has voted to make a handful of the tax breaks permanent, leaving the fate of others uncertain.

The Democratic-controlled Senate is taking a different approach. Instead of making the tax breaks permanent, senators have been working on a package that would extend nearly all the temporary tax breaks through 2015.

Democratic leaders say their approach would give lawmakers more time to decide which tax breaks to make permanent and which ones to get rid of.

The stalemate is unlikely to be resolved until after congressional elections in November. If Congress renews the temporary tax breaks by the end of the year, taxpayers would be able to claim them on their 2014 returns, which will be filed next spring.

Pentagon Gives Pink Slips To Thousands Of Soldiers, Including Active-duty Officers

[Reuters](#), July 13, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

House Hearing Examines 'viability' Of Federal Senior Executive Service

By Joe Davidson

[Washington Post](#), July 14, 2014

Federal senior executives may not have realized there's a question about the existence of their elite crew.

Yet, that's the implication from the title of last week's House hearing on "The Viability of the Senior Executive Service."

General Schedule employees should not feel overlooked. A hearing asking "Is the Federal Government's General Schedule (GS) a Viable Personnel System for the Future?" is scheduled for Tuesday.

With some members of Congress thinking that senior executives are overpaid and overprotected, there is a question about the viability of the SES in its current form. Congress now is poised to kill or badly cut certain SES civil-service protections in the Department of Veterans Affairs. That might just be the opening act.

After the hearing, the chairman of the House Oversight subcommittee on the federal workforce, Rep. Blake Farenthold (R-Tex.), said that "the Senior Executive Service is not meeting its intended purpose when it continues unsustainable management practices, such as uneven application of performance-bonus standards and failure to hold accountable employees who fall short of achieving agency goals."

That expanded on the critical tenor of his opening statement: "This committee's oversight work has shown that government continues to lack the quality executive leadership necessary to administer key government services and programs."

That's a clear jab at the 7,000 senior executives who think they are providing quality executive leadership. Most of them do.

But the ongoing VA scandal allegedly involving SES members in the falsification of patient wait-time records, and the related coverup, have provided an opening for Farenthold and others to raise questions about the operation of the SES as a whole.

The answers already emerging will not make SES members happy and, more important, could damage the fundamental notion of an independent, nonpartisan corps of executive civil servants.

Farenthold said the hearing provided "a chance to discuss how we can institute a system that allows agencies to more quickly and fairly remove incompetent leaders — whose appointments do not have time limitations — while guarding against politically motivated actions."

Unfortunately, a House VA bill that Farenthold and many others supported did not guard against politically motivated actions. It would strip due-process protections from VA Senior Executive Service members, by allowing the department's top political appointee to fire the workers, who would have no appeal rights. Congress also has considered another mass-punishment measure, prohibiting bonuses or performance awards for all SES members at VA.

"Punishing all VA senior executives by banning performance awards irrespective of performance or creating 'at will' employment in the SES, which could enable a new administration to clean out" employees aligned with the opposition political party "will do more harm than good," said Carol A. Bonosaro, president of the Senior Executives Association. "The best current executives will retire, and excellent candidates will refrain from applying to the SES. And who will be left to provide the care and services which veterans need and deserve?"

Rep. Stephen F. Lynch (Mass.), the top Democrat on the subcommittee, was among the strong majority that supported the House VA bill. Yet he spoke eloquently at the hearing about the need both to discipline wayward senior executives and to guard against a spoils system.

"I hope that, in the name of government reform, we don't forget a key lesson from our history and inadvertently return the federal government to an era susceptible to political patronage and corruption," he said.

Lynch said he will propose legislation allowing VA to take back performance awards granted to those guilty of misconduct, a bill Farenthold indicated he might co-sponsor. Committee members also were understandably critical of employees keeping their SES pay even if demoted to a lower rank.

Samuel Retherford, a VA principal deputy assistant secretary, told the panel that VA already has the authority it needs to discipline employees.

"To remain competitive in recruiting and retaining the best personnel to serve our veterans, we must rely on tools such as incentives and awards that recognize superior performance," he said.

Stephen T. Shih, a deputy associate director at the Office of Personnel Management, said during their probationary period staffers generally can be removed from the SES after written notice, but without a performance rating and with no opportunity for appeal. Agencies are required to remove workers from the SES if they get less than fully successful ratings twice in any three consecutive years.

Those and other disciplinary provisions probably are not enough to stop legislative changes to the SES. Some of those changes might make sense. Mass punishment does not.

With "an essentially broken pay-for-performance system," a "series of punitive legislative proposals" and "an atmosphere which inhibits risk-taking," Bonosaro described a Senior Executive Service in crisis. How Congress responds is crucial.

Morale among SES members is already bad and talented lower-level employees are declining to join them, Bonosaro said.

"The service may well become a place of last resort," she added, "as high-performing employees take their skills to the private sector."

ObamaCare's Next Court Threat

By Elise Viebeck

[The Hill](#), July 14, 2014

A federal appeals court is poised to rule in a case that could blow a gaping hole in ObamaCare's scheme for providing healthcare coverage.

The plaintiffs in *Halbig v. Burwell* argue that the healthcare law does not authorize the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to offer premium subsidies on the federal exchanges.

It's an issue that strikes at the heart of the Affordable Care Act's insurance benefits and could potentially end financial help for nearly 5 million enrollees.

That is, if the plaintiffs succeed. Legal experts have generally looked askance at the lawsuit, which has a losing record in federal court so far.

But some believe that a looming decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit could break that trend. A ruling could come out on Tuesday.

Either way, it's a case that could wind up at the Supreme Court.

"The IRS has arrogated for itself the power to rewrite a federal statute, triggering federal appropriations and financial penalties beyond those authorized by the legislature," wrote Jonathan H. Adler and Michael F. Cannon in an amicus brief to the D.C. appeals court in support of the plaintiffs.

“Such ‘administrative hubris’ cannot stand,” they said.

Adler and Cannon, from Case Western Reserve University and the Cato Institute, crafted the legal theory behind the case.

The lawsuit’s critics, though, say plaintiffs are missing the forest for the trees.

“Courts do not read statutes by cherry-picking single phrases to defeat the entire purpose of laws,” wrote Washington and Lee University Law School Professor Timothy Jost in the Washington Post.

“If one views the totality of the [law] ... it’s clear that tax credits are available in the federal exchange.”

Court watchers expect Judge Thomas Griffith to be the swing vote in the case.

An appointee of former President George W. Bush, he appeared somewhat friendly to the plaintiffs’ view during oral arguments before a three-judge panel.

Still, it is unclear whether the challengers would succeed if the government appealed the case to the full circuit.

The 4th Circuit Court of Appeals is also due to issue its ruling soon in a similar case.

After Lapses, C.D.C. Admits A Lax Culture At Labs

By Richard Fausset And Donald G. McNeil Jr.

[New York Times](#), July 14, 2014

ATLANTA — Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, spent much of Wednesday completing a report that would let the public see, in embarrassing detail, how the sloppy handling of anthrax by scientists at its headquarters here had potentially exposed dozens of employees to the deadly bacteria.

But just as he was sitting down for a late-afternoon lunch at his Washington, D.C., office, an urgent call came in. There had been another accident, this one just as disturbing, if not more so — and no one in the agency’s top leadership had been informed about it until that Monday, though the C.D.C.’s lab had been told about it more than a month earlier.

C.D.C. workers had somehow shipped a dangerous strain of avian influenza to a poultry research lab run by the Department of Agriculture. Known as H5N1, the virus had killed more than half of the 650 people who had been infected with it since 2003.

“I was, just frankly, stunned and appalled,” Dr. Frieden said in an interview Saturday.

The recent revelations have created a crisis of faith in the federal agency, prompting calls for an independent body to investigate such episodes in the future, as well as for sweeping changes at the agency and to a sprawling web of research labs that has grown after the 2001 terror attacks led

to an intensified focus on microbes that could be used as biological weapons.

Dr. Michael Bell, a 19-year C.D.C. veteran who has been appointed by Dr. Frieden to a new position overseeing laboratory safety, said in an interview Saturday that he was most concerned about the “potential for hubris” among researchers who grow so inured to the daily grind of working with deadly microbes that they cease to follow safety protocols. The agency both conducts that research and is charged with ensuring that other labs adhere to federal safety standards.

The agency’s internal investigation of the troubling events, made public Friday, found that senior staff members had failed to write up a plan for researchers to follow in the anthrax study. It also faulted scientists who neglected to review the existing literature before working with the deadly pathogen, and found that the agency was ill-prepared to respond to a potential exposure episode.

