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Enforcement and Removal

08/20/2019

Enhanced coordination results in increased, faster removals to Guatemala

DHS urges Central Americans not to make the dangerous journey

GUATEMALA CITY — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) on Tuesday announced the monthlong results of a more streamlined removal process for Guatemalan adults and families arriving at the U.S. border.

"We are discouraging all citizens in Central America from embarking on the dangerous, often expensive, journey to the U.S. thinking you will remain in the U.S. Smugglers have for too long told aliens that if they just make it to the border or arrive with a child, they would be allowed to stay in the United States. That's simply not true," said Timothy S. Robbins, acting executive associate director for ICE ERO. "The journey to the southern border of the United States is extremely perilous, especially for young children and other vulnerable populations. Breaking U.S. laws by illegally entering the United States is an ineffective manner to petition to legally remain in the United States. Ultimately, if you have no basis to remain in the United States, you will be apprehended and returned to your home country."

Since mid-July, Guatemala and the United States have implemented a new process to more expeditiously remove aliens without any claims to support remaining in the U.S. This enhanced cooperation results in reduced lengths of stays in DHS custody for Guatemalan citizens, while allowing the U.S. to fulfill its mission to repatriate those illegally present without utilizing resources to house aliens or manage their cases while they await immigration or removal proceedings out of custody.

This more streamlined approach replicates how DHS currently works with Mexico to effect removals. The process includes DHS determining Guatemalan citizenship, then letting Guatemalan officials know who is being removed to resolve any issues, and finally, Guatemala confirms identities of individuals after they are returned. Currently, only single adults and family units arriving at the border are eligible for more expedient process.

Since the beginning of FY 2019, ICE has averaged approximately 30 weekly removals of family unit members (parents/guardians and their children) to Guatemala; last week ICE removed 238 members of family units. All these individuals were issued a final order of removal. ICE removed more than 50,000 Guatemalan nationals in FY 2018, including 1,000 members of family units. In FY 2019 to date, ICE has removed nearly 49,000 Guatemalans, including more than 1,500 members of family units – a 50 percent increase in family member removals from the year before.

This new enhanced cooperation is just one of the many ways the U.S. and our Central American partners are working to address migration flow into the U.S. and to combat the ruthless criminal organizations that engage in human smuggling.

ICE continues to focus its enforcement resources on individuals who pose a threat to national security, public safety and border security. However, ICE no longer exempts classes or categories of removable aliens from potential enforcement. All of those in violation of the immigration laws may be subject to immigration arrest, detention, and if found removable by final order, removal from the United States.

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