“It is ironic that the institution that sets U.S. standards for safety and security of work with human pathogens fails to meet its own standards,” Richard H. Ebright, a professor of chemistry and chemical biology at Rutgers University, wrote in an email Saturday. “It is clear that the C.D.C. cannot be relied upon to police its own select-agent labs.”

Dr. Frieden has closed the agency’s flu and bioterror laboratories and has banned all shipments from the agency’s highest-security labs while safety protocols are reviewed — a move that could freeze work at many public-health labs that rely on such shipments

Later this month, the C.D.C. will invite outside experts to form an external advisory group on lab safety. But some experts say that the agency should not police itself.

Najmedin Meshkati, an engineering professor at the University of Southern California who teaches a course in investigating accidents, commended Dr. Frieden for his candor. But he said that the C.D.C. should turn to an independent institution like the United States National Academies, which includes the National Academy of Sciences, to address safety problems. Others suggested an agency with subpoena powers comparable to the National Transportation Safety Board, which investigates airline crashes and can ground whole fleets it deems unsafe.

Dr. Frieden said the idea of an independent investigative agency was “certainly worth exploring.”

The anthrax accident occurred on June 5 in the agency’s bioterrorism rapid response lab. C.D.C. researchers in Atlanta had been preparing to test a faster way to identify dangerous substances. The lab used a virulent anthrax strain in the test when a weaker one would have worked.

The work was conducted in area classified as a “three” on the biosafety scale, with four being the highest security level. Such labs work with microorganisms that may lead to serious illness or death if inhaled, and follow strict safety

guidelines: Workers wear safety hoods that filter air and typically work with infectious materials in special ventilated boxes called biosafety cabinets.

On June 2, according to the report, a lab supervisor called a scientist at another lab who had done similar work on a different bacterium, brucella, which can cause fevers and swelling in humans.

The written protocol for preparing brucella for the test was sent to the bioterrorism lab, and the supervisor told a scientist to follow it while preparing eight dangerous pathogens, including anthrax. But anthrax forms hardy spores, while brucella does not.

In addition, the brucella protocol required that bacteria be killed in a bath of formic acid for 10 minutes, and that small samples of it be incubated for 48 hours to be sure it was dead.

But a mix-up occurred when the instructions were conveyed over the phone. The scientist incubated the test samples for only 24 hours before sending the bulk of the bacteria to less-secure labs. Some of the bacteria were not filtered to remove spores.

After 24 hours, one scientist tried to sterilize the test plates in a high-power steam autoclave. But its door was stuck, so the plates were returned to the incubator. It was an inconvenience that would prove extremely lucky.

Over the next few days, scientists in two other labs where breathing equipment was not used agitated the bacteria and sprayed them with compressed gas, which could have blown spores into the air.

On June 13, one scientist checked the incubated plates and saws that anthrax was growing. If the door to the autoclave had opened properly and, as the report noted, the plates had been sterilized, "the event would not have been discovered."

The troubling finding was reported immediately, according to the report. Rooms were closed off, and floors, tabletops, equipment and door handles were decontaminated.

Lab tests would later determine that the chemical bath would have killed any live, growing anthrax sent out of the lab, but not all the dangerous spores. Staff exposure, the report concluded, was "not impossible," but "extremely unlikely."

By looking at videotapes and the use of door key cards, managers tried to figure out who might have been exposed. They discovered another safety violation: staffers often "piggybacked," following colleagues through doors without using their own cards.

Ultimately, 62 employees were offered vaccines and antibiotics. None have shown signs of illness related to anthrax exposure.

C.D.C. officials learned of the avian flu blunder from the Agriculture Department's poultry lab in Athens, Ga. It had

received a C.D.C. shipment of what was supposed to be a relatively benign H9N2 bird flu virus. But it was contaminated with H5N1 bird flu and rapidly killed test chickens. H5N1 is deadly to humans but not easily transmitted between them. In birds, it can wipe out flocks overnight.

Fortunately, both labs had used high-security precautions. Had it slipped out of either laboratory, it might have killed some people and would possibly have devastated the American poultry industry, several experts said.

The near miss should have been reported immediately to top leadership, but was not. The flu lab heard from the Agriculture Department on May 23, but it was not reported to senior C.D.C. leadership until July 7.

Dr. Frieden said the delay shocked him because the agency's flu lab is renowned in its field.

He and Dr. Bell said in interviews that the bioterror lab might have lax management and the flu lab might have workers who are afraid to speak out. Both problems are dangerous.

"It's going to take a while to sort that out," Dr. Frieden said.

The report recalled other errors. In 2006, the agency accidentally sent live anthrax to two other labs, and also shipped out live botulism bacteria.

Several experts on biosecurity noted that the inspector general's office of the Department of Health and Human Services sent official complaints to the C.D.C. in 2008, 2009 and 2010 about undertrained lab personnel and improperly secured shipments.

Both Dr. Frieden and his predecessor, Dr. Julie L. Gerberding, replied in letters over their signatures that the problems would be fixed.

The agency's report Friday suggested that fewer labs should be handling dangerous microbes.

Richard Fausset reported from Atlanta, and Donald G. McNeil Jr. from New York.

With U.S. Encouragement, VA Disability Claims Rise Sharply

By Alan Zarembo

[Los Angeles Times](#), July 13, 2014

As Malvin Espinosa prepared to retire from the Army in 2011, a Veterans Affairs counselor urged him to apply for disability pay.

List all your medical problems, the counselor said.

Espinosa, a mechanic at Ft. Lee in Virginia, had never considered himself disabled. But he did have ringing in his ears, sleep problems and aching joints. He also had bad memories of unloading a dead soldier from a helicopter in Afghanistan.

"Put it all down," he recalled the counselor saying.

Espinosa did, and as a result, he is getting a monthly disability check of \$1,792, tax free, most likely for the rest of his life. The VA deems him 80% disabled due to sleep apnea, mild post-traumatic stress disorder, tinnitus and migraines.

The 41-year-old father of three collects a military pension along with disability pay — and as a civilian has returned to the base, working full-time training mechanics. His total income of slightly more than \$70,000 a year is about 20% higher than his active-duty pay.

Similar stories are playing out across the VA.

With the government encouraging veterans to apply, enrollment in the system climbed from 2.3 million to 3.7 million over the last 12 years.

The growth comes even as the deaths of older former service members have sharply reduced the veteran population. Annual disability payments have more than doubled to \$49 billion — nearly as much as the VA spends on medical care.

More than 875,000 Afghanistan and Iraq war veterans have joined the disability rolls so far. That's 43% of those who served — a far higher percentage than for any previous U.S. conflict, including World War II and Vietnam, which had significantly higher rates of combat wounds.

Disabled veterans of the recent wars have an average of 6.3 medical conditions each, also higher than other conflicts.

Incentives to seek disability ratings have increased due to changes in VA policy, including expanded eligibility for post-traumatic stress disorder and a number of afflictions that affect tens of millions of civilians.

Nearly any ailment that originated during service or was aggravated by it — from sports injuries to shrapnel wounds — is covered under the rationale that the military is a 24/7 job.

The disability system was unprepared for the massive influx of claims, leading to backlogs of veterans waiting months or longer to start receiving their checks.

But once the payments begin, many veterans say, they are a life-saver.

Ray Lopez struggled to keep a steady job after leaving the Marines in 2001. Stints as a TSA screener, insurance agent and soft drink salesman ended badly.

At 35, Lopez is rated 70% disabled for back, shoulder and knee pain, as well as post-traumatic stress disorder from having witnessed a deadly helicopter crash off the coast of San Diego.

He couldn't support his wife and two children, he said, without the monthly \$1,800 disability check. "If it wasn't for that, I'd be on the streets," he said.

Lopez trains boxers three days a week and is pursuing a community college degree.

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The generosity of veterans benefits is on an upswing in a pendulum arc as old as the republic.

During the Revolutionary War, disability payments were limited to soldiers who lost limbs or suffered other serious wounds.

Lobbying by Civil War veterans led to coverage that included peacetime injuries and illnesses.

After World War I, compensation was scaled back to cover only combat injuries and diseases contracted in war. But World War II brought an expansion to include all conditions that appeared during service or shortly afterward.

In the 1950s, President Eisenhower — a former five-star general — tried to rein in the costs. He found little support in Congress, and the basic system has remained the same ever since.

The VA uses a formula that combines a veteran's conditions into a rating of between 0% and 100% — in 10% increments. The higher the rating, the larger the disability payment.

Nearly half of those in the system have ratings of 30% or below. They can apply for higher ratings if ailments grow worse.

"The disability system has this escalator quality," said David Autor, an economist at MIT. "Once you get on, you just keep going up."

The current benefits boom began with a political battle over Agent Orange and other herbicides used to clear jungle brush in Vietnam.

In 1991, Congress and the VA started paying veterans who had served on the ground there — meaning possible exposure to Agent Orange — and went on to develop diseases that eventually included lung and prostate cancer.

Then in 2001, the VA added Type 2 diabetes to the list. The disease affects 1 in 4 U.S. senior citizens and has not been definitely linked to Agent Orange. But veterans groups lobbied to include it.

"The feeling was, let's give them whatever they need and move on," said Anthony Principi, the VA secretary at the time. Through 2013, the number of veterans receiving compensation for diabetes climbed from 46,395 to 398,480.

The Obama administration added three more conditions in 2010: Parkinson's disease, a rare form of leukemia and ischemic heart disease. Since then, more than 100,000 cases of heart disease — the leading cause of death in the U.S. — have been added to the disability rolls.

Veterans of all generations also have been encouraged to apply for compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder, with Vietnam and the recent wars driving the growth in roughly equal measure over the last decade.

Some veterans said they have lived with the disorder ever since leaving the military. Others kept it at bay until recent wars or major life changes released old demons. The economic uncertainties of retirement age also gave veterans more incentive to apply.

As post-traumatic stress disorder claims boomed, the Obama administration made them easier to win.

The VA had long required documentation of a traumatic event that resulted in post-traumatic stress disorder. But in 2010, in keeping with the current science, the administration said a qualifying trauma could simply be a fear-inducing situation such as traveling through enemy territory.

Karen Olszewski, who works in Long Beach for the nonprofit Vietnam Veterans of America, said that once the rules changed, she started calling men whose cases she had rejected.

"I told them to come back," she said.

More than 1.3 million veterans of the Vietnam era received \$21 billion in disability pay last year. From Afghanistan and Iraq, the cost was \$9.3 billion — but it is growing fast.

Among disabled veterans of recent wars, 43% have tinnitus, the most common condition. Rounding out the top 10 are back or neck strain, knee problems, post-traumatic stress disorder, migraines, arthritis of the spine, scars, ankle trouble, defective hearing and high blood pressure.

"They're filing for the basic wear and tear of military service, not combat injuries," said Phillip Carter, a veterans expert at the Center for a New American Security, a nonpartisan think tank.

One of the latest trends, resulting from another policy change, is a rise in disability determinations related to sleep apnea — from 11,742 to 164,107 over the last decade.

The Pentagon had long prohibited veterans from receiving disability pay in addition to their military pensions. But in 2003, officials lifted the ban if a veteran had a disability rating of at least 50%. The change triggered a surge in claims costing billions of dollars — including many by veterans with sleep apnea, which is typically rated as a 50% disability.

The condition tends to strike in middle age due to weight gain and can usually be managed by wearing a breathing mask while sleeping, but the VA does not consider such external devices in its disability decisions.

Retired Navy veteran David Adams said he was surprised that sleep apnea, for which he wears a breathing mask, qualified him for disability pay. At 49, he works as an electrician in an aluminum factory in Davenport, Iowa. He said his monthly disability pay of \$910 gives his family financial security by boosting his \$1,800-a-month military pension.

"Most of the time, the rules are against you," Adams said. "You get one that's for you, you don't question it."

The expansion of disability benefits signals a change in attitude about the purpose of the payments, long intended to compensate veterans for lost income. Studies have found that many disabilities in the system have no effect on average earnings. One showed that veterans receiving disability pay tend to have higher total incomes than those who do not.

In the age of an all-volunteer military and after two unpopular wars, disability pay has come to be seen as a lifetime deferred payment for service.

Roderick Atkinson, who spent 26 years on active duty and as a reservist, said he views it as compensation for the hardships he endured.

"The real kicker was the time I spent away from my family," Atkinson said.

The 53-year-old's voice flattened when talking about how he developed post-traumatic stress disorder after living in fear of mortar attacks in Iraq — and how it rendered him unable to work around other people. The Santa Monica mail carrier counts knee and ankle problems among his ailments.

He has a 100% disability rating, entitling him to a monthly check of \$3,200.

Espinosa, the Ft. Lee trainer, said his monthly \$1,792 disability check is scarcely making him rich. All of it goes to for his son's college education.

He has filed new claims for back and knee pain, gastrointestinal problems and vertigo in an attempt to boost his 80% disability rating.

"I believe my disability rating — and I'm not trying to sound greedy — should be 100%," he said. "I know what I went through."

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Ukrainian Forces Pound Rebel Stronghold

By Sabrina Tavernise

[New York Times](#), July 14, 2014

DONETSK, Ukraine — Ukrainian forces battered the outer suburbs of the rebel stronghold of Luhansk on Sunday, pushing deeper than ever into the city but falling short of retaking it.

The Ukrainian forces pounded rebel positions in an area called Yuvileiny just west of Luhansk, a rebel spokeswoman and residents said. Some accounts said the forces had managed to establish a checkpoint there, though a Ukrainian military spokesman could not confirm that.

Some news reports said that the government forces had retaken the city, which is crucial for the survival of the pro-Russian insurgency here in part because of its proximity to the Russian border. But residents and rebels said Sunday evening that the city was still in rebel hands.

"So far our forces are holding them back," said a spokeswoman for the self-declared Luhansk People's Republic who asked not to be identified by name for her safety.

Andrei Anoshin, a journalist for Realnaya Gazeta, a newspaper in Luhansk, said that the city had been shelled intensely for the past week, and that many civilians had been killed. "Today wasn't that different from other days," Mr. Anoshin said, adding that in the city center, "it is tense, but militarily calm."

The military advances came as relations between Ukraine and Russia fell to a new low. On Sunday, a Russian citizen was killed on Russian soil by what the Russian government said was an errant Ukrainian shell. Ukraine denied firing a shell into Russian territory. Russia said the episode could have “irreversible consequences.”

Also on Sunday, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia met with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany in Brazil and discussed the Ukraine crisis, Reuters reported. Citing a Putin spokesman, Reuters said the two leaders had called for the resumption of political negotiations on Ukraine but had added that for that to happen, a cease-fire needed to be declared and honored by all sides. Ukraine’s president, Petro O. Poroshenko declared a unilateral cease-fire last month but then called it off, saying the rebels had refused to abide by it and had used the truce merely to regroup and rearm.

Ukraine is trying to quell a pro-Russian insurgency that has inflamed its southeastern edge since spring. Luhansk, a region of coal mines and industry that is poorer and grittier than Donetsk, another rebel stronghold, is critical for the insurgents because it shares a long border with Russia, which the West believes is quietly supporting the rebels. Ukraine has been hitting rebel positions for days and has gained considerable ground in areas south and west of the city.

The Russian news agency Interfax cited an unnamed rebel in Luhansk as saying the Ukrainian forces had begun to storm the city from an area called Alexandrovka. The rebel said the attack included not only artillery fire, but also dozens of tanks and two fighter helicopters. It was impossible to verify the report. Three residents interviewed on Sunday said they had seen neither tanks nor helicopters.

In Donetsk, a local emergency worker, Alexander Ryaboshapka, said seven people were killed Saturday in a rocket attack in the Petrovsky neighborhood. One of them was a young girl. The Ukrainian military denied responsibility for the attack.

The rockets landed in such a way that suggested that they had been fired from the south, where Ukrainian forces are based. Still, some residents said on Sunday that the rockets had been fired from rebel positions.

The attack caused residents to flee the neighborhood, and on Sunday, it was silent. Vera Alexeyevna, a retired nurse, was cleaning debris in her small, tidy house on Bank Street. A window had been blown in by the blast, and a bed with yellow sheets was covered with shards of glass. She and her husband, both pensioners, did not have the money to leave, she said, so they had nothing to do but sweep up and hope.

“How long will this go on? Please tell me how long,” she said, wiping tears from her face.

Russian’s ‘Imperial Dream’ Faces Last Stand In Donetsk

By Philip Shishkin

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

AFT Calls For Education Secretary Duncan To Submit To ‘improvement’ Plan Or Resign

By Valerie Strauss

[Washington Post](#), July 14, 2014

Education Secretary Arne Duncan’s relations with the country’s largest teachers unions — which collectively have more than 4 million members — keep getting worse. Earlier this month, the nation’s largest teachers union called for him to resign. On Sunday, the second-largest teachers union passed a resolution that stopped short of a direct call for him to quit but urged President Obama to put Duncan on an “improvement plan.” If Duncan doesn’t improve, he should resign, it says.

The obvious hitch: Obama hasn’t shown a single sign that he disagrees with Duncan’s education reform agenda, which is largely focused on using standardized test scores to hold educators accountable (a method that accountability experts say is unreliable) as well as implementing the controversial Common Core State Standards and increasing the number of charter schools.

The resolution passed by American Federation of Teachers delegates meeting in Los Angeles for the union’s 2014 convention calls for Obama to set up and implement an “improvement plan” for Duncan to hold him accountable for his job performance. It says the plan should, among other things, require Duncan to enact specific school funding equity recommendations in a report issued by a congressionally charged bipartisan Equity and Excellence Commission, and end the “test and punish” accountability systems of No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top. If an accountability plan is not put in place and Duncan does not “improve,” then he should resign, the AFT resolution says.

The resolution passed earlier this month by delegates at the National Education Association’s convention in Denver calls for Duncan to resign, saying his “failed education agenda” has focused on high-stakes standardized tests and served to “undermine public schools and colleges.”

The anti-Duncan votes — which were passed by representative assemblies of both unions and not the entire membership — reflect rising anger at the Obama administration’s education reform policies that have led teachers to feel that they were being unfairly targeted by officials. The proverbial last straw for the unions may have been Duncan’s support for the verdict in Vergara vs. California, in which a judge tossed out California statutes that

provided job protections to teachers. (The judge stayed his decision until an appeal can be heard.)

Another Teachers Union Ding For Arne Duncan

By Allie Grasgreen
[Politico](#), July 14, 2014

The American Federation of Teachers approved a resolution this afternoon calling for Education Secretary Arne Duncan to resign if he does not improve under a plan to be implemented by President Barack Obama.

The “improvement plan” would include the requirement that Duncan enact the funding and equity recommendations of the Equity Commission’s “Each and Every Child” report; change the No Child Left Behind and Race To The Top “test-and-punish” accountability system to a “support-and-improve” model; and “promote rather than question” teachers and school staff.

Education Department spokeswoman Dorie Nolt said in an email to POLITICO that Duncan is “hopeful” that he and AFT can “continue to work together.” Nolt added, “the transformation that educators and policymakers are leading to prepare all students for college and careers is incredibly difficult, and too often the adults fight about how to best help the kids.”

AFT President Randi Weingarten said in a statement sent to POLITICO that the amendment “is basically saying, ‘Enough is enough.’ Teachers are evaluated and their future livelihoods are linked to that. And when they fall short, they should have a chance to improve. And that’s what this special order represents.”

The plan was laid out in an amendment tacked onto a resolution codifying AFT’s “Commitment to Fighting Back and Fighting Forward” on labor and education issues.

The AFT member who introduced the amendment cited Duncan’s response to Hurricane Katrina and the Vergara v. California case, and said Duncan’s programs “blackmailed” cash-strapped districts into accepting Race to the Top. But he also put the onus to correct Duncan on Obama: “He made the choice; he must make the change.”

The resolution comes on the heels of one earlier this month by members of the National Education Association calling for Duncan to step down.

Governors Group Skirts ‘Radioactive’ Common Core

By Erik Schelzig And Steve Peoples
[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) – Reviled by staunch conservatives, the common education standards designed to improve schools and student competitiveness are being modified by some Republican governors, who are pushing

back against what they call the federal government’s intrusion into the classroom.

The Common Core standards were not on the formal agenda during a three-day meeting of the National Governors Association that ended Sunday, relegated to hallway discussions and closed-door meetings among governors and their staffs. The standards and even the words, “Common Core,” have “become, in a sense, radioactive,” said Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad, a Republican whose state voluntarily adopted the standards in 2010.

“We want Iowa Common Core standards that meet the needs of our kids,” Branstad said, echoing an intensifying sentiment from tea party leaders who describe the education plan as an attempt by the federal government to take over local education.

There was little controversy when the bipartisan governors association in 2009 helped develop the common education standards aimed at improving schools and students’ competitiveness across the nation. The standards were quickly adopted by 44 states.

But conservative activists who hold outsized influence in Republican politics aggressively condemned Common Core, and lawmakers in 27 states this year have proposed either delaying or revoking Common Core. The issue has forced many ambitious Republicans who previously had few concerns to distance themselves from the standards and the issue has begun to shape the early stages of the 2016 presidential race.

Wisconsin’s Republican Gov. Scott Walker, a potential 2016 candidate among the governors gathered in Nashville, said he has proposed a measure to adopt Wisconsin-specific education standards that are tougher than what the state adopted under Common Core in 2010.

“My problem with Common Core is I don’t want people outside Wisconsin telling us what our standards should be,” Walker said.

Indiana Gov. Mike Pence was the first to sign legislation revoking Common Core in April and fellow potential Republican presidential hopeful Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana signed a series of executive orders blocking the use of tests tied to the standards, a move that outraged his state’s own education superintendent.

Republican governors in Oklahoma and South Carolina, an early presidential primary state, have signed measures aimed at repealing the standards.

Other Republicans, including former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, have defended the standards as integral to improving student performance and maintaining American competitiveness around the globe.

Democratic Gov. Peter Shumlin, of Vermont, called the conservative critics “crazy.”

“The fact that the tea party sees that as a conspiracy is a symptom of their larger problems,” said Shumlin, who leads the Democratic Governors Association.

Common Core is a set of English and math standards that spell out what students should know and when. The standards for elementary math have confounded some parents by departing from some traditional methods to emphasize that kids understand how numbers relate to each other. Comedian Louis C.K. captured some of that frustration when he took to Twitter earlier this year to vent about his kids’ convoluted homework under Common Core, writing that his daughters went from loving math to crying about it.

There are vocal critics on left as well. Teachers’ groups that typically back Democrats have complained that the standards rely too heavily on student test scores, which in turn are used to evaluate teacher performance.

In New Jersey, where Republican Gov. Chris Christie has been a major advocate of tougher accountability measures for teachers, Democratic lawmakers have sought to delay linking evaluations to testing related to the standards.

Christie said he plans to issue an executive order on the issue this week, though he declined to elaborate. Christie, a potential GOP presidential contender, said the public skepticism about Common Core can be traced to a general distrust of the federal government.

He said voters “given the lack of confidence they have in government in Washington and that type of centralization, want their governors” to figure out solutions that work for their states.

Some governors attending the weekend conference said they were surprised to find the resistance to the standards.

“It’s important for us governors to keep remembering the history of this, and the fact that this was not and continues to not be about a federal takeover,” said Delaware Gov. Jack Markell, a Democrat.

Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval of Nevada stressed that the majority of the states are still in the process of implementing the new standards and it’s the responsibility of governors and education officials to remind people that the curriculums will be designed locally.

“Nothing comes without a bit of controversy, but at the end of the day people realize it’s in the best interest of the children of the state,” he said.

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Lower Job Churn Hurts Young Workers

Job-Hopping Can Boost Résumés, Lifetime Pay

By Josh Zumbrun

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Mitch McConnell: Unemployed Americans Need Action

[USA Today](#), July 13, 2014

Today, millions of Americans remain unemployed. But even for those lucky enough to have a job, things have never seemed tougher. Outdated policies diminish opportunities in the workplace, leaving many torn between the demands of work and family. And between car payments, a mortgage, out-of-control tuition, and the rising energy and medical costs many face, there’s often little left for anything else.

Easing this middle-class squeeze is a top priority for Republicans. We understand that the challenges facing the middle class are varied and complex – and that, while more jobs and lower costs are critically important, so too are greater flexibility and increased options for busy families. That’s why we’ve put forward a number of bills in Congress in recent months aimed at orienting our economy away from the failed policies of the past and toward the actual needs and realities of today’s working families.

We’ve sought to do things like restore the 40-hour workweek and fix a pay cut built into Obamacare (Forty Hours Is Full Time Act), increase educational opportunities (Expanding Opportunity Through Quality Charter Schools Act), and put an end to an outdated law that prevents women from getting paid more when they outperform their male colleagues (RAISE Act).

One bill I recently introduced with Sen. Ayotte, the Family Friendly and Workplace Flexibility Act, would help Americans better balance the demands of work and family by allowing workers to take time off as a form of overtime compensation. It’s an idea that’s tailored to the needs of the modern workforce, it’s something a lot of working men and women say they want, and there’s no reason not to provide a little more flexibility to working families. Another bill I introduced, the Working Parents Home Office Act, would reduce the hassle and cost of child care for working parents already stretched thin enough. My legislation would do that by changing the law to allow parents to write off a home office even if they happen to have a crib in the room. Currently, the law treats working moms and dads unfairly by disqualifying them from this deduction if they care for their child while working in a home office. So making that change is just common sense.

And, really, you could say that common sense is the hallmark of all the legislation we’ve introduced. We’re not

trying to create massive government bureaucracies. We're not looking to take from one struggling neighbor to give to another. Our aim instead is simply to identify smart, common-sense fixes that can make a significant impact in the lives of middle-class families — families who've never felt more squeezed.

We think these are ideas that both parties should be able to support. That's why we've been reaching out to our Democrat colleagues in Washington to help us bring some relief to the middle class on a bipartisan basis. So far, we haven't gotten a very positive response.

The Democrats who run the Senate have blocked most of these bills from advancing as a result of an election-year calculation that voters will stick with them if they just stand in place and do nothing. It doesn't make much sense, and it isn't doing anything to help middle-class Americans who are just looking for solutions. A better course would be to pass these common sense bills and let the politics take care of itself.

Because our middle-class constituents need relief, not more politics. And Republicans are committed to doing everything we can to deliver that relief to them. I hope Senate Democrats will join us in that effort soon.

Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky is the Senate Republican Leader.

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The Full-Time Scandal Of Part-Time America

Fewer than half of U.S. adults are working full time. Why? Slow growth and the perverse incentives of ObamaCare.

By Mortimer Zuckerman

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

The End Of Quantitative Easing Is Good News

By Editorial Board

[Washington Post](#), July 14, 2014

THE FEDERAL Reserve's unconventional "quantitative easing" strategy will not turn into a "QE-ternity" after all. Many a Wall Street wag had suggested that might happen after then-Fed Chairman Ben S. Bernanke announced an indefinite program of \$40 billion per month in asset purchases in September 2012. But on Wednesday the Fed released minutes of its internal discussions showing that the central bank, under new chair Janet L. Yellen, plans to stop quantitative easing in October.

The conclusion of the Fed's bond-buying, which had increased its balance sheet to \$4.4 trillion from \$900 billion before the financial crisis, is good news in two ways. It is a sign that the Fed believes growth and job creation have finally achieved enough momentum to continue without the stimulus that comes from adding to the Fed's balance sheet — while the stimulus of near-zero interest rates and the expanded balance sheet remain in place. And it is a much-needed recognition that easy monetary policy may be breeding asset bubbles not unlike those that contributed to the crash.

Signs of possibly dangerous froth in the markets have multiplied in recent weeks, from unusually low yields on risky corporate junk bonds to soaring luxury real estate prices to record highs for the New York stock market indexes. As the Fed's minutes put it: "Low implied volatility in equity, currency and fixed-income markets as well as signs of increased risk-taking were viewed as an indication that market participants were not factoring in sufficient uncertainty about the path of the economy and monetary policy." Translation: Investors' "search for yield," spurred by the Fed's own prolonged low-interest rate policy, may have become so frenzied that they are paying asset prices that no longer convey accurate information about the economic costs and benefits of various investments.

An irony of this situation is that the Fed is reaping what it sowed. One goal of quantitative easing was precisely to create a rally in asset prices at a time when a panicked market was unduly risk averse. The "wealth effect" also made consumers more eager to spend. All the more reason to praise the Fed's latest action, which shows that the central bank is aware of its responsibilities to counter speculative bubbles before they get too big — if it can. Financial markets are now on notice that near-zero interest rates won't necessarily last forever either.

Yet Ms. Yellen also has explained that suddenly jacking up rates would unduly hamper growth, at least given present conditions. In a recent Washington speech, she argued instead for using the Fed's "regulatory or supervisory" powers to make sure that financial institutions are well-capitalized enough to withstand any bubble-popping that might occur. In its own way, this approach — like the entire business of engineering a safe exit from quantitative easing — is as unconventional and untested as quantitative easing itself. It suggests the Fed chair aims to limit the damage that bubbles do rather than deflate them in the first place.

Given Ms. Yellen's track record, she is entitled to the benefit of the doubt. But given the uncertainties, Congress should explore her thinking in detail when she appears for semi-annual hearings on monetary policy this week.

Boeing Optimistic That Export-Import Bank Will Get Funding

By Nicola Clark

[New York Times](#), July 14, 2014

LONDON — The head of Boeing's commercial aircraft division said on Sunday that he was optimistic that the United States Congress would ultimately agree to reauthorize funding to the Export-Import Bank, which guarantees billions of dollars in loans to foreign buyers of its airplanes.

The Boeing executive, Raymond L. Conner, argued that failure to keep the bank running would risk American jobs and place Boeing at an unbeatable disadvantage to Airbus, which receives similar support from European governments.

"For us to not have the Ex-Im Bank would put us at a huge disadvantage in the marketplace for sure," Mr. Conner said. "I'm optimistic. I think we've put together a pretty good coalition of businesses with solid support."

Mr. Conner's comments came as Boeing announced plans here for a new variant of its best-selling 737 short-range jet with space for up to 200 seats, which it hopes will attract interest from low-cost carriers in Europe and Asia.

Boeing, the biggest exporter in the United States by value, is in the crossfire of the political battle over the Export-Import Bank's future. The bank helped finance the purchase of more than \$37 billion of American exports last year, of which \$8 billion went to Boeing clients.

Congressional authorization for the bank is due to expire in September. Republicans have attacked the bank as extravagant government largess to big business and threatened to block renewal of its charter.

The bank's opponents have forged an alliance with some American airlines, which say the bank's guarantees give an unfair cost advantage to foreign rivals, particularly carriers from the Persian Gulf that have been aggressively building up their fleets with jets like the Boeing 787 and 777. Domestic airlines, among them some of Boeing's largest customers, are not eligible for such subsidies.

Mr. Conner argued that eliminating United States loan guarantees would do little to protect American carriers from foreign competition, since those competitors would simply turn to European agencies for help buying Airbus planes.

Mr. Conner spoke on the eve of the weeklong Farnborough International Air Show, which begins Monday. Boeing and Airbus compete head-to-head at the biennial show, where airlines from around the globe traditionally place billions of dollars in orders for new jets.

In addition to Boeing's new 737 variant, Airbus is widely expected to announce an upgraded version of its A330 widebody plane fitted with more fuel-efficient engines and a more aerodynamic wing.

Boeing Will Survive An Ex-Im Defeat

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

How A Raid In Benghazi Helped Shape Citigroup's \$7 Billion Settlement

By Ben Protess, Jessica Silver-Greenberg, And Michael Corkery

[New York Times](#), July 14, 2014

The stage was set for another public shaming of a Wall Street bank.

The Justice Department flew in a lead prosecutor from Colorado and planned for a news conference in Washington to announce a lawsuit against Citigroup over mortgage securities that had imploded during the financial crisis.

But an event a world away that day in June unexpectedly changed the Justice Department's plans. The capture of a suspect in the deadly attack on the United States Mission in Benghazi, Libya, led federal prosecutors to conclude that those headlines would overshadow the Citigroup case. The prosecutors, knowing that the Citigroup case represented one of their last chances to send a public message that the government was holding Wall Street accountable for the crisis, were loath to squander that opportunity.

"We've got a lot going on right now, so we're putting the lawsuit temporarily on hold," Tony West, the government's lead negotiator and the Justice Department's No. 3 official, said to the bank's lawyers in a phone call just hours after he told them that a lawsuit was coming, according to people briefed on the matter.

That twist of fate — which some bank officials viewed as the Justice Department looking to escape its own costly legal battle — opened the door to last-minute negotiations that have now culminated in a \$7 billion settlement the government expects to announce on Monday, the people briefed on the matter said.

The deal caps months of heated talks that began with a \$363 million offer by Citigroup followed by a \$12 billion demand from the Justice Department. The reasons for such a yawning gap, the people said, were the radically divergent methods used to calculate the cost of the settlement.

Citigroup linked its initial offer to the bank's relatively small share of the market for mortgage securities, the people said. The Justice Department, however, rejected that argument, emphasizing instead what it saw as Citigroup's level of culpability based on emails and other evidence it had uncovered.

At one point, one of Mr. West's deputies told the bank's lawyers before a meeting that "there's no way you'll get anywhere with us if you are only going to make the market share argument."

A behind-the-scenes account of the negotiations, based on interviews with the people briefed on the matter, who were not authorized to speak publicly, shows for the first time that the government's bargaining position often hinges not only on

a huge penalty but also on a desire to destroy Wall Street's argument that market share should dictate punishment.

The dollars and cents of the final Citigroup settlement reflect that strategy. Citigroup had already raised its offer to \$7 billion — the same size as the final settlement — when the Justice Department planned to announce the lawsuit last month.

The main breakthrough toward a settlement took a simple feat of accounting: The bank agreed to shift a portion of the settlement from state attorneys general to the Justice Department. That move, the people said, prevented Citigroup from claiming a tax deduction on the settlement. More important for the Justice Department, it meant that the bank would pay a far heftier sum than one based entirely on market share.

The mortgage settlements are among the last chapters in Wall Street's six-year struggle to shed the baggage of the financial crisis. Since 2008, the housing market has rebounded, the economy has improved and Congress has passed new laws to rein in Wall Street excess. Yet one item of unfinished business — the Justice Department's investigations into whether banks duped investors into buying defective mortgage securities that generated billions of dollars in losses — has stalled the banks' efforts to move on and ignited lingering tensions with the government.

The conflict over the huge settlement figures stems in part from an obscure federal law created in the aftermath of the savings-and-loan crisis a quarter-century ago. Under the law, the Financial Institutions Reform, Recovery and Enforcement Act, or Firrea, prosecutors can demand unusually large penalties: \$1.1 million per violation.

The Citigroup case includes a \$4 billion cash penalty to the Justice Department — a record for Firrea — as well as \$2.5 billion in so-called soft dollars earmarked for aiding struggling consumers and \$500 million to state attorneys general and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. In the deal, an independent monitor — Thomas J. Perrelli, a lawyer at Jenner & Block and former Justice Department official — was appointed to make sure that Citigroup follows through with the terms.

At the outset, the bank expected to pay a fraction of that \$7 billion.

The two sides met for the first time in November at the library in the office of the United States attorney for the Eastern District of New York, in Brooklyn, which was investigating the case along with the United States attorney's office in Colorado and the Justice Department in Washington. The meeting offered the Justice Department a preliminary opportunity to outline evidence in the case and doubled as a show of government force: The 39 federal officials, from prosecutors to federal housing regulators, far outnumbered the eight Citigroup lawyers who attended, one of the people briefed on the matter said.

The meeting, which took place on the same day the Justice Department announced its record \$13 billion settlement with JPMorgan Chase over the bank's sale of mortgage securities, also encapsulated the debate over market share. Using the JPMorgan settlement as a template — \$2 billion of the \$13 billion came in the form of cash penalties from Firrea — Citigroup's lawyers from Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison argued that their client faced a far smaller settlement. After all, Citigroup had sold roughly half as many mortgage securities as JPMorgan had through its various subsidiaries.

But Geoffrey Graber, who runs a Justice Department task force that handled the cases against Citigroup and JPMorgan as well as a lawsuit against the ratings agency Standard & Poor's, warned the lawyers not to draw too close of a parallel, the people said. Market share would be only one metric for deciding the penalty.

Months later, in April, Citigroup made its first settlement offer. But the bank's opening bid of \$363 million was swiftly rebuffed. The government didn't even bother to make a counteroffer, the people said, telling the bank to come back with something better.

After balking, Citigroup decided to raise its offer to \$700 million, again basing that figure largely on an analysis of the bank's market share.

That only aggravated the situation. On the last weekend of May, lawyers from Paul Weiss and Citigroup's general counsel were all in Cambridge, Mass., attending Harvard graduations, when they received an email from Mr. West. The Justice Department, Mr. West said in the email, was demanding a settlement of \$12 billion, including a mix of cash penalties and relief for consumers.

Inside the bank, frustrations grew. Executives grumbled that prosecutors were making unfair and arbitrary demands. Citigroup raised its offer, but only slightly, to \$1 billion.

Time was running out. The Justice Department had set a deadline of June 13 for Citigroup to present its best offer, and the bank asked for an extension. By this point, however, Mr. West had traveled to Alaska on business. On a midnight call with Brad Karp and Theodore Wells Jr., two of the bank's lawyers at Paul Weiss, Mr. West and Mr. Graber denied the request. The deadline would stand, they said.

With only hours to go, Citigroup was dealt a rude shock. News reports indicated that the Justice Department was planning to sue the bank.

To Citigroup, the message from the Justice Department was stunningly clear: Ratchet up the offer or face a long and bruising court battle. That evening, with the threat looming, Mr. Wells phoned Mr. West to raise the prospect of a broader settlement that would include the state attorneys general from California and elsewhere, as well as the F.D.I.C. Mr. West, whose sister-in-law is the attorney general of California,

suggested an extra \$900 million payment for the states and the F.D.I.C.

While the plan was preliminary, it gave Citigroup some extra time. And so over Father's Day weekend, Citigroup's board held a meeting to debate whether to meet the Justice Department's demands, even as it prepared to defend against a lawsuit.

Then, as the next week began, Citigroup raised its offer to \$3.6 billion in cash to the Justice Department, \$2.5 billion in consumer relief and \$900 million to the states and the F.D.I.C.

But the offer came with a catch: In exchange for the extra payouts, the bank wanted the Justice Department to forgo any potential cases against Citigroup over collateralized debt obligations, the complex financial instruments that the bank sold in the years before the crisis. Paul Weiss relayed the offer to Mr. West, who struck an optimistic tone — but also demanded substantially more cash.

When the bank declined to raise its offer further, the people briefed on the matter said, Mr. West met with Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. to discuss the Justice Department's options. Rather than lower the demands, Mr. Holder authorized the lawsuit. The decision prompted a lead prosecutor in the case, John Walsh, the United States Attorney in Colorado, to fly out to Washington. Mr. West then phoned Paul Weiss to say that the case was going to be filed the next day.

But just a few hours later, after another Citigroup board meeting, Mr. West's number reappeared on Mr. Wells's cellphone. Mr. West was calling to say that an arrest had been made in Libya, and the Justice Department was temporarily postponing the lawsuit.

"It looks like Citi got a reprieve," Mr. West said, according to the people briefed on the matter, while adding that he was "always open to talk."

Within weeks, Mr. West agreed to Citigroup's request about forgoing any C.D.O.-related cases and offered to shift \$400 million from the state attorneys general and the F.D.I.C. to the Justice Department, forming the basis of the current settlement.

"That's tough," Mr. Wells replied, "but if it buys us global peace, then I think we can get this done."

Behind The Scenes Of Citigroup's \$7 Billion Settlement

By Andrew Grossman, Christina Rexrode And Dan Fitzpatrick

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 14, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Holder Blasts Palin Over Obama Impeachment Call

By David Jackson

[USA Today](#), July 13, 2014

Attorney General Eric Holder says Sarah Palin is no better a legal analyst than a vice presidential candidate.

Asked about Palin's call last week to impeach President Obama, Holder told ABC's This Week that "she wasn't a particularly good vice presidential candidate (in 2008). She's an even worse judge of who ought to be impeached and why."

Palin and some other Republicans say they want to impeach Obama for issues ranging from the spike in illegal border crossings to what they call excessive use of executive orders.

"President Obama's rewarding of lawlessness, including his own, is the foundational problem here," Palin wrote on the Breitbart website.

Holder, also the target of some impeachment calls, attributed them to Republicans who seek to block the Obama administration at every turn. In the ABC interview aired Sunday, Holder said:

"For whatever reason, (some) Republicans decided early on that this was a president they were just simply not going to cooperate with. And over the past five-and-a-half years, we have seen demonstrations of that, where the president has reached out his hand, offered compromises that have simply not been met (in the way) they have been in the past by a Republican Party willing to do the appropriate things."

House Republicans are planning to sue Obama over executive changes made to the health care, a plan that also drew Holder's scorn during the ABC interview.

"It's a more, I think, a political gesture than a truly legal one," Holder said. "Filing a lawsuit against the president that has no basis is not going to improve the quality of life for the American people."

Rep. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., appearing on CNN's State of the Union, said the lawsuit is designed to protect the rights of Congress, and that Obama is "trying to make his own laws."

House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, and other Republican leaders say they do not support calls for Obama's impeachment.

Holder, the nation's first African-American attorney general, told ABC that Obama — the first African-American president — are subject to "a certain level of vehemence" that is in part racial.

"You know, people talking about taking their country back," Holder said. "There's a certain racial component to this for some people. I don't think this is the thing that is a main driver, but for some there's a racial animus."

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Holder Blasts Palin Over Impeachment Call

By Seung Min Kim

[Politico](#), July 14, 2014

Attorney General Eric Holder slammed former Republican vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin in an interview that aired Sunday, dismissing her calls to impeach President Barack Obama over his alleged “lawlessness” in enforcing immigration law.

“She wasn’t a particularly good vice presidential candidate,” Holder said on ABC’s “This Week.” “She’s an even worse judge of who ought to be impeached and why.”

Palin made waves with her insistence last week that Obama should be impeached, although those calls have been dismissed by House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) and other senior Republicans. And another top House Republican on Sunday rejected Palin’s call for impeachment.

“We are not working on or drawing up articles of impeachment,” House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) said on “This Week.” “He has not committed the kind of criminal acts that call for that.”

Instead, Boehner and House Republicans are preparing a lawsuit targeting Obama’s alleged overreach of his executive powers — specifically, the administrative delay of Obamacare’s employer mandate.

During the ABC interview, Holder said he did not believe that legal action would “have legs” and called it politically motivated.

“It’s a more, I think, a political gesture than a truly legal one,” he said. “Filing a lawsuit against the president that has no basis is not going to improve the quality of life for the American people.”

Read more about: Sarah Palin, Eric Holder

Goodlatte Not Working On Obama Impeachment

By Justin Sink

[The Hill](#), July 14, 2014

President Obama has not committed “the type of criminal acts” that would lead to impeachment proceedings, House Judiciary Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) said Sunday.

“We are not working on or drawing up articles of impeachment,” Goodlatte told ABC News. “The Constitution is very clear as to what constitutes grounds of impeachment for the president of the United States. He has not committed the kind of criminal acts that call for that.”

Last week, some Republicans — including former vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin — suggested that the GOP should attempt to impeach the president over his use of executive action. Any articles of impeachment would originate in Goodlatte’s Judiciary Committee.

The Virginia Republican did blast Obama for “not enforcing the law,” and said he supported efforts by Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) to sue the president for his decision to delay the employer mandate provision in ObamaCare. Goodlatte also pinned the current crisis at the border on the president’s deferred action program, which allows certain minors who entered the U.S. illegally to remain as adults. Those crossing the border currently are ineligible for the program.

“He doesn’t enforce law,” Goodlatte said. “He uses the concept of prosecutorial discretion, which is intended for that limited exceptional case, to apply to hundreds of thousands of people right now.”

Goodlatte did offer conditional support for part of the \$3.7 billion emergency spending request the president unveiled last week to address the flood of migrant children at the border.

“Yes, we should do targeted appropriations where its needed to make sure we are able to detain people and send them back to their countries,” Goodlatte said.

But the Virginia lawmaker said “most of the money the president is asking for is to continue the process of further transporting these children, and adults by the way, further into the United States” — something he does not support.

Obama’s supplemental includes \$1.8 billion for the Health and Human Services Department to be able to house the children while they are awaiting immigration court hearings.

“That is not deterrence and it will result in more people coming into the United States,” Goodlatte said.

Lt. Gen Boykin: Veterans Scandal And Benghazi Are Grounds For Impeachment

By Ginni Thomas

[Daily Caller](#), July 14, 2014

Standing resolute against the forces transforming the nation he loves, Lt. Gen. (Ret.) William G. “Jerry” Boykin thinks “the two most egregious violations of the trust of the American public” are the Veterans Affairs scandal and Benghazi — and in his opinion, these two cases rise to the level of impeachable offenses.

Speaking of the attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, on September 11, 2012, General Boykin said, “If we will leave people behind on the battlefield and let them be overrun and killed by an enemy simply because it was politically inconvenient for us to respond to their calls for help, which is what I believe happened with all my heart. If we will do that, then the character of this nation is not the nation I grew up in and the nation I served for 36 ½ years. We have an obligation to people who serve this country, people serving our country.”

On the VA scandal, Boykin quotes John F. Kennedy: "You can tell a character of a nation by how it treats its veterans."

He goes on to compare the ability of Bradley Manning to get a sex change operation — while incarcerated at taxpayer expense — to the many veterans who cannot get a colonoscopy that might save their lives.

Boykin was one of the original members of the U.S. Army's Delta Force and later commanded them, has written several books, served with honor and distinction in America's military for over 36 years and is now serving as the executive vice president for the Family Research Council in Washington, D.C.

He is also an ordained minister and a full time patriot, inspiring multitudes of regular citizens worried about the direction President Obama is taking this nation.

In this interview, he offers advice for what concerned citizens can do, how the hard left has gotten more vicious and violent as they seek to maximize their gains with allies now in power, and what gives him hope. For more information on General Boykin, see [here](#) and [here](#).

Videography by Grae Stafford

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Holder Sees 'Racial Animus' In Opposition

By Justin Sink

[The Hill](#), July 14, 2014

Attorney General Eric Holder said Sunday he and President Obama have been targets of "a racial animus" by some of the administration's political opponents.

"There's a certain level of vehemence, it seems to me, that's directed at me [and] directed at the president," Holder told ABC. "You know, people talking about taking their country back. ... There's a certain racial component to this for some people. I don't think this is the thing that is a main driver, but for some there's a racial animus."

Holder said the nation is in "a fundamentally better place than we were 50 years ago."

"We've made lots of progress," he said. "I sit here as the first African-American attorney general, serving the first African-American president of the United States. And that has to show that we have made a great deal of progress."

"But there's still more we have to travel along this road so we get to the place that is consistent with our founding ideals," he said.

He also stood by his controversial comments made during Obama's first year in office, in which he said the U.S. was a "nation of cowards" when it comes to race.

"I wouldn't walk away from that speech," Holder said. "I think we are still a nation that is too afraid to confront racial

issues," rarely engaging "one another across the color line [to] talk about racial issues."

The attorney general also pointed to Republican efforts to enact stricter voter ID laws in southern States as evidence that more needed to be done to protect minority rights. Republicans have maintained the efforts are designed to prevent voter fraud, while Democrats say instances of fraud are exceedingly rare, and far outpaced by the minority population that does not have identification that would be unable to vote.

Holder called the laws "political efforts" designed to make it "more difficult" for "groups that are not supportive of those in power" to "have access to the ballot."

"Who is disproportionately impacted by them? Young people, African Americans, Hispanics, older people, people who, for whatever reason, aren't necessarily supportive of the Republican Party," Holder said, adding that "this notion that there is widespread in-person voter fraud is simply belied by the facts."

Holder said the Justice Department was planning legal challenges of new voting laws in Ohio and Wisconsin. It has previously filed suit in Texas and North Carolina.

"I'm attorney general of the United States. ... I will not allow people to take away that which people gave their lives to give, and that is the ability for the American people to vote," Holder said.

USGS: 7 Small Earthquakes Shake Central Oklahoma

[Associated Press](#), July 14, 2014

GUTHRIE, Okla. — The U.S. Geological Survey has recorded seven small earthquakes shaking central Oklahoma in a span of about 14 hours.

The temblors are part of an increase in earthquakes across Oklahoma, Texas and Kansas that some scientists say could be connected to the oil and gas drilling method known as hydraulic fracturing, and especially the wells in which the industry disposes of its wastewater.

Sunday's quakes ranged from magnitude 2.6 to 2.9 and were centered in the Guthrie, Jones and Langston areas, 15 miles to 30 miles northeast of Oklahoma City. The USGS said the quakes were recorded between 7:57 p.m. Saturday and 9:51 a.m. Sunday. No injuries or damage were reported.

Those follow four other quakes, including a 4.3-magnitude temblor near Langston recorded shortly after noon Saturday. The other Saturday morning quakes ranged in magnitude from 2.9 to 3.2.

Seismologists know that hydraulic fracturing, or fracking — which involves blasting water, sand and chemicals deep into underground rock formations to free oil and gas — can cause microquakes that are rarely strong enough to register on monitoring equipment.

However, fracking also generates vast amounts of wastewater, which is pumped into injection wells thousands of feet underground. Scientists wonder whether they could trigger quakes by increasing underground pressures and lubricating faults. Another concern is whether injection well operators could be pumping either too much water into the ground or pumping it at exceedingly high pressures.

Hundreds of central Oklahoma residents met with regulators and research geologists last month in Edmond, and many urged regulators to ban or severely restrict the disposal wells.

Austin Holland, a research seismologist with the Oklahoma Geological Survey, said at the time that the state is experiencing unprecedented earthquake activity and his agency is closely monitoring it to determine whether the earthquakes are a natural phenomenon or are man-made.

Holland also said the same drilling methods have been used in the state for years but that frequent earthquakes did not become a problem until after 2009.

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Mountaintop Removal For Coal Hurts Water Quality And Harms Fish, Study Says

By Darryl Fears

[Washington Post](#), July 14, 2014

In West Virginia's Appalachian mountains, fish are vanishing. The number of species has fallen, the populations of those that remain are down, and some individual fish look a little skinny.

A new government study traces the decline in abundance to mountaintop removal, the controversial coal mining practice of clear cutting trees from mountains before blowing off their tops with explosives.

When the resulting rain of shattered rock hits the rivers and streams that snake along the base of the mountains, minerals released from within the stone are changing the water's chemistry, the study said, lowering its quality and causing tiny prey such as insects, worms and invertebrates to die.

"We're seeing significant reductions in the number of fish species and total abundance of fish downstream from mining operations," said Nathaniel Hitt, a research fish biologist for the U.S. Geological Survey's office in Kearneysville, W.Va., and one of the study's two authors.

Hitt and his co-author, Doug Chambers, a biologist and water quality specialist in the Charleston, W.Va., office of the USGS, took a 1999 study of the Guyandotte River basin's fish populations by Pennsylvania State University researchers to compare them over time.

For two years starting in 2010, they sampled the populations in waters downstream from an active mountaintop coal mining operation. In one of the sample areas, the Mud River watershed, which contains the largest tributary of the Guyandotte River, at least "100 point source pollution discharge permits associated with surface mining have been issued," the study said.

North America's central Appalachian mountains, where the basin lies, are considered a global hot spot of freshwater fish biodiversity, but few researchers have investigated the impact of mountain strip mining on stream fish, and the effects "are poorly understood," the study said.

Hitt and Chambers found that the number of species was cut in half and the abundance of fish fell by a third. The silverjaw minnow, fopsyface shiner, silver shiner, bluntnose minnow, spotted bass and largemouth bass, along with at least two other species detected before their study, were no longer there.

Another fish species, the small and worm-like least brook lamprey, never before detected, had moved in. In areas of the river basin where there was no mountaintop mining, fish flourished. In addition to species that were in those waters previously, seven new ones were found, including the spottin shiner, the spottail shiner and the golden redhorse.

"I think if we only focus on the fact that it's fish . . . some people will say, 'So what?'" Chambers said. But fish and invertebrates they eat are canaries in a coal mine for researchers, "indicators of the water quality," he said.

The USGS looks "at the nation's water resources . . . their significance to the nation, and [tries] to understand processes that are degrading water quality. [Tainted] water may not be suitable for additional uses."

Research such as the USGS's mountaintop mining study, published online early this month by the Society for Freshwater Science, is viewed with suspicion in coal country, where mining operations provide thousands of jobs.

"The people opposed to the coal industry are trying to pile on with more studies," said Bill Raney, president of the West Virginia Coal Association. "It sounds like this is one of those studies that sets out to show there's harm done. It sounds like perhaps more of the same."

Raney said he has not seen the USGS study and cannot strongly criticize its methods or conclusions, but people "don't just wake up in the morning and decide they are going to do mountaintop mining," he said. "It takes three to four years to get a permit. Every aspect of the operation is analyzed."

Mountaintop removal as a way of extracting coal has been in practice since the 1960s, but its use has expanded in the past two decades and it now takes place in the Appalachian regions of Ohio, Kentucky and Virginia, in addition to West Virginia.

The coal the process produces provides power to hundreds of thousands of homes, industry advocates say, and creates about 14,000 jobs that pay middle-income salaries in regions where work is hard to find.

“The average mining wage is more than \$66,000 per year . . . 57 percent higher than the average for industrial jobs,” according to the National Mining Association. “Mountaintop mining accounts for approximately 45 percent of the entire state’s coal production in West Virginia.”

Raney’s association disputed claims that mining destroys streams and mountains, saying state permits and government regulations require the land to be restored after use.

But the Sierra Club Eastern Missouri Group called the practice “quite possibly the worst environmental assault yet” because of the amount of landscape it removes and the impacts to people and animals.

Homeowners in one West Virginia community, Lindytown, were bought out by a company before the town essentially disappeared following mountaintop removal. Homes and a grave site were left behind. Cascading debris has buried streams, impacting a diversity of wildlife, a major concern raised by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Often, companies are granted exemptions that ease requirements to restore land. Conservationists call the practice a plunder, and protesters, including Quakers in Appalachia and demonstrators at the White House, have called on the government to end it and banks to stop funding it.

“Mountaintop removal mining is one of the fastest-changing land use forms in the region,” Hitt said. “One of the main questions for our research lab is how biological communities respond to land use changes.”

In the case of the fish, they seemingly do not respond well, Chambers said. “To sum up, 10 fish species were apparently extirpated from the mined sites,” meaning they were rooted out, completely destroyed, he said.

Fish with a more diverse diet appeared to fare well, but those that relied primarily on invertebrates, such as small aquatic insects, tended to fare poorly.

“It’s telling us that the water quality is changing,” Chambers said. Water in that area is not used for drinking, he said, but “if you look at it from a regulatory perspective, you have to determine if the water is fishable, swimmable, drinkable, all of these are benchmarks.”

Needed: A New Team Of Rivals

By Fred Hiatt

[Washington Post](#), July 14, 2014

Maybe it is time for a shake-up.

President Obama’s second-term staffing was always going to be a risk. He abandoned his first term’s team of rivals for a closer-knit team of loyalists. The bet was that he

was assured enough in the job to no longer need the in-house challenge — and that smooth-running consensus would compensate for the loss.

The bet isn’t paying off. Overseas and at home, the administration seems besieged and befuddled. Obama is in danger of cementing an image of haplessness that would be hard to undo.

The administration was surprised when Russian President Vladimir Putin swallowed Crimea. It was caught flat-footed by the crumbling of Iraq and emergence of an al-Qaeda state. Now the region is “a cradle of violent extremism,” Obama’s attorney general said last week. But the president is uncertain how to respond.

Increasingly friends and foes around the world seem comfortable disrespecting the United States . In Egypt, a court sentenced journalists to prison hours after Secretary of State John F. Kerry left Cairo expressing confidence in the government’s commitment to democracy. U.S. ally Bahrain, home to the Navy’s 5th Fleet, expelled an assistant secretary of state. Days after Obama visited the Philippines to support rule of law in the South China Sea, China towed a massive oil rig into waters claimed by Vietnam and, Vietnamese officials said, intentionally rammed two of their ships.

Obama visited Berlin in 2008, promising to build bridges between continents that had “drifted apart” in the Bush era. Now Germans are furious at the United States for spying on them. Burma, which Obama recently claimed as a foreign-policy success, last week sentenced four journalists to 10 years of hard labor, one of many signs that reform there has stalled or worse. China barred a U.S. scholar from visiting and rounded up dissidents immediately before last week’s U.S.-China strategic and economic dialogue. Israel and Hamas are drifting toward war after Obama’s second failed effort to broker a peace accord.

At home, the administration seems equally taken aback by the thousands of Central American children flooding across the Southwest border. It sends mixed signals on whether it wants to change the asylum law in response. In the most elementary sort of staffing snafu, the president found himself needlessly on the defensive during a trip to Texas because he refused to visit the border.

Meanwhile the White House message varies by the day. Growing economic inequality, which last December Obama said “challenges the very essence of who we are as a people,” now is rarely mentioned. There seems to be no strategy to propel objectives the White House had set forth as fundamental: immigration reform, trade deals with Asia and Europe, investment in education and infrastructure.

Obviously these disappointments don’t all reflect poor staffing. Even the best-oiled, most high-powered administration might not bend John Boehner or Putin to its will. Obama is hardly the first president frustrated by Israeli-Palestinian intransigence.

But Obama should be asking whether his team is making the best of whatever difficult circumstances it cannot control. More than half of his second term stretches before him. Some things — notably the economy — are looking hopeful. It's too soon, and it would be too dangerous for the country, to settle for the current state of affairs.

In his first term, Obama surrounded himself with people with the independence and self-confidence to debate him and each other: his primary opponent Hillary Clinton at State; his predecessor's defense secretary, Bob Gates, staying on at the Pentagon; the formidable Richard Holbrooke coordinating Afghanistan-Pakistan policy; a former four-star general, James Jones, as national security adviser; Leon Panetta and David Petraeus at the CIA. Chief of staff Rahm Emanuel had his own base and history in the House of Representatives; Tim Geithner, Treasury secretary, had his in the New York Fed. Some performed better than others, but together they guaranteed the White House would not be an echo chamber for the president's views.

Many of their places have been taken by people who are no less honorable or hard-working but for whom loyalty to the president may come first and who were chosen in part for seeing things as he does. Will Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, Obama's pal from Senate days, or Chief of Staff Denis McDonough, his aide from the same era, question the president's world view or tell him that fundamental change is needed, as Gates or Emanuel might have?

As second-term critics circle like sharks, it's natural for a president to surround himself with admirers and defenders. But what a president needs are people who will challenge his thinking and, when necessary, tell him news he would rather not hear.

Read more from Fred Hiatt's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook.