

## MEETING WITH LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS August 12, 2021

### Overview:

- You requested this roundtable to bring together local elected officials, as well as members of Congress or their District Directors, to discuss the influx of migrants along the Southwest Border (SWB).
  - This will be CLOSED press.
- The purpose of this meeting is to provide mayors and county judges an opportunity to provide direct feedback about their concerns and impacts from COVID-19 and the increased numbers of migrants crossing the border and being released.
- You will be staffed by Office of Partnership and Engagement (OPE) Assistant Secretary Eva Millona, Border Patrol Deputy Chief Raul Ortiz, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Pritesh Gandhi, and Dr. Alex Eastman. A full list of participants is below.

### Flow of Show:

- 10:15 a.m. **You** open the local elected official roundtable by providing brief remarks and initiate a general discussion among the participants.
- 11:25 a.m. **You** will make closing remarks and thank the participants for joining.
- 11:30 a.m. Meeting ends

### Discussion Points:

#### COVID-19 Testing of Migrants

- Mayors are becoming increasingly concerned about the rise of positive COVID-19 cases among migrants and want to ensure that the Department is testing these incoming migrants.
  - DHS shares this concern. The DHS Chief Medical Officer (CMO) has closely monitored the impact of the Delta variant on the COVID positivity rates of families released from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody.
  - DHS has surged medical personnel to multiple sites in the Rio Grande Valley and along the Southwest Border (SWB) to ensure that arriving migrants receive appropriate medical evaluation and support, including evaluation for symptomatic COVID.
  - DHS is working with its federal partners on ways to assist local jurisdictions with testing, isolation, and quarantine.
  - DHS/CBP coordinates with Non-Governmental Organizations to identify and present in a safe and orderly way those identified as meeting the Title 42 exception criteria along the southern border. The undocumented noncitizens must have a negative COVID-19 test prior to being processed under the Title 42 exception.
  - Drs. Gandhi and Eastman can assist with answering jurisdiction specific health questions as needed.

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#### Title 42

- Mayors are highly aware of their position along the border and how drastically their communities would be affected should the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC) Order under Title 42 be lifted, even more so if it were to be lifted without advance notice and coordination with city and local governments.

- As part the United States' COVID-19 mitigation efforts, DHS will continue to assist the CDC in enforcing the CDC's updated Title 42 Order. Title 42 is not an immigration authority, but a public health authority, and its continued use is dictated by CDC and governed by the CDC's analysis of public health factors.
- Under Title 42, DHS continues to expel the majority of single adults, and, to the extent possible, families encountered at the SWB.
- Although the enforcement of the CDC public health Title 42 Order allows CBP to expel most undocumented noncitizens, at certain locations and with certain demographics, the Mexican government does not permit these noncitizens to return to Mexico. CBP then works with ICE to safely repatriate individuals to Central America directly.

#### Title 19 and Non-Essential Travel Restrictions

- Mayors have continually raised their concerns about the economic impacts from the non-essential travel restrictions.
  - To decrease the spread of COVID-19, including the Delta variant, the United States has extended restrictions on non-essential travel at our land and ferry crossings with Canada and Mexico through August 21, while ensuring the continued flow of essential trade and travel.

#### Expedited Removal Flights

- Mayors may ask how the expedited removal flights will help the situation of increasing numbers of migrants crossing the border.
  - The expedited removal process is a lawful means to securely manage our border, and it is a step toward our broader aim to realize safe and orderly immigration processing. By placing into expedited removal certain families who cannot be expelled under Title 42, we are making clear that those who do not qualify to remain in the United States will be promptly removed.
  - Consistent with that approach, DHS as of July 30<sup>th</sup>, resumed expedited removal flights for certain families who recently arrived at the southern border, cannot be expelled under Title 42, and do not have a legal basis to stay in the United States, and thus, are subject to a final order of removal. Families apprehended by Customs and Border Protection were removed via U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Air Operations to their home countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

#### Root Causes of Migration

- With the increase of migrant flow at the SWB, mayors are becoming increasingly interested in learning more about the Department's efforts working internationally with Mexico and other Central American countries to address these root causes.

#### FEMA Funding

- Governor Abbott did not allow DHS to pass through FEMA Public Assistance funds through the State of Texas, the only funding program available for local Texas counties and cities is the Emergency Food and Shelter Program.

- Michael Lee, Chairman of the Emergency Food and Shelter Program from FEMA Headquarters has been in McAllen this week and will be at the meeting to speak with local officials for specific questions regarding funding reimbursement.
- The Mayor of Laredo spoke with Mr. Lee, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and OPE on August 9, 2021 and was very appreciative of the information to help his city financially recover.

**Background:**

- **Laredo lawsuit:** On July 16, 2021, the City of Laredo filed a lawsuit in the hopes of getting a temporary restraining order to stop the influx of migrants. The Mayor dropped the lawsuit on August 5. The city is now spending \$10,000/day to send 200 migrants on buses to Houston and Austin. CBP requested the mayor and fire chief speak with their counterparts in Houston and Austin to make them aware of Laredo's plans. DHS OPE, CBP, and FEMA spoke with the Mayor and his team on August 9 regarding reimbursement opportunities.
- **Temporary shelter in McAllen:** On August 2, 2021, the Mayor of the City of McAllen issued a local disaster declaration. On August 3, 2021, the City of McAllen Commission ratified and instructed the Emergency Management Office and City Management to request that Hidalgo County erect a temporary emergency shelter for immigrants stranded in McAllen. The Commission also instructed city staff to demand relief from the federal government and work with local non-governmental organizations to expand their operations in order to find additional emergency shelters. (**Attachment E**)
- **Abbott executive order on transportation:** On July 28, Texas Governor Greg Abbott issued an executive order on transportation of migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic. The U.S. sued and received a temporary restraining order on August 3. The U.S. and Texas are set to appear in an evidentiary hearing related to the U.S.'s preliminary injunction motion on August 13.
- **Correspondence:**
  - On August 2, 2021, the Texas Border Coalition sent a letter, signed by Chairman and Cameron County Judge Eddie Trevino, Jr., to Secretary Mayorkas requesting immediate action on the immigration situation in border communities. (**Attachment C**)
  - On July 30, 2021, Hidalgo County Judge Richard Cortez sent a letter to President Joe Biden requesting federal support for increased manpower and immediate cessation of admission of additional immigrants on the Rio Grande Valley Sector. On August 2, 2021, Judge Cortez signed a local disaster declaration for Hidalgo County due to the growing number of COVID-19 positive cases and noncitizens being released into Hidalgo County, including individuals who are positive for COVID-19. (**Attachment D**)
- **COVID positive patients:**
  - On July 29, 2021, Weslaco Mayor David Suarez said that the Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley (CCRGV), a non-governmental organization, has been "temporarily housing" COVID-positive migrants at the Texas Inn in Weslaco. Mayor Suarez also asked the NGO to "detail what protocols are in place to ensure immigrants are provided food, water and other resources during their stay at the motel, so that COVID-19 positive individuals can safely remain in quarantine."
  - On July 27, 2021, the La Joya Police Department addressed a migrant family they spoke with at a Whataburger in La Joya that told police they were COVID-19 positive. La Joya police were later informed that Catholic Charities completely booked the Texas Inn on

East Expressway 83 to house migrants that are traveling to other parts of the country—all unknown to the city of La Joya, according to La Joya Police Sergeant Casas.

- **Disaster declaration:** On July 21, 2021, Webb County Judge Tano Tijerina issued a disaster declaration “to stop migrants from coming into the Laredo sector.”
- **Increased Flights:** U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) has increased the number of flights (ten weekly) to the interior of Mexico used to expel those from Northern Triangle countries. ICE ERO is also conducting 14 lateral flights along the SWB to remove Mexican nationals from the U.S., thereby displacing them from known crossing points.
- **Bus crash:** On August 4, 2021, eleven people were killed and roughly 20 others injured when an overloaded van carrying migrants crashed and flipped over in the Rio Grande Valley on Wednesday afternoon, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety.

**Participants:**

Secretary Mayorkas  
Eva Millona, OPE Assistant Secretary  
BP Deputy Chief Raul Ortiz  
Laredo Border Patrol Sector Chief  
Rio Grande Valley Border Patrol Sector Chief  
Dr. Pritesh Gandhi  
Dr. Alex Eastman  
Michael Lee, Chairman, Emergency Food and Shelter Program, FEMA HQ  
Juan “Trey” Mendez, Brownsville Mayor  
Javier Villalobos, McAllen Mayor  
Rick Morales, Donna Mayor  
Joel Villarreal, Rio Grande City Mayor  
Dr. Ambrosio Hernandez, Pharr Mayor  
Dr. Armando O’Cana, Mission Mayor  
Judge Richard Cortez, Hidalgo County Judge  
Judge Eddie Trevino, Cameron County Judge  
Eloy Vera, Starr County Judge  
Judge Tano Tijerina, Webb County Judge  
Pete Saenz, Laredo Mayor  
Lewis Owens, Val Verde County Judge  
Bruno ‘Ralph’ Lozano, Del Rio Mayor

**Attachments:**

- A. Biographies
- B. McAllen Press Article
- C. TX Border Coalition Letter
- D. Judge Cortez Letter

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**Staff Responsible for Briefing Memo:** Brian Hyer, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary. (202)

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OGC Reviewer: (b)(6) Deputy Chief of Staff



**ATTACHMENT A: Participant Biographies**



**Juan "Trey" Mendez - D**  
Mayor of Brownsville

Juan "Trey" Mendez, III was born in Brownsville, Texas. Growing up in a South Texas border town taught him the value of hard work and perseverance. A product of the public school system in Brownsville, he graduated in 1997 from Gladys Porter High School and went on to receive a Bachelor's Degree in Government from the University of Texas at Brownsville in 2002.



**Javier Villalobos - R**  
Mayor of McAllen

Javier Villalobos was sworn in on Monday, June 5 as mayor of McAllen, Texas, a city located about 13 miles from the U.S.-Mexico border. He won by 206 votes. Mayor Villalobos is the son of migrant workers who didn't have much of an education, but instilled in their kids the value of one. His brother was the first in their family to graduate high school and then college, in which Mayor Villalobos himself followed and then went on to law school

as well.



**Pete Saenz**  
Mayor of Laredo

Mayor Pete Saenz is a third-generation son of Laredo. He graduated from St. Joseph's Academy and earned a Bachelor and Masters' degrees in Animal Science and Range Management from Texas A&I University. He also earned a law degree from St. Mary's University School of Law.

Mayor Saenz has built a highly successful and distinguished law practice. He also worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a Range Conservationist.

He has served on numerous community boards and advisory committees, including president of the South Texas Food Bank and president of the Laredo Affordable Housing Corporation.



**Bruno 'Ralph' Lozano**  
Mayor of Del Rio

Bruno "Ralph" Lozano was elected mayor of Del Rio on May 5, 2018. Mayor Lozano made history as the youngest elected mayor in Del Rio, Texas. He also made history as being the first mayor to graduate from the new Del Rio High School, which was established after the two local school districts were consolidated to make our current San Felipe-Del Rio Consolidated Independent School District.

Mayor Lozano also was enlisted in the United States Air Force. Apart from being mayor, he is employed in the airline industry, having traveled to over 30 countries in the past twelve years. Mayor Lozano is a Del Rio native.



**Mayor Dr. Ambrosio Hernandez**  
Mayor of Pharr

Dr. Ambrosio Hernandez, native of Pharr, was elected into office in 2015, re-elected in 2019, and is currently serving his second term as Mayor of the City of Pharr, representing one of the largest cities in South Texas. Mayor Hernandez is a pediatric surgeon, bariatric surgeon, director of surgical services, hospital compliance officer, and business professional by trade.



**Mayor Dr. Armando O'Caña**  
Mayor of Mission

Dr. Armando O'Caña, PhD was elected in 2018. Mayor O'Caña previously served on the City Council from May 2001-2007 and was elected to a 4 year term in May of 2012 and in 2016. He is a 1972 graduate of Mission High School, graduated in 1976 from Pan American University with a Bachelor's degree and in 1980 with a Master's of Education. In 1992, Mayor O'Caña received his Associates in Applied Science in Fire Protection and graduated in 1996 from the National Fire Academy. In 1999, he received his PhD in Educational Administration from Texas A&M University College Station.

Mayor O'Caña is a retired educator with the La Joya ISD.



**Judge Richard Cortez**  
County of Hidalgo, Texas

Judge Richard F. Cortez took office as Hidalgo County Judge on January 2, 2019. He is a retired Certified Public Accountant and a Certified Valuation Analyst (CPA/CVA).

After receiving his CPA license in 1973, Judge Cortez became a partner with accounting colleagues and continued practicing public accounting. In 1984, he began providing consulting services by assisting parties in litigation and determining economic damages. He was involved in hundreds of cases in federal, state and bankruptcy courts. Judge Cortez has been appointed receiver, special auditor, accountant, and business valuator by various state district courts.

Elected the eighteenth Mayor of the City of McAllen, Judge Cortez began his revitalization of the progressive city. With success, he was re-elected for a second four- year term in May of 2009.

Judge Cortez chose not to run for re-election at the end of his second four-year term, yet returned to the political arena in 2015 as McAllen City Commissioner District 1. He continued to serve in that position until he withdrew his seat to run for Hidalgo County Judge.



**Judge Eddie Treviño, Jr.**  
County of Cameron, Texas

Eddie Treviño, Jr. was sworn in on November 23, 2016, as Cameron County Judge. A passion for politics and civic engagement Judge Treviño has been at the forefront of many of the decisions made in the local community.

Born and raised in Brownsville, Texas, Judge Treviño has served in various elected and non-elected positions including City Commissioner from 2001 to 2003 and Mayor of Brownsville from 2003 to 2007.



**Judge Eloy Vera**  
County of Starr, Texas

Starr County Judge Eloy Vera is the Chief Executive Officer of the County and presides over Commissioner's Court.

Judge Vera has worked with several engineering firms and TXDOT and worked throughout the State of Texas developing and designing highways and drainage systems. He also opened his own engineering firm, Vera Enterprises.



**Judge Tano Tijerina**  
Webb County Judge

Judge Tijerina was sworn into office on January 1, 2015, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Judge for Webb County. Since taking office, Judge Tijerina has been directly involved with each department, ensuring that Webb County provides continuity and the highest level of service to its constituents.



**Judge Lewis Owens**  
Val Verde County Judge



*NO BIOGRAPHY AVAILABLE*

**Rick Morales**  
Mayor of Donna



*NO BIOGRAPHY AVAILABLE*

**Joel Villarreal**  
Mayor of Rio Grande City



*NO BIOGRAPHY AVAILABLE*



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUGUST 4, 2021

Contact: Xochitl Mora, Office of Communications O: 681-1202 / M: 662-9269 / E: [xmora@mcallen.net](mailto:xmora@mcallen.net)

## **City of McAllen Approves Setting Up Temporary Emergency Shelter in Response to Migrant Surge**

*McAllen City Commission decision seeks to protect public health and safety*

Yesterday, the McAllen City Commission took decisive action to protect public health and safety.

Faced with a rapidly escalating surge of immigrants at the Texas-Mexico Border, the City of McAllen's Emergency Management Office, in coordination with City Management and in accordance with the Mayor's Declaration of Local Disaster executed on August 2, 2021, took swift action to begin its efforts to mitigate emergent health and safety risks.

In response to these actions, by an overwhelming majority, the McAllen City Commission ratified and gave further specific instruction to the Emergency Management Office and City Management, through the Mayor's Disaster Declaration to request that Hidalgo County erect temporary emergency shelter on property in McAllen on 23rd Street for the overwhelming number of immigrants stranded in McAllen by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The City Commission also instructed City staff to demand relief from the federal government for the alarming number of immigrants that are being released into the city of McAllen. The Commission further instructed staff to assist local non-governmental organizations to swiftly expand their operations, including identifying additional locations for emergency shelter should the need arise.

The current immigration surge began in 2014 under the Obama administration and has continued for seven years to the present surge the community is now experiencing. So far in 2021, McAllen has seen well over 87,000 immigrants pass through its city limits. U.S. Customs and Border Protection has reported a historic increase in immigrant apprehensions. For context, in 2020 the total number of Title 42 Expulsions on the Southwest Border was 381,928. To date in 2021, in less time, a total of 566,959 Title 42 Expulsions have occurred on the Southwest Border.

While some immigrants are refused entry at the border under current Title 42 restrictions, many are temporarily lawfully admitted into the United States pending their asylum hearing. In these cases, the federal government only detains them for a couple of days. After which, absent the commission of a separate crime, neither law enforcement nor private entities have the legal authority to further detain them. As these temporarily admitted immigrants are released, the federal government does not test them for COVID-19 or provide assistance in contacting relatives or sponsors living in the United States to make arrangements for temporary housing.

Due to this unacceptable flaw in the federal immigration system, Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley established the Humanitarian Respite Center. The facility currently operates under a Conditional Use Permit at 111 S. 15<sup>th</sup> Street, in a building owned by Catholic Charities of the RGV. The Respite Center focuses its services on family units and has processed over 87,000 immigrants since mid-February of 2021, providing them essentials: clothing, shoes, meals, showers, basic medical care and a safe place to rest.

**-more-**

### **City of McAllen Approves Temporary Emergency Shelters in Response to Migrant Surge/page 2 of 3**

The Respite Center also assists immigrants in contacting their U.S. sponsor, typically a family member, who will make financial arrangements for the immigrants' final travel into the United States. The City of McAllen does not pay for immigrant travel. In most cases, immigrants move through the Respite Center in one day. However, at times, due to the unavailability of northbound transportation, some immigrants remain at the Center for more than a day.

For nearly seven years, the Respite Center had the capacity to process the flow of immigrants released into McAllen, keeping them off the streets. However, in the last several weeks, due to the shockingly large number of immigrants released by CBP, the Respite Center's capacity became overwhelmed, and threatened its ability to provide its humanitarian services to all in need. This significant change increases the threat of COVID spread or other lawlessness within the city.

At the beginning of July, the Respite Center saw an average of 750 people per day. That number, over the course of the month, escalated to over 1,100 people per day, and so far in August has surged to over 1,900 people per day. The Respite Center has capacity for only 1,236 occupants and will not allow more than its maximum occupancy at any given time. Therefore, beginning in August 2021, there has been a significant threat of leaving hundreds on the streets of McAllen with no place to turn for food, shelter, medical attention, or other humanitarian services. It was at this point that McAllen Mayor Javier Villalobos saw no option other than to declare a Local State of Disaster in McAllen so the City of McAllen could obtain necessary county and state resources to address the situation that it did not create.

To make matters worse, in 2020 the global pandemic of COVID-19, a highly contagious respiratory virus, swept the globe, including McAllen and the migrants flocking to the Texas-Mexico border. In order to continue the Respite Center's operations during the deadly pandemic, Catholic Charities of the RGV partnered with American Medical Response (AMR) to test immigrants for COVID-19 at a location near the Respite Center. Since mid-February of 2021 there have been over 7,000 confirmed COVID-19 positive immigrants released into the City of McAllen by CBP, including over 1,500 new cases in the past seven days. AMR now operates at S.15<sup>th</sup> Street in a building leased to AMR. AMR's testing operations are allowed under the current zoning for that location, and a permit from the City of McAllen is therefore not required for its operations. AMR operates under a contract with the City of McAllen which is entirely pre-funded by a FEMA grant program.

The influx of migrants and their movement between AMR, the Respite Center, the McAllen Bus Terminal and McAllen International Airport has required parking management in the area around the Respite Center, which is coordinated by City of McAllen Downtown Services, a division of McAllen Metro in accordance with the Transit Director's authority under Section 102-229 of the McAllen Code of Ordinances.

Under Catholic Charities' current protocol, immigrants are tested for COVID-19 at AMR. Once the immigrants are tested, they are divided into two groups. Those that test negative are admitted to the Respite Center; those that test positive are transported from the AMR testing facility to quarantine sites in the Rio Grande Valley area. AMR provides the transportation to locations arranged for and directed by Catholic Charities.

**-more-**

## City of McAllen Approves Temporary Emergency Shelter in Response to Migrant Surge/*page 3 of 3*

Once an immigrant has completed quarantine, they proceed on their final northbound travel out of McAllen.

Despite the City of McAllen and its community partners' best efforts, the sheer number of immigrants being released into the city has become a crisis: a crisis the City of McAllen did not create and has proactively tried to avoid for seven years. Now, with the drastic, unexpected increase of immigrants arriving to McAllen, the City Commission's first priority is to protect the health and safety of the residents they serve. Mayor Villalobos's August 2, 2021 Local Disaster Declaration was an important step in McAllen's obtaining additional critical resources from the State of Texas and Hidalgo County. The City of McAllen, known for its safety and security, did not create nor invite this crisis, but it will swiftly respond and take every action within its power to protect the health and safety of its residents.

###



@cityofmcallen



Instagram



McAllen TX

**Chairman**

Judge Eddie Treviño, Jr.  
Cameron County

**Vice Chairman**

C. LeRoy Cavazos-Reyna  
United States Hispanic  
Chamber of Commerce

**Treasurer**

Henry Sauvignat  
IBC Bank

**Chairman Elect**

Luis Sifuentes  
Eagle Pass ISD

**Immediate Past Chairman**

Mayor Pete Saenz  
City of Laredo

**Executive Committee**

Judge Eleazar Cano  
Brewster County

Mayor Ralph Lozano  
City of Del Rio

Mayor Rick Morales  
City of Donna

Mayor Sergio Coronado  
City of Hidalgo

Mayor Javier Villalobos  
City of McAllen

Mayor Armando O'Caña  
City of Mission

Daniel Silva  
Mission EDC

Mayor Amos Hernandez  
City of Pharr

Luis Bazan  
Pharr-Reynosa Intl. Bridge

Mayor J.J. Zamora  
City of Port Isabel

Mayor John Ferguson  
City of Presidio

Judge Cinderela Guevara  
Presidio County

Mayor Patrick McNulty  
City of South Padre Island

J.D. Salinas, III  
AT&T

Sergio Contreras  
RGV Partnership

Ben Petty, Sr.  
TaxFree Shopping

Mayor David Suarez  
City of Weslaco

Judge Aurelio Guerra  
Willacy County

Judge Joe Rathmell  
Zapata County

**Committee Chairs**

Carolyn Petty  
Economic Development

Dr. Hector F. Gonzalez  
Healthcare

Monica Weisberg-Stewart  
Immigration &  
Border Security

Cynthia Garza Reyes  
Transportation

Michael E. Gonzalez  
Education & Workforce  
Development

**Mission:**

To make legislative  
recommendations to  
help the Texas Border Region  
grow and prosper economically.



August 2, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20395

**Urgent Request for Action**

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

We write with special urgency about conditions in our communities on the Texas-Mexico border that require action by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Absent your immediate attention, there is growing potential for the situation to spin out of control in many border communities.

We appreciate the Biden Administration's Blueprint for a Fair, Orderly and Humane Immigration System, published on July 27. It includes several initiatives the Texas Border Coalition (TBC) strongly supports, such as increasing investments in border technology, modernizing the land ports of entry, reducing visa and immigration court backlogs, investing in Central America, and congressional action to reform our nation's broken immigration system. These are needed actions that we have supported over many years and we will work with you to aid in their implementation.

They will also take time to take effect. There are other items in the Blueprint that demand action now.

Our communities cannot wait weeks or months for the Biden Administration to implement the Blueprint's plans to improve the expedited removal process for migrants who do not qualify for asylum. Our local humanitarian support organizations are operating at or beyond capacity now and need help – especially should Title 42 authorities be removed. When these organizations or their local government partners ask the Border Patrol to pause releasing migrants to allow humanitarian organizations to appropriately support them, or to stop releasing migrants infected with COVID-19, these requests should be honored. We request you order Border Patrol to work with local communities so that we might avoid the consequences of ignoring them.

Given the rise in reported positive COVID tests, TBC requests the Administration keep Title 42 authorities in place until positivity rates decrease to manageable levels, giving the Administration and local communities time to implement policies to effectively address any changes.

Should the Administration lift Title 42 restrictions in the next several weeks, we request appropriate consultation with border leaders to assure that adequate plans are in place. This should include both increased staffing at the land ports of entry (with all the COVID protections necessary), including asylum officers and processing



personnel. The plan must include sufficient coordination with and funding for humanitarian organizations to prevent the release of migrants into border communities not equipped to handle an influx.

We also urge you to consult with border leaders about any plans you might have in place for returning to normal operations at our land ports of entry. This includes efficient and safe operations at our land ports of entry that will safeguard the health and safety of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) personnel who protect our homeland and citizens. TBC requests that CBP ensure that its personnel are vaccinated and adequately outfitted with Personal Protective Equipment to protect the health of our officers, their families, our border communities, and all individuals seeking to cross our borders.

TBC acts as the collective voice of border communities on issues that affect Texas- Mexico border region's quality of life, commerce, and public policy. TBC is comprised of mayors, city council members, county judges, county executives, businesses, corporations, and community leaders. Collectively, we represent more than 2.5 million people who reside along the more than 1,250 miles of the Texas-Mexico border, from Brownsville to El Paso, Texas. We believe in the economic vibrancy of our border region; its potential to re-vitalize is dependent on cross-border travelers.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important request. We look forward to a positive response on this matter.

Sincerely,



Eddie Treviño Jr.  
Chairman, Texas Border Coalition  
County Judge, Cameron County, Texas

**CC:** The Honorable Kamala Harris, Vice President of the United States  
The Honorable Xavier Becerra, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)  
The Honorable Esteban Moctezuma, Ambassador, Embassy of Mexico in the United States  
Office of Public Engagement, The White House  
The Honorable John Cornyn, U.S. Senator  
The Honorable Ted Cruz, U.S. Senator  
The Honorable Greg Abbott, Texas Governor  
The Honorable Raul Ruiz, Chairman, Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) and CHC Members  
Karinda Washington, Acting Assistant Secretary, Office of Partnership and Engagement, DHS  
Charles L. Wollenhaupt, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary, Private Sector Office, DHS  
Felicia Escobar Carrillo, Chief of Staff, U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services, DHS  
Victor De Leon, Chief, Intergovernmental Affairs, Office of the Commissioner, DHS  
Texas Border Congressional Caucus  
Texas Border Legislative Delegation



# OFFICE OF THE COUNTY JUDGE

## County of Hidalgo

RICHARD F. CORTEZ

County Judge

July 30, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

I write you today with an extremely pressing issue. The ongoing immigrant surge along our country's Southern Border demands immediate and decisive action.

As County Judge, it is my responsibility to advocate for the well-being of the residents of Hidalgo County. While I am sympathetic to the plight of asylum seekers, we must address their needs in a safe, compassionate, and humane manner without risking the well-being of our community.

The promise of the American Dream remains a beacon of hope and righteousness across the world, however, the situation along our border is not sustainable. I invite you to please come to our community to witness first-hand the challenges being created by current policy.

Mr. President, Hidalgo County needs an immediate increase of federal manpower and resources to address immigrants currently within our jurisdiction and also the immediate cessation of admissions of additional immigrants in the RGV Sector.

Sincerely,

Richard F. Cortez  
County Judge  
Hidalgo County, Texas

Cc: The Honorable Kamala Harris, United States Vice-President  
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives  
The Honorable Alejandro N. Mayorkas, Secretary of U.S. Homeland Security  
Chief Raul Ortiz, U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
Rio Grande Valley Federal Delegation

**MEETING WITH BROWNSVILLE MAYOR**  
**August 12, 2021**

**Overview:**

- You will be participating in a brief 15-minute meeting with Mayor Trey Mendez of Brownsville, Texas.
- The purpose of this meeting is to convey your thanks for his continued support, communication, and collaboration in this partnership with DHS and other non-governmental organizations (NGO).
- Participants: You will be meeting with Mayor Trey Mendez. You will be staffed by OPE Assistant Secretary Eva Millona and BP Chief Raul Ortiz. A full list of participants is below.

**Discussion Points:**

- Express appreciation to the Mayor for his and the city's cooperation with DHS.
  - City of Brownsville staff assist migrants with contacting their sponsor/family and provide them with information regarding the local airport and bus lines departing Brownsville.
  - Brownsville processes approximately 300 per day at the La Plaza Bus Station. These arrivals come from either the Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centers in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) or from United States Border Patrol (USBP) RGV Sector. Capacity at the bus station location is approximately 400.
  - The operation at the La Plaza Bus Station is run by the City's Office of Emergency Management & Homeland Security (Director Odee Ann Leal). Communication between the City, CBP, ICE and NGOs is good and is key to the smooth-running operation in Brownsville.
  - NGO volunteers (from Good Neighbor, Team Brownsville and West Iglesia Bautista) provide migrants with meals and supplies.
- Recognize that Brownsville has been a model for success in moving migrants through to their final destination.
  - The City of Brownsville has handled the increase in migrants differently than other cities along the southwest border.
  - Brownsville does not have overnight shelter capacity, so they focus on processing and getting people in and out as quickly as possible.
  - Most people are processed and on their way to their sponsor/family within a couple of hours - almost all in under 12 hours. If sponsor/family is unable to purchase airline/bus ticket(s) for same day departure, then the sponsor/family is responsible to make overnight accommodations at a local hotel and contact a local taxi/Uber/Lyft to transport to hotel and back to either the bus terminal or airport.
- Demonstrate understanding of the City's plans for COVID testing, isolation, and quarantine.
  - Those arriving at the bus station are COVID tested by a FEMA funded contractor, AMR, and offered vaccinations by Dignity LLC.
  - To date, 1,018 migrants have been vaccinated. Month to date, the COVID positivity rate is 16 percent (of the 1,672 tested, 262 tested positive). The rate was 11 percent in July and was 8 percent in June.
  - Those who test positive for COVID are given a health authority letter advising them they have tested positive and offered to quarantine at a local hotel sponsored by a local NGO (Good Neighbor Settlement Home).

- **Many of the migrants choose not to get the vaccine.** The city estimates about 10 percent elect to get the vaccine.
- ***ASK from the Mayor:*** The Mayor will likely recommend that Border Patrol further promote the opportunity for the migrants to get the vaccine while they are being transported from custody.

**Background:**

- Mayor Mendez will also be attending the roundtable event with local officials held earlier in the morning.

**Participants:**

Secretary Mayorkas

Border Patrol Chief Raul Ortiz

Eva Millona, Assistant Secretary OPE

Mayor Trey Mendez, Brownsville

**Attachments**

A. Brownsville – Daily Influx Report Aug 9, 2021

B. Biography

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**Staff Responsible for Briefing Memo:** Brian Hyer, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary (202)

(b)(6)

**ATTACHMENT B: Biography**



**Juan “Trey” Mendez**  
Mayor of Brownsville, TX

Juan “Trey” Mendez, III was born in Brownsville, Texas. Growing up in a South Texas border town taught him the value of hard work and perseverance. A product of the public-school system in Brownsville, he graduated in 1997 from Gladys Porter High School and went on to receive a bachelor’s degree in Government from the University of Texas at Brownsville in 2002.



## MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS IN MCALLEN, TEXAS

August 12, 2021

### Overview:

- During your visit to South Texas, you will have a **15-minute** meeting with Members of Congress from the region: Rep. Henry Cuellar (D, TX-28); Rep. Vicente Gonzalez (D, TX-15); and Rep. Filemon Vela (D, TX-34). Not all Members may attend this meeting.
- This Member meeting will immediately precede an engagement with regional and local elected officials. Members will be invited to participate in the larger group meeting.
- The intention of this brief meeting is to provide an in-person opportunity for Members to share any concerns or bring other matters to your attention in a private setting.

### Discussion Points:

- The three Members have been focused on the Biden Administration's and DHS's response to conditions on the U.S.-Mexico border, particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic has continued.
- The topics they are most likely to raise are the following:
  - COVID-19 testing and release of migrants into community-based settings;
  - Reimbursement for county, local, and non-profit organizations and partners providing support and care to migrant families;
  - Addressing the flow of migrants through regional cooperation and action; and
  - Non-essential travel restrictions (Title 19) affecting cross-border commerce.

### Relevant Correspondence:

- January 8: Rep. Vela signed onto a letter led by Rep. Larson to VP Pence requesting him to invoke the 25<sup>th</sup> amendment to remove President Trump from office.
- January 26: Rep. Vela signed onto letter led by Rep. Castro to POTUS and HHS requesting ACA access for DACA recipients in response to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- March 17: Rep. Vela signed a letter requesting \$6 billion for land ports of entry be included in FY22 budget request and/or infrastructure package.
- March 31: Rep. Cuellar signed a letter requesting DHS and DOJ work together to cancel all eminent domain lawsuits and forego any claims for taking for the purpose of building fencing or border wall systems.
- April 16: Rep. Cuellar signed a letter advocating for reopening land ports of entry to "non-essential" travel on a localized basis.
- April 27: Rep. Gonzalez letter to POTUS requesting for notice of any and all planned work along the U.S.-Mexico border in his district and asking for assistance to restore flood mitigation infrastructure impacted by border wall construction.
- May 28: Rep. Gonzalez and Rep. Cuellar joint letter with several Border state Senators and other Members inquiring about plans regarding travel restrictions at U.S. land ports of entry.
- June 4: Rep. Gonzalez signed a letter requesting a detail path forward for safely reopening the U.S.- Mexico border.
- July 30: Rep. Cuellar and Senator Graham signed a letter calling for the creation of a special executive position for former DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson to oversee health and safety of U.S. communities at the southern border.

**Attachments:**

A. Member Biographies

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**Staff Responsible for Briefing Memo:** Alexandra Carnes, Acting Assistant Secretary, OLA,

(b)(6)

*OGC Reviewer:* (b)(6), Deputy Chief of Staff

## ATTACHMENT A: PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES



### **Representative Henry Cuellar (D, TX-28)**

Member of House Committee on Appropriations, Homeland Security Subcommittee

Member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Congressional Border Caucus

Chief Deputy Whip for 117<sup>th</sup> Congress.

**Met with him?** Rep. Cuellar participated in your March Congressional Hispanic Caucus meeting, and you had an individual call with him later that month. The call with the Congressman in March was relatively short and straightforward. He did most of the talking, reiterating his priorities and his concerns about conditions at the Donna Centralized Processing Center. At that time, he offered to be helpful in getting HHS additional capacity to relieve the pressure on DHS given his position on the House Appropriations Homeland Subcommittee. He also mentioned that he had been speaking with Acting Assistant Secretary Gary Rasicot regarding his proposal about easing non-essential travel restrictions at the border.

### **Key Biographic information:**

- Served in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2005.
- District includes the cities of Laredo, Mission, Rio Grande City, and San Antonio. His district encompasses 290 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Only Texas Democrat on House Appropriations. Serves as the Vice Chair of the Homeland Security subcommittee.
- The first Laredoan in more than 20 years elected to represent the 28<sup>th</sup> District of Texas in the House.
- He is the son of migrant workers.
- His legislative principles are based on the belief that education, family values, and hard work should open doors to new opportunities for all Americans.
- During his time in Congress, he has stood out as an advocate for better government, commerce and trade, small businesses, and border security.

### **Relevant Southwest Border (SWB)/Immigration Information:**

- Opposed border wall construction, particularly taking private land in his district to do so.
- He has called the construction of border walls a 14<sup>th</sup> century solution and has instead focused his energy on introducing more effective alternatives, such as modernizing land ports of entry and security infrastructure, bolstering U.S. Border Patrol vehicles and checkpoints, and increasing border patrol agent salaries to reduce attrition.
- Supports working more closely with Mexico to limit irregular migration from Central American countries.
- He has supported efforts to streamline commerce at land ports of entry between the United States and Mexico, urging CBP to improve its staffing models and encouraging the exploration of a rail line between the United States and Mexico via Texas.

- In an August 5 tweet called for appointment of “a special executive for border issues to ensure the government provides sufficient federal resources to overburdened border communities.”
- Joined Senator Graham in writing DHS in July requesting that former DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson to be appointed to “border czar.”
- Consistently tweets about DHS agents and border communities being overwhelmed by increasing amounts of migrants and has written the Department about these concerns as well.
- Supported CBP termination of Laredo Sector border wall contracts.
- Introduced the *Responsibility for Unaccompanied Minors Act* to help HHS ensure unaccompanied children are safe and protected.
- In a July 26 press release called for DHS to prioritize the health and safety of Border Agents and border communities during the COVID-19 surge. Cited concerns for 87 Border agents that tested positive for COVID-19.
- Very focused on reopening the SWB for non-essential travel and has written the Department about his concerns as well as spoken to DHS officials on several occasions.

**Remarks at House Appropriations Homeland Subcommittee Budget Hearing on 7-13-2021**

- “This is still key for our NGOs and our border communities. The \$170 million for joint migrant processing centers, that is key to make sure that we have a one-stop center area, the humanitarian response operating plan because we need to plan for these surges. We've seen this in 2014, 2019 and, of course, now. The millions of dollars to combat human smuggling to make sure that the Homeland HSI investigation capacity, undercover activities, human trafficking, child exploitation, all that work is done.”
- “And I do want to say that our men and women in green, especially and OFO also, also are having a hard time. They're having a very difficult time because of the large numbers, so we need to just give them more than just a pat. We need to give them the monies. We need to give them the resources. We need to make sure that we support them. Also, on the border communities, if you live in Hawaii or in New York or somewhere else, L.A., it's a little different from our border communities.”
- “We're facing something that's very difficult. And this is why I'm hoping that this bill would help. But let me just give you some numbers. For example, last week or a couple of weeks ago, just in the Lower Rio Grande Valley; we had over 15,800 people that were apprehended. This is only the people that got apprehended. Last week we had over 16,000 people. That means that to get 2,600, 2,200 people come in every single day. Now what happens to those individuals, if you, unaccompanied kids we know they go through health and human services. If you're a single adult under Title 42, you're going to be returned. Family units are being released. Now, I say this not tongue and cheek, but if you support all this and if you have a place in your hometown, we'll be happy to send them directly from the Lower Rio Grande.”
- “In fact, our health director, Dr. Trevino and the Mayor of Laredo, they basically said "Don't send us any more buses from the valley." Because every day they're sending buses about 250 to 350 people. The NGOs can't handle them. They were quarantined because of the COVID-19. They're getting large numbers, and basically, yes, sir, we had an emergency call with CBP here in D.C. and the local folks. And they agreed to suspend

the busses from coming from the valley to Laredo because we're overloaded with COVID-19 cases of this subject.”

- “So, I associate myself with the migrants' care that you all mentioned but I want you to understand, the men and women in green, the men and women in blue, the ICE officers, they need help. And our border communities -- our border communities are being strained at this time. And I say this because, again, this is what's happening in Laredo and other - Del Rio also.”



**Representative Vicente Gonzalez (D, TX-15)**

Member of the House Select Committee on Economic Disparity and Fairness in Growth, House Committee on Financial Services, and House Committee on Foreign Affairs, including the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, Migration, and International Economic Policy

Member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus COVID-19 Task Force, the Problem Solvers Caucus, and the Congressional Border Caucus

**Met with him?** Rep. Gonzalez participated in your March Congressional Hispanic Caucus meeting and you had an individual, planeside engagement with the Congressman in April during your trip to McAllen, TX. You most recently spoke with the Congressman at the end of July during which time he invited you to his district and offered to convene a meeting with local stakeholders.

**Key Biographic Information:**

- Served in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2017.
- District includes a portion of McAllen, Falfurrias, and extends toward San Antonio.
- He received a G.E.D. in 1985 and attended community college before earning a bachelor's degree in business aviation from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in 1992.
- He earned his J.D. from Texas Wesleyan (now Texas A&M) School of Law in Fort Worth in 1996.
- He opened V. Gonzalez & Associates in 1997 and practiced law for 20 years.
- A lifetime resident of South Texas, Rep. Gonzalez lives in McAllen, TX.

**Relevant Southwest Border (SWB)/Immigration Information:**

- Sponsored legislation that authorized federal funding to identify the remains of migrants who attempt to enter the country.
- Introduced legislation to allow deported veterans to return to the United States.
- Favors protecting Dreamers from deportation.
- In February, criticized the Biden Administration's suspension of the Asylum Cooperative Agreements with Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, saying it would lead to a surge



that “will overwhelm our many unvaccinated Customs and Border Patrol agents and put our frontline workers at greater risk during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

- In an August 9 tweet called on POTUS and S1 to allow for in-country asylum processing.
- Authored a 10-tweet thread on August 5 highlighting a press release containing a statement on efforts to provide relief at the SWB.
  - Tweet thread called the federal response to the border situation unacceptable, citing lack of resources for COVID-19 testing.
  - Reaffirmed commitment to working with White House and DHS on long-term legislative solutions to address root causes of migration.
  - Reaffirmed commitment to push for resources, including hazard, pay for CBP officers and agents and local healthcare providers.
- Deeply concerned about release of COVID-19 positive migrants into the United States, and in a statement asked the Biden Administration for answers regarding a rise in COVID-19 cases and release of migrants in South Texas.
- Supports reopening non-essential travel for legal visa holders, using clear thresholds and benchmarks. He wrote letters to the Department in May and June about non-essential travel restrictions, requesting information on how DHS determines to extend the non-essential travel restrictions as well as our efforts to provide the public with a plan concerning how land ports of entry along the SWB will return to normal operations, among other things.
- Introduced legislation to reimburse farmers and ranchers for damages and vandalism occurring on their property due to increased irregular migration.



**Representative Filemon Vela (D, TX-34)**

Member of the House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Agriculture

Member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and Co-Chair of the Congressional Border Caucus

Vice Chair Democratic National Committee

**Met with him?** You have not yet officially met the Congressman in your capacity as Secretary.

**Key Biographic Information:**

- Served in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2013.
- District includes Brownsville, Weslaco, Harlingen, and extends to south of San Antonio.
- He is a graduate of Georgetown University and University of Texas Law School.
- President Biden picked his wife to direct the Commission on White House Fellowships.

- A strong advocate for immigrant rights, education programs—including Head Start and Pell Grants for college students—and community health centers.

**Relevant Southwest Border (SWB)/Immigration Information:**

- Strongly opposed border wall construction.
- Wrote the Department in March about prioritizing funding for land port of entry infrastructure along the SWB.
- District shares border with Mexican state of Tamaulipas.
- Supports Biden Administration Blueprint for a Fair, Orderly and Humane Immigration System.
- Supports real policy solutions that reflect nation's values that secure the border while also treating those seeking a better life with compassion and respect.
- Introduced the *Border Health Security Act* to strengthen multi-country cooperation to screen for infectious disease and support vital public health initiatives in border communities.



**Representative Tony Gonzales (R, TX-23)**

Member of the House Committee on Appropriations and House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis

Co-Chair of the GOP Congressional Hispanic Conference

Member of the Problem Solvers Caucus and U.S.-Mexico Interparliamentary Group

**Met with him?** You have not yet met with the Congressman in your capacity as Secretary.

**Key Biographic Information:**

- Freshman Member of Congress, serving since 2021.
- Served in the Navy for 20 years before running for Congress.
- Previously served as DOD legislative fellow for Senator Rubio.
- Founded his own nonprofit focused on empowering and encouraging growth and development in impoverished areas of San Antonio.
- A 2018 National Security Fellow at the foundation for Defense of Democracies.
- Teaches counterterrorism, U.S. government, and other political science courses as an assistant professor at the University of Maryland system.
- Rep. Gonzales' legislative priorities include border security and immigration.

**Relevant SWB/Immigration Information:**

- He introduced a bill to modify the authority for pay and work schedules of Border Patrol agents.

- He also supports additional resources for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Border Patrol, including more personnel along the border, an updated entry/exit program, and the construction of a wall along certain parts of the border.
- Consistently tweets about Border Patrol agents needing more support from the White House and federal government.
- Co-led introduction of *RAPID (Reimbursing Agriculture Producers for Immigration Damages) Act* to reimburse farmers for damages incurred by irregular migration.
- On August 10, he held a roundtable with farmers and ranchers on property damage and thefts they allege are due to the “migration crisis.”
- Blames the “border crisis” on the Biden Administration and “failed border policies,” particularly “open door policies.”
- Led an August 6 letter to the DHS Secretary expressing concern for the practice of “catch-and-release for thousands of migrants unlawfully crossing the southern border and the lack of consistent testing for COVID-19.”
- In a July 29 tweet, expressed concern for the growing number of deceased migrants being found by law enforcement.
- Opposes lifting Title 42 and feels it would have disastrous consequences.
- In a July 17 tweet he criticized the FY22 Homeland Security Appropriations bill for failing to include additional funding for Border Patrol agents while reducing CBP funding by nearly \$1 billion.
- Has criticized the Biden Administration for “defunding” CBP and ICE.
- Supports funding Operation Stonegarden.
- Co-authored an op-ed with House Minority Whip Rep. Steve Scalise on how the Biden Administration has created the “southern border crisis” and called for a reversal of the executive orders that halted border wall construction and that repealed the “Remain in Mexico” policy.

**RGV SECTOR TEMPORARY OUTSIDE PROCESSING SITE (TOPS) TOUR**  
**August 12, 2021**

**Overview:**

- Chief Patrol Agent Brian Hastings will facilitate a tour of and briefing on the Temporary Outdoor Processing Site (TOPS) located in Rincon Village, Granjeno, Texas.
- You will be meeting with RGV Chief Patrol Agent (b)(6); (b)(7)(C), RGV Acting Deputy Chief Patrol Agent (b)(6); (b)(7)(C), RGV Acting Division Chief of Operation (b)(6); (b)(7)(C), (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) Interim Patrol Agent in Charge (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) approximately (b)(7)(E) line agents and (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) DHS surge employees.

**Flow of Show:**

- PAIC Jesse Cardoza and DPAIC (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) will greet you upon arrival.
- You, PAIC (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) Chief Ortiz, and Chief Hastings will walk along the TOPS facility while greeting employees.

**Discussion Points:**

- CBP has found TOPS to be functional and efficient. (b)(5)
- The area where TOPS (b)(7)(E)
- TOPS is self-sustained and has all the processing equipment found in processing centers along with dedicated networks to facilitate processing demands.
- TOPS decreases the strain on limited holding facility capacity.
- TOPS allows USBP to maintain CDC social distancing guidelines and lower detainee and workforce exposure to contagions, including COVID-19.
- TOPS reduces the need for time intensive travel from field to processing centers.
- TOPS has received significant public criticism from NGOs, which have cited lack of temperature controls, rustic facilities, overcrowding, inadequate medical attention, and prolonged stays as some key concerns.

**Background:**

- (b)(7)(E)
- (b)(7)(E) Volunteer force is from USCIS and hands out food and track and deliver supplies. (b)(7)(E) currently has (b)(7) volunteers total across (b)(7)(E) fts.
- Starting in March 2020, the RGV Sector began using mobile field processing systems to quickly process migrants encountered. Lessons learned and advancements in mobile processing capabilities gives agents the ability to intake subjects at locations outside of Border Patrol stations and ports of entry.
- The purpose of TOPS is to expand current processing capabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic in an outdoor environment. The ability to process vulnerable populations as soon as they are apprehended, in an outdoor setting, reduces their time in custody while also limiting exposure to COVID-19 and other contagions.

- TOPS features the following amenities:
  - Weatherproof lodging
  - Medical screenings
  - Food
  - Portable restrooms
  - Sleeping mats
  - Blankets
  - Extra clothing
  - Hygiene products
  - Items for infant care (diapers, baby formula, etc.)
  - Readily available transportation to move detainees to nearby NGO's reception after processing is complete.

**Participants:**

Secretary Mayorkas

Raul L. Ortiz, Deputy Chief, U.S. Border Patrol

Brian Hastings, Chief Patrol Agent, RGV

(b)(6); (b)(7)(C) [redacted], Acting Deputy Chief Patrol Agent, RGV  
[redacted] Acting Division Chief, RGV  
[redacted] Interim Patrol Agent in Charge, MCS

**Attachments:**

A. Biographies

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**Staff Responsible for Briefing Memo:** (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) [redacted] *Communications Director, RGV*

(b)(6) [redacted]

## LAW ENFORCEMENT ROUNDTABLE

August 12, 2021

### Overview:

- This will be a 60-minute law enforcement roundtable with six law enforcement officials from surrounding south Texas border jurisdictions.
- The goal of this meeting is to have a candid discussion regarding current border activities, and to discuss collaborative opportunities and coordination between the federal government and the local law enforcement community. Chief Raul Ortiz, U.S. Border Patrol will moderate this roundtable. Chief Ortiz noted some in this group have not participated in the Texas State initiatives and have been great partners with CBP.
- This session is **closed press**.
- Note: This roundtable is not sponsored by the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), and the majority of participants have not had the opportunity to participate in your regularly scheduled monthly NSA and Southwest Border Sheriffs' roundtables.
- You will be staffed by Chief Raul Ortiz, U.S. Border Patrol.

### Sequence of Events:

- 8:45 a.m. You will arrive at McAllen Muster Room.
- 8:46 a.m. Chief Ortiz will introduce you.
- 8:48 a.m. You will deliver 5 minutes of opening remarks.
- 8:53 a.m. You will facilitate an open discussion.
- 9:42 a.m. You will provide closing remarks.
- 9:45 a.m. Session concludes, and you will depart.

### Discussion Points:

- **Administration:** Note your continued commitment to actively engage with the Northern Triangle countries and Mexico to address irregular migration management issues.
- **Operation Sentinel:** Highlight the Department's counter-network targeting operation focused on transnational criminal organizations affiliated with migrant smuggling (**Attachment B**).
- **Operation Load Up:** This operation was implemented on July 16, 2021 and is a DHS-wide strategy to support local law enforcement agencies that encounter human smuggling cases along the border. The U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) will coordinate with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) for the purposes of reducing the response times to calls for assistance with potential immigration violations.
  - USBP will lead coordination efforts and will focus on Rio Grande Valley (RGV), Del Rio (DRT), and Tucson (TCA) sectors. Intelligence gleaned from apprehensions will further investigations and enable targeting of smuggling organizations.
- **Operation Lock and Key:** Operation Lock and Key will address threats in the RGV Area of Responsibility by utilizing U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) marine assets to provide a combined persistent law enforcement presence. USCG assets will be deployed strategically to improve Operational Control of the border through their presence and search and rescue availability.



- **Efforts to Combat Transnational Organized Crime (TCOs):** Note DHS efforts to combat TCOs, including collaboration between HSI-led Border Enforcement Security Task Forces (BEST), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Border Patrol, and ICE HSI to screen families for potential fraud and, where applicable, further investigation. HSI is increasing its footprint via two vital initiatives:
  - **Operation CITADEL:** A multi-year interagency effort that began in 2013 to bolster law enforcement capabilities of host nations, while also supporting HSI domestic and international investigations. In Mexico, HSI personnel work closely alongside investigators and prosecutors from the Mexico Attorney General's Office.
  - **Joint Task Force Alpha (JTFA):** Mention that JTFA is a mechanism that directly impacts the smuggling threat through the Northern Triangle and Mexico. JTFA marshals the investigative abilities and resources of HSI and prosecutorial resources of the Department of Justice, in partnership with other federal law enforcement entities, including CBP, to disrupt and dismantle human smuggling and trafficking networks that exploit and endanger migrants to the United States from the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and from Mexico.
    - HSI has doubled the number of special agents at 11 domestic field office locations devoted to JTFA. New locations added include Harlingen, Nogales, Sells, and Douglas. HSI special agents continue to support JTFA from Yuma, San Diego, Calexico, Laredo, Las Cruces/El Paso, Eagle Pass, and Del Rio.
- **Grants:** The public announcement for grant allocations occurred on July 16, 2021.
  - FEMA announced final allocations for 6 grant programs, totaling \$475 million.
  - The announcement included \$90 million for Operation Stonegarden (OPSG); **Attachment C – Participant Grant Allocation** highlights funding for some of the Sheriff participants present and their counties.
- **Staffing:** Highlight your commitment and plan to work with Congress to appropriately resource CBP, enabling it to better manage the multiple needs required at the border.
- **Immigration Enforcement:** The Department will continue to implement the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)'s order under Title 42, continue immigration processing under Title 8, and increase use of criminal prosecutions for certain populations.
  - Discuss the new Dedicated Docket, which will streamline immigration court proceedings for families who arrive between ports of entry at the Southwest Border.
- **Gotaways:** The Department is committed to enhancing both personnel and technological security measures on the Southwest Border.
  - Border encounters are dynamic. Ensuring personnel and technology resources are deployed most effectively is key to limiting getaways. Agents are confronted daily with a range of encounters, from fleeing to surrendering, that exacerbate resourcing decisions.
- **COVID-19:** Express gratitude to Sheriffs as valuable partners during the pandemic.
  - Express the Department's commitment to assisting Northern Triangle countries with the resources needed to combat COVID-19. DHS ensured that over 1.5 million doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine were shipped from the United States to Guatemala.
- **Travel Restrictions:** Confirm that on July 22, 2021, DHS announced the extension of the temporary travel restrictions applicable to land ports of entry and ferry services between the U.S. and Mexico (86 FR 32766), now in effect until 11:59 PM EDT on August 21, 2021.
- **Messaging:** Advise that you are working with federal and international counterparts to develop a messaging campaign geared towards the Northern Triangle countries.

- **Release of Migrants Into the Local Communities:** Migrants transported into jurisdictions, particularly when resources are already strained, continues to be a concern.
- **Movement of Migrants from Sector to Sector:** CBP and ICE may need to transport migrants from one sector to another to accommodate space and other resource constraints.
- **Flights and Other Methods of Migration Management:**
  - State the Interim guidelines priorities do not require or prohibit the arrest, detention, or removal of any noncitizen. Rather, ICE officers and agents are expected to exercise their discretion thoughtfully, consistent with ICE's important national security, border security, and public safety mission. Since every case is unique, authority has been delegated to local ICE Field Office Directors to review and approve cases for enforcement, detention, or removal that fall outside those stated priorities.
  - Highlight your July engagement with Guatemalan President Giammattei and other officials, including President Giammattei's agreement to explore trilateral migration management collaboration with Mexico. State that DHS and Guatemala are forming a strong partnership that will increase security at ports of entry, fight criminal organizations, facilitate lawful trade and travel, and assist U.S. efforts to create safe and lawful pathways for migration.
  - Discuss the Biometric Data Sharing Program Letter of Intent signed by you and Guatemalan Minister of Government Reyes, which communicates both countries' interest in improved information sharing and screening to combat human trafficking through ports of entry.
  - CBP signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Guatemalan Institute of Migration to implement the Automated Targeting System – Global in Guatemala.
- **Border Barrier Safety Projects:** Border Wall and other safety projects have been halted or delayed while CBP and ICE can review them.

**Participants:**

Secretary Mayorkas

Chief Raul Ortiz, U.S. Border Patrol

Sheriff Eddie Guerra (Hidalgo County)

Sheriff Joe Frank Martinez (Val Verde County)

Sheriff Benny Martinez (Brooks County)

Sheriff Martin Cuellar (Webb County)

Sheriff Eric Garza (Cameron County)

Regional Director Victor Escalon, Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), South TX Region

**Attachments:**

A. Participant Biographies

B. Operational Sentinel

C. Grant Funding

**Staff Responsible for Briefing Memo:** (b)(6) Associate Director, OSLLE; Acting Assistant Secretary (b)(6) OSLLE.

*OGC Reviewer:* (b)(6), Deputy Chief of Staff.

## **ATTACHMENT A: BIOGRAPHIES**

### **J.E. "Eddie" Guerra Sheriff, Hidalgo County, Texas**



Mr. J.E. "Eddie" Guerra was elected Hidalgo County Sheriff in November 2014, after having been appointed Sheriff by the Hidalgo County Commissioners' Court in April 2014. Sheriff Guerra oversees approximately 800 deputies and staff, including the county jail and has 20 years of law enforcement experience. Prior to becoming Sheriff, he was elected Hidalgo County Precinct 4 Constable beginning in 2009. Under Sheriff Guerra's leadership, the Precinct 4 Constable's Office received awards from ICE Homeland Security Investigations, Texas Attorney General's Office, Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission, Texas Department of Public Safety, and Edinburg Consolidated Independent School District.

Sheriff Guerra became involved in law enforcement because of his personal experience growing up in the rural Linn/San Manuel area where he saw first-hand the lack of connection between the community and county law enforcement services. In 1995, Sheriff Guerra joined the Precinct 4 Constable's Office as a part-time reserve deputy serving the area where he lived and worked. In 1999, he was recruited by the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office as a full-time deputy. He quickly moved up the ranks to Sergeant and was assigned to the U.S. Customs Drug Task Force where he served as the primary liaison officer between the Sheriff's Office and U.S. Customs. He served as a liaison officer for five years earning the respect of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. His efforts helped confiscate more than \$1 million in seized assets to the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office.

Sheriff Guerra holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agricultural Education from Texas A&M University. He has been married for 24 years to Norma, and they share three children.

**Joe Frank Martinez**  
**Sheriff, Val Verde County, Texas**



Sheriff Joe Frank Martinez has spent more than 39 years in law enforcement, including 9 years as Sheriff in Val Verde County; more than 25 years with the Texas Department of Public Safety; and more than 4 years with the Del Rio Police Department.

At the Texas Department of Public Safety, Sheriff Martinez served eleven years as a Sergeant Investigator with the Narcotics Service where he supervised and conducted criminal investigations into areas of narcotic smuggling, organized crime as it relates to narcotic trafficking, and money laundering and organized gang investigations. He also spent ten years as a License and Weight Trooper where he enforced the Federal Motor Carrier Regulations as they pertain to commercial motor vehicles. Martinez spent four years assigned to Highway Patrol.

Sheriff Martinez started his law enforcement career as a City of Del Rio Police Officer, where he was assigned to routine traffic patrol, the Detectives Division, and conducted investigations of felony offenses including murder, theft, burglary, and unauthorized use of a motor vehicle.

Sheriff Martinez is a member of the Southwestern Border Sheriffs' Coalition. He has an Associate Degree in Applied Science in Criminal Justice from the Southwest Texas Junior College.

**Sheriff Urbino "Benny" Martinez**  
**Brooks County, TX**



Sheriff Martinez has served the County of Brooks since 2009. He plans, organizes, implements, administers, and evaluates all Sheriff's Office operations and programs. Sheriff Martinez studied at Baylor University.

Prior to Brooks County Sheriff's Office, Sheriff Martinez served as a Texas State Trooper from 1979 until his retirement in 2008, retiring at the rank of Sergeant. During that time, his responsibilities spanned from enforcing traffic and criminal laws, investigation of motor vehicle traffic crashes, and providing a visible police presence in his area of responsibility. In 1990, Sheriff Martinez joined the Narcotics Service of the Department of Public Safety, which charged him with the overall direction of the State's enforcement efforts against illegal drug trafficking in Texas. He played an integral role in identifying and targeting individuals and organizations diverting large quantities of controlled substances for illicit sale, while undercover in the South Texas area until his retirement in 2008.

Sheriff Martinez' most current focus and attention has been drawn to the abundant migration from persons from all over the world across the border of Mexico, which has caught the attention of state, federal, and international agencies as the United States moves toward an immigration policy and strategy.

**Sheriff Martin Cuellar**  
**Webb County, TX**



A native of Laredo, Sheriff Martin Cuellar has dedicated his entire professional life to law enforcement. Starting as a Webb County Deputy Sheriff and rising to the rank of Lieutenant in charge of Narcotics Intelligence with the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Sheriff Cuellar has received hundreds of hours of advanced training and is responsible for the seizure of tens of thousands of pounds of narcotics and millions of dollars in drug money that was funneled back into the war against drugs. His Office is seizing an average of nearly 1,000 pounds of marijuana per week. In addition to increased efforts to work cooperatively with other local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, Sheriff Cuellar is working to modernize the

Office and offering an unprecedented level of openness and transparency with the media, the public, and other elected officials.

**Sheriff Eric Garza**  
**Cameron County, TX**



***NO BIOGRAPHY AVAILABLE***

**Victor Escalon, Jr.**  
Regional Director  
Department of Public Safety  
South Texas Region



Mr. Victor Escalon Jr. was appointed the Regional Director for the Department of Public Safety (DPS) South Texas Region in September 2019. His district spans Brownsville, Corpus Christi, and Del Rio, Texas.

Mr. Escalon attended Pan American University and also served in the United States Navy.

Mr. Escalon first served as a highway patrol trooper in Zapata and Laredo, Texas. From there, he was promoted to the narcotic services, serving for approximately four and a half years in Laredo, where he earned the sergeant rank.

Mr. Escalon became a Texas Ranger in 2003 and served for sixteen years. He was also promoted to Sergeant Investigator in Harlingen, working with all agencies of the Rio Grande Valley. When promoted to Captain, he moved to the Austin headquarters. During that time, his responsibility was running the border security operations. These operations included the joint operations intelligence centers and the Drawbridge camera program. He also coordinated efforts for border security operations with the Border Patrol along the Rio Grande Valley and to El Paso, Texas.



## **ATTACHMENT B: OPERATION SENTINEL ISSUE PAPER**

### **OPERATION TO COUNTER TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME ASSOCIATED TO HUMAN SMUGGLING AND TRAFFICKING**

Since April 2021, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has led *Operation Sentinel* through the facilitation of a whole of government and international partnerships approach to counter Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) affiliated with smuggling migrants into the United States. The Sentinel team has leveraged these partnerships to identify targets associated to TCOs and denied their access to the homeland through a synchronized set of actions to restrict their ability to travel, conduct commerce, and finance their operations. The Sentinel team has gained insight into the hierarchy of the TCO networks, as well as key tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP); names, monikers, geographic points of interest, financial accounts, and other selectors to facilitate network-based analysis and close intelligence gaps. The Sentinel team's targeting methodology has uncovered multiple investigative leads, and through coordination and collaboration, facilitated support to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) investigative priority team identified as Joint Task Force Alpha (JTFA).

**Method:** Utilizing the breadth of CBP's authorities, data, analytic capability, and capacity, along with those of CBP's domestic and foreign partners, *Operation Sentinel* will continue to identify TCO targets, their foreign and domestic associates, and assets and employ a series of targeted and synchronized actions against them in a phased approach.

**End State:** Disrupt the TCO logistical networks directly and indirectly contributing to the current surge of migrants along the Southwest Land Border (SWLB). These efforts continue to support the overall enhancement of both enforcement and targeting abilities to strengthen security and CBP's border security mission and generate leads in support of JTFA investigative priorities.

#### **Current State (as of 07/12/2021):**

- Identified **3,468** total targets in various states of analysis, deconfliction, and action by Operation Sentinel partner agencies
  - **1,092** targeted for non-immigrant visa revocation
    - **162** Revoked
  - **1,314** Money Service Business (MSB) accounts tied to structuring funds linked to human smuggling and trafficking
    - **645** Referred to MSBs
  - **196** Global Entry/Sentri accounts targeted for removal
    - **79** Revoked
  - **157** Foreign bank accounts tied to structured/laundered funds related to human smuggling and trafficking
    - **44** referred to Mexican Ministry of Finance via U.S. Department of Treasury for asset freezing and further investigation
  - **650** Domestic bank accounts analyzed to identify investigative leads through coordination with DOJ JTFA
  - **24** business entities targeted for links to TCOs

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

- 1 business and 1 owner proposed for a 5-year debarment by CBP Office of Trade
- 1,286 IRS-NG products published by the CBP Intelligence Enterprise in response to Operation Sentinel Focused Collection Messages (FCM)
- 16 IRS-NG products published by the Operation Sentinel team
- 12 IIRs/Classified Cables related to Sentinel Actions
- Ongoing coordination with industry partners:
  - National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB)
  - Global Banking Consortium
  - Money Service Business Association (MSBA)
    - This collaboration has directly led to 62 Suspicious Activity Reports (SAR) being published by MSBs, which included 571 specific targets, due to Operation Sentinel financial targeting efforts.

**BROWNSVILLE MEETING WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS  
(NGOs)  
August 12, 2021**

**Overview:**

- This is your first in-person meeting with NGOs in Brownsville, TX. You previously met with Sister Norma Pimentel when you last traveled to South Texas in March 2021.
  - This will be CLOSED press.
- You will give brief opening remarks (5 minutes) followed by an open discussion with the participating NGOs (55 minutes). The goal of this meeting is to introduce yourself, briefly discuss your vision, and welcome input on border priorities.
- Topics of discussion may include the expedited removal process, the use of criminal prosecutions for repeat crossers, the recent news about T42 interior expulsion flights, and lateral T42 flights.
- *For your awareness:*
  - On July 30, 2021, Susan Law, the founder of Angry Tias & Abuelas passed away. She had been a respected member of the community since 1973.
- Participants: You will meet with NGO representatives and service providers from the Rio Grande Valley area. You will be staffed by OPE Assistant Secretary Eva Millona. A full list of participants is below.

**Discussion Points:**

- DHS will continue to engage with NGOs and communities to raise awareness about the Department's policies and to listen to all perspectives, and thank the assembled organizations for their critical work and support in border response, including legal and support services for recently arriving asylum-seekers and migrants.

**Background:**

- The main topics of concern for the NGOs are: Title 42 and the future of the consortium process for Title 42 humanitarian exceptions as well as the treatment of children and reunification of families separated at the border. Participants may also ask about the recent resumption of expedited removal for families, the "Repeat Offender" initiative to refer for prosecution single adults who have previously been removed under Title 8, humanitarian concerns with Title 42 expulsion flights to southern Mexico and Haiti, and "lateral" expulsion flights from El Paso and San Diego.

Title 42 and the Consortium Process

- DHS established a process with NGOs in Mexico (consortium) to identify migrants, including families, in vulnerable situations (with factors defined by DHS) that could make them suitable for humanitarian exception from Title 42. NGOs referred cases and provided advanced biographic and biometric information. Once an individual's information has been confirmed, and a negative COVID-19 test had been provided, they were processed at a designated port of entry.
- This process occurred in El Paso, Brownsville, Nogales, Hidalgo, Laredo, and in a very low capacity, San Ysidro. To date, more than 7,440 individuals have been processed.

- This process is time-bound through September 10, using State Department funding through UNHCR. However, due to backlogs among referring NGOs, partners are no longer able to accept new cases to prepare for DHS referral. DHS will continue to accept and process cases through the close of this process and is working to increase NGO capacity in this interim period, and is developing plans for processing beyond Title 42.

#### Family Reunification

- On June 8, 2021, the Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families submitted to President Biden its Initial Progress Report, which details ongoing efforts to identify and reunite children who were separated from their parents at the US-Mexico border.

#### **Background on participating organizations:**

- **ARISE** (A Resource In Serving Equality), is a community-based program that works with families to strengthen their communities. It is located in South Texas.
- **LUPE** (La Union del Pueblo Entero) builds stronger, healthier communities where residents use civic engagement for social change. LUPE has over 8,000+ members throughout the Rio Grande Valley.
- The **South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project (ProBAR)** is a project of the American Bar Association that provides legal information, pro se assistance and pro bono representation to thousands of immigrants and asylum-seekers in South Texas each year.
- **Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley** is the charitable branch of the Diocese of Brownsville.
- **Team Brownsville** volunteers help families/individuals legally seeking asylum in the US.
- **Angry Tias & Abuelas** feeds the hungry and collaborates with dozens of other NGOs to affect immigration policy, and provide legal counsel to migrants.
- The **Sidewalk School** exists to provide quality education, medical care, COVID-19 testing, and food assistance to those who would go without on the Mexico border.
- **Global Response Management (GRM)** delivers emergency medical care and humanitarian relief to vulnerable populations in Reynosa.
- **The Young Center** works in the best interests of children who arrive in the United States on their own.
- The **RGV Welcome Committee** is a coalition of NGOs and advocates that coordinate humanitarian efforts for migrants entering the US through established border processes.
- **Texas Civil Rights Project** strives for equality and justice in and out of the courts. They envision a Texas where all communities thrive with dignity and justice, and without fear.

#### **Participants:**

Secretary Mayorkas

Assistant Secretary Millona

#### **Non - DHS (Confirmed)**

Jennifer Harbury, Angry Tias and Abuelas (Confirmed)

Andrea Rudnik, Team Brownsville (Confirmed)

Felicia T Samporano, Sidewalk School (Confirmed)

Sister Norma Pimentel, Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley (Confirmed)

Lindsay Schenk or Corinne Waite, ProBAR

Erin Thorn-Vela & Laura Pena, Texas Civil Rights Project (Confirmed)  
Olivia Pena, The Young Center  
Andrea Leiner, Global Response (Confirmed)  
Tom Cartwright, Rio Grande Valley Welcoming Committee (Confirmed)  
Hugo Zurita, Good Neighborhood Settlement (Confirmed)  
Daniel Diaz, LUPE (La Union del Pueblo Entero) (Confirmed)  
Ramona Casas, ARISE (Confirmed)

**Attachments:**

A. Biographies (*Principals only*)

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**Staff Responsible for Briefing Memo:** (b)(6) NGO Liaison

## ATTACHMENT A: Participant Biographies



**Sam Bishop**  
Project Coordinator  
Global Response Management

Mr. Sam Bishop is the Project Coordinator for response in Matamoros and oversees operations at the clinic. Mr. Bishop is a combat veteran of the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq and started working with Global Response Management towards the end of his military career. With five years as a special operations combat medic in the Army's 3rd Ranger Battalion, Mr. Bishop's focus is on point of injury trauma and resource limited care. Mr. Bishop also has a Bachelor's of Fine Arts from Savannah College of Art and Design.



**Thomas Cartwright**  
Volunteer  
Rio Grande Valley Welcoming Committee

Mr. Thomas Cartwright was at JP Morgan Chase (JPMC) for 38 years prior to retiring in 2015 as Executive Vice President. Following retirement from JPMC, Mr. Cartwright engaged in executive-level management consulting part-time with the operation of Santander Bank for five years.

During semi-retirement, Mr. Cartwright became active in health care advocacy, refugee and migrant advocacy, and volunteer work for humanitarian services. Mr. Cartwright is active in a number of advocacy and policy group Leadership Tables including the Asylum Working Group, Border Network, and the Unaccompanied Minor Working Group as well as Witness at the Border.



**Ramona Casas**  
Community Organizer  
ARISE

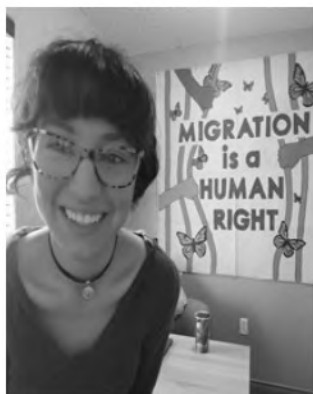
Ms. Ramona Casas worked closely with ARISE's founder to grow the organization from a handful of women eager to learn English and basic life skills to a grass-roots network with hundreds of members. ARISE programs include early childhood education, driver's license training, baking and sewing classes, English language development, and leadership training. Today, Ms. Casas is a community organizer and advocacy networker, and she directs ARISE's Border Witness Program.





**Jennifer Harbury**  
Co-founder  
Angry Tias and Abuelas

Ms. Jennifer Harbury is an American lawyer, author, and human rights activist. Her primary area of work with the Tias is at one of the migrant shelters in Reynosa. There, Ms. Harbury speaks with migrants about their stories, what they have gone through in their home countries and what has happened to them in their efforts to find safety, and she works to find attorneys who can help them. Ms. Harbury closely monitors and reports on ongoing human rights violations, documenting changes, identifying legal violations, reporting to interamerican groups as well as national networks and leaders. Ms. Harbury also assists migrants in finding needed support, such as sponsors in the United States.



**Norma Herrera**  
Rapid Response Organizer  
Voces Unidas

Ms. Norma Herrera was born in Tamaulipas, Mexico and grew up in the Rio Grande Valley. Ms. Herrera coordinates a grassroots coalition working to stop border wall construction in the RGV and supports efforts to free people from Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention. Ms. Herrera's work includes building a base of directly impacted communities to organize against punitive government policies that cause harm and criminalize migration. Ms. Herrera supports policy research, campaign strategy, coalition building and leadership development.

Growing up undocumented and experiencing the detention and deportation of her parents, Ms. Herrera has experienced first-hand that criminalization hurts families. She has a master's degree in public policy. Ms. Herrera dreams of a world beyond bars, borders and scarcity, where communities thrive in abundance and self-determination.



**Laura Peña**

Legal Director, Racial and Economic Justice Program  
Texas Civil Rights Project

Ms. Laura Peña is the Legal Director of the Racial and Economic Justice Program at the Texas Civil Rights Project.



**Olivia Peña**

Deputy Program Director  
The Young Center

Ms. Olivia Peña is the Deputy Program Director overseeing the Harlingen and San Antonio offices. Previously, Ms. Peña served as the Managing Attorney at the Young Center's Harlingen office. Before joining the Young Center in 2014, Ms. Peña served as a Student Attorney in the Immigration Clinic at the University of Houston Law Center, where she worked on humanitarian parole, asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile status, Deferred Action for Childhood arrivals, and Adjustment of Status applications. Ms. Peña successfully represented clients before U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the Executive Office of Immigration Review. While in law school, Ms. Peña also clerked for the Hon. Felix Recio of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas; Martinez, Barrera, Martinez L.L.P.; and the Cameron County District Attorney's Office. Ms. Peña earned her Bachelors of Science in Criminal Justice from the University of Texas in Brownsville/Texas Southmost College.



**Norma Pimentel**

Executive Director

Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley

Sister Norma Pimentel is a Sister with the Missionaries of Jesus. As Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley for over 12 years, she oversees the charitable arm of the Diocese of Brownsville, providing oversight of the different ministries and services in the Rio Grande Valley area through emergency assistance, homelessness prevention, disaster relief, clinical counseling, pregnancy care, food programs, and the Humanitarian Respite Center.

In recognition for her work on the U.S.-Mexico border in which Sister Norma Pimentel oversaw the provision of a safe space for migrants to rest and regain strength, in 2015 Sister Norma Pimentel received the Martin Luther King, Jr. “Keep the Dream Alive” Award from Catholic Charities USA and awards from the University of Texas-Pan American, the Texas Medical Association, and a nomination for “Texan of the Year.”

Sister Norma Pimentel earned her bachelor’s degree in Fine Arts from Pan American University, a master’s degree in Theology from St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, Texas, and a master’s degree in Counseling Psychology from Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois.



**Felicia Rangel-Samponaro**

Director

Sidewalk School

Ms. Felicia Rangel-Samponaro runs a non-profit education organization for asylum-seeking children.

To be able to switch to distance learning, the teachers and students were outfitted with more than 200 Amazon tablets by The Sidewalk School for Children Asylum Seekers. The organization was founded by Ms. Rangel-Samponaro who lives across the border in Brownsville, Texas, and has been crossing to help the asylum-seekers by providing them food and books.

Ms. Rangel-Samponaro said that to buy the tablets, she used her own money and raised funds including a GoFundMe campaign. Ms. Rangel-Samponaro said she felt obliged to do something for the asylum-seekers because the U.S. government had upended their lives.



**Andrea Rudnik**  
Co-founder  
Team Brownsville

Ms. Andrea Rudnik is the Co-founder of Team Brownsville. Ms. Rudnik, a retired special education teacher, volunteers at the Brownsville bus station two or three days a week, which is known informally as the Brownsville Team.



**Erin Thorn Vela**  
Attorney  
Texas Civil Rights Project

Ms. Erin Thorn Vela is an attorney with the Texas Civil Rights Project. She was born and raised in the Río Grande Valley.



**Juanita Valdez-Cox**  
Executive Director  
La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)

Ms. Juanita Valdez-Cox grew up in a migrant family and experienced the challenges faced by farm workers. Since 1981 she has devoted her energies to the struggles of farm workers and immigrants. Ms. Valdez-Cox's determination to see low-income families win the respect they deserve drives her to keep pushing for resolution to the issues that afflict their lives.



**Corinne Waite**  
Supervising Attorney  
ProBar

Corinne Waite practices out of Harlingen, TX and attended Yale University. Ms. Waite has been licensed for four years.



**Hugo Zurita**

Executive Director

Good Neighbor Settlement House

Mr. Hugo Zurita is the Executive Director of Good Neighbor Settlement House. Mr. Zurita feels that the opportunity to be part of an organization that changes lives every day is a great responsibility and privilege. Mr. Zurita considers it a privilege to see lives altered every day, and witness people coming off the streets, asking for help, and finding their way out of homelessness and into a new life.

**PRESS BRIEFING IN BROWNSVILLE, TX**  
**August 12, 2021**

**Overview:**

- You will hold a press briefing to discuss the situation at the border.
- The briefing will take place at the outdoor muster area of the Fort Brown Station, underneath a covered area with the Veterans International Bridge at Los Tomates – Port of Entry in the background.
- There will be a podium and a wireless mic.
- Mask may be taken off while speaking.



**Objectives:**

- Reset the narrative around the situation at the border
- Continue to lay out the actions the Department has taken to address the situation at the border as we continue to rebuild a safe, orderly, and humane immigration system
- Explain the gravity of the situation at the border and the impact the Delta variant has had on operations

**Run of Show:**

- **YOU** arrive at the Ft. Brown Border Patrol Station
- **YOU** and delegation head to hold room
- **YOU**, Deputy Chief Ortiz, and Dr. Pritesh Gandhi walk to outdoor muster area towards podium
- **Chief Ortiz introduces YOU** and acknowledges Dr. Gandhi
- **YOU** provide remarks
- **YOU**, and Chief Ortiz, and Dr. Gandhi take Q&A



**Discussion Points:**

- The situation at our border is one of the toughest challenges we face right now. We have a plan in place to meet the challenge now and in the days ahead, and we are executing and adjusting the plan to meet the moment.
- Addressing the border situation is a top priority every day – for the men and women in green from our Border Patrol, for ICE officers, for our DHS volunteer force, for all of us at headquarters. We are in this together, and the dedication of our agents and staff, especially in the midst of a global pandemic, is second-to-none.
- The Biden-Harris Administration’s whole-of-government response is, founded on a set of core principles:
  - One, that the United States is a Nation of laws and a Nation of immigrants;
  - Two, that the effort to rebuild a broken system at our border will take energy, effort, and time; and
  - Three, that our clear and unwavering goal is a safe, orderly, and humane immigration system.

**Attachments:**

- A. Talking Points
- B. Fact sheet

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Staff Responsible for Briefing Memo (b)(6)

## **S1 Talking Points – Border Presser**

### **INTRODUCTION – KEY PRINCIPLES**

- Good afternoon. I am honored to be here in the Rio Grande Valley, meeting with my colleagues at the Department of Homeland Security who are doing the heroic work to address the challenge we face at the border.
- Let me get right to the point: the situation at our border is one of the toughest challenges we face right now. I will explain why it is such a challenge. And I will also describe what the Department of Homeland Security and the Biden-Harris Administration are doing to address this challenge head-on. One of the things that we know to be true in homeland security is that circumstances frequently change, and we must adjust our plans to execute our mission and meet the moment.
- I traveled here today at the direction of the President – because it is absolutely critical that we hear from people and communities on the ground, on the front lines, so I can take these vital firsthand perspectives back to Washington and inform our policies moving forward.
- Securing and managing our border is a top priority every day. I am proud to do this work alongside the men and women of Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the DHS Volunteer Force who raised their hands to help out their colleagues during a challenging time. This is what we do.
- We are in this together, and we are always grateful to our dedicated agents, officers, and staff, many of them putting their health and lives on the line in the midst of a global pandemic, to secure our border and protect legitimate trade and travel.
- The Biden-Harris Administration's whole-of-government response is founded on a set of core principles:
  - That the United States is a Nation of laws and a Nation of immigrants.
  - That rebuilding a broken system at our border will take energy, effort, and time.
  - And that our clear and unwavering goal is a safe, orderly, and humane immigration system.

### **THE BORDER REALITY**

- We have to be frank about the reality before us: Last month, 212,672 individuals crossed our southern border, the highest number in two decades – including vulnerable populations, unaccompanied children, and others.
  - A majority – 52 percent – continue to be single adults. That is a 6 percent decrease from June.

- 95,788 individuals, nearly 50 percent of July encounters, were quickly expelled under Title 42 pursuant to the CDC's public health authority.
- We have to be clear about the factors making a difficult situation even more complex:
  - Over the past month, the Delta variant has changed the pandemic landscape and significantly impacted border operations.
  - Given the higher transmissibility of this strain of the virus, the Centers for Disease Control renewed its order directing the expulsion of single adults and families pursuant to its Title 42 public health authority – and DHS will continue expulsions based on that measure.
  - Doing so is necessary to protect the American public, DHS agents, officers, and staff, and the migrants themselves.

### **ADMINISTRATION/DHS ACTIONS**

- We inherited a system that had been completely dismantled, and from the moment President Biden took office, we have taken clear and concrete actions to rebuild it.
- Our efforts are part of a government-wide approach that focuses on tackling the root causes of migration, to ensuring public health is protected, to securing sufficient and safe shelter capacity, to improving technology at the border and modernizing our system to secure and manage it.
- Now, let me lay out some of DHS' key steps.
- [Hold for Mexico news]
- First, here in Brownsville and elsewhere across the border, we recently resumed expedited removal flights, for certain family units who cannot be expelled under Title 42 and who do not have a legal basis to stay in the United States.
- The message here is clear – those who do not qualify to remain in our country will be promptly removed. Plain and simple.
- Second, with guidance from the CDC, based on the concerns surrounding the Delta variant, single adults and families encountered at the southern border will continue to be expelled under Title 42.
- We have begun to transport many of these individuals by plane to the Mexican interior to help deter repeated attempts at entry and prevent the spread of COVID-19 within our border facilities.
- The health of our workforce and our local communities is paramount.
  - We provide PPE to migrants from the moment they are taken into custody, and they are required to keep masks on at all times.

- If anyone exhibits symptoms of illness, they are referred to local health systems for testing, diagnosis, and treatment.
  - We work with local governments, non-governmental organizations, and our Department of Health and Human Services to administer COVID-19 tests to adults and children, and provide access to other COVID mitigation measures.
  - We have provided 48.7M\$ in emergency food and shelter program funding to support local governments and NGOs with the testing, isolation and quarantine of migrants in their communities.
- Bottom line, we are taking a public health-guided, evidence-based approach to each facet of our COVID-19 protocols.
  - Third, we know that a large percentage of entries into the U.S. are actually re-entry attempts. To target recidivism, our team at CBP has started a Repeat Offender initiative.
  - Under this program, single adults apprehended along the southwest border who have previously been deported pursuant to Title 8 authorities will be referred for prosecution.
  - Finally, our Department was created to respond to the unexpected. We have to shift our resources, our focus, and our priorities to address emergent needs.
  - For that reason:
    - We have temporarily reassigned personnel to assist with the southern border response, including processing of migrants as they await expulsion, removal, or immigration proceedings.
    - ICE has expanded its use of Alternatives to Detention to boost its ability to process families and ensure compliance as they await the outcomes of their proceedings.
    - We are transferring some individuals via air or ground transportation to Border Patrol Sectors elsewhere along the border to support additional removals or expulsions. The necessity of these operations is assessed daily based on factors on the ground.

The Biden-Harris Administration is creating new, alternative pathways, addressing root causes, and building an asylum system that is fair, efficient, and humane.

- There is more work to be done but these efforts will bear fruit and will create a system that reflects our integrity and our values.

**CLOSE**

- These are the facts on the ground. Our borders are not open. Individuals should not make the treacherous journey. Those who do not qualify to remain in the United States will be removed.
- This is tough. This is complex. This is going to take time.
- But we will not stop acting each and every day to uphold our laws, our priorities, and our ideals – and to fulfill our Department's mission to safeguard the American people, our homeland, and our values. Thank you.

###

## **ATTACHMENT B: FACT SHEET**

### **FACT SHEET: The Biden Administration Blueprint for a Fair, Orderly and Humane Immigration System**

The United States can have an orderly, secure, and well-managed border while treating people fairly and humanely.

In January, the Biden-Harris Administration launched a broad, whole of government effort to reform our immigration system, including sending to Congress legislation that creates a new system to responsibly manage and secure our border, provide a pathway to citizenship, and better manage migration across the Hemisphere.

In the six months since, the Administration has made considerable progress to build a fair, orderly, and humane immigration system while continuing to call on Congress to make long overdue reforms to U.S. immigration laws. We successfully processed over 12,500 people who had been returned to Mexico under the Migrant Protection Protocols. We expanded lawful pathways for protection and opportunity, including the Central American Minors (CAM) program to reunite children with their parents in the United States. We strengthened collaborative migration management with regional partners, including through a new Human Smuggling and Trafficking Task Force to disrupt and prevent migrant smuggling and human trafficking operations. And we continue to deter irregular migration at our Southern border.

The Biden-Harris Administration has accomplished this and more while reckoning with the prior Administration's cruel and reckless immigration policies, which exacerbated long-standing challenges and failed to securely manage our border. Case in point: the total number of unique encounters at the Southern border to date this fiscal year remains below the total number of unique encounters to date during fiscal year 2019 under the Trump Administration.

Today the Administration is releasing a blueprint that outlines the next steps Federal agencies will be taking to continue implementing the President's transformative vision for a 21st century immigration system that secures the border, fairly and efficiently considers asylum claims, strengthens regional migration management efforts in North and Central America, and addresses the root causes of migration from Central America. Success in building this fair, orderly, and humane immigration system won't be achieved overnight, especially after the prior Administration's irrational and inhumane policies, but this Administration has a blueprint to get there and is making real progress.

We will always be a nation of borders, and we will enforce our immigration laws in a way that is fair and just. We will continue to work to fortify an orderly immigration system.

### **ENSURING A SECURE, HUMANE AND WELL-MANAGED BORDER**

The United States can allow people to exercise their legal right to apply for asylum while also reducing irregular migration and maintaining an orderly, secure, and well-managed border.



- **Making better use of existing enforcement resources.** Since fiscal year 2011, U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) discretionary budget has grown from \$9.9 billion to \$15 billion in FY 2021. The President's Budget redirects resources from a needless border wall to make robust investments in smarter border security measures, like border technology and modernization of land ports of entry, that are proven to be more effective at improving safety and security at the border. These investments will serve as a force multiplier to the over 19,500 Border Patrol Agents currently helping secure our Nation's borders and the over 25,500 CBP Officers working at our land, air, and sea ports. The investments will also facilitate more robust and effective security screening to combat human smuggling and trafficking and the entry of undocumented migrants.
- **Improving the expedited removal process for those who arrive at the border.** The Administration is working to improve the expedited removal process at the border to fairly and efficiently determine which individuals have legitimate claims for asylum and other forms of protection. Asylum and other legal migration pathways should remain available to those seeking protection. Those not seeking protection or who don't qualify will be promptly removed to their countries of origin.
- **Facilitating secure management of borders in the region** by providing training and technical assistance, supporting the improvement of border infrastructure and technology, and promoting collaborative migration and border management approaches.
- **Strengthening anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking operations** by working with regional governments to investigate and prosecute individuals involved in migrant smuggling, human trafficking, and other crimes against migrants. In April 2021, DHS announced Operation Sentinel, a new operation targeting organizations involved in criminal smuggling.
- **Bolstering public messaging on migration** by ensuring consistent messages to discourage irregular migration and promote safe, legal, and orderly migration.

## **IMPLEMENTING ORDERLY AND FAIR PROCESSING OF ASYLUM APPLICATIONS**

The Administration is committed to fairly and efficiently considering asylum claims. Asylum and other legal migration pathways should remain available to those seeking protection. But those not seeking protection or who don't qualify will be returned to their country of origin.

- **Establishing a dedicated docket to consider asylum claims.** The Administration has set up a special immigration court docket to promptly and fairly consider the protection claims of certain recent arrivals.
- **Further improving the efficiency and fairness of the U.S. asylum system** by authorizing asylum officers to adjudicate asylum claims for those arriving at the border and establishing clear and just eligibility standards that harmonize the U.S. approach with international standards. The Administration has already begun to rescind Trump administration policies and decisions that unjustly prevent individuals from obtaining asylum. On June 16, the Department of Justice reversed two of the former administration's rulings severely restricting asylum protections for victims of domestic and gang violence.

- **Maximizing legal representation** and legal orientation programs by working closely with pro bono legal service providers. The President's FY 2022 Budget requests \$15 million to provide representation to families and vulnerable individuals, as well as \$23 million to support DOJ legal orientation programs.
- **Reducing immigration court backlogs** by ensuring priority cases are considered in a timely manner and hiring more immigration judges. The FY 2022 Budget requests an additional 100 immigration judges and provides support for additional court staff to ensure the efficient and fair processing of cases. The Department of Justice also restored the discretion of immigration judges to administratively close cases in another step to ensure priority cases are considered in a timely manner.

## **STRENGTHENING COLLABORATIVE MIGRATION MANAGEMENT WITH REGIONAL PARTNERS**

The United States seeks to expand U.S. and multilateral efforts to address the dire humanitarian situation in Central America and strengthen regional collaborative migration management. The United States believes that all individuals should be able to have a safe, stable and dignified life within their own countries, while ensuring that asylum and other legal migration pathways remain available to those who need them.

- **Providing humanitarian support to address the acute needs that pressure individuals to abandon their homes.** U.S. efforts will address food insecurity and malnutrition, mitigate the impacts of successive droughts and food shortages, promote protection for vulnerable individuals, and provide materials to support rebuilding of homes and schools damaged by the hurricanes. The United States will also work with the United Nations to mobilize international support for the deteriorating situation in the Northern Triangle. As part of these efforts, the United States in April provided \$255 million in assistance to meet immediate and urgent humanitarian needs for people in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, refugees, other displaced people, and vulnerable migrants in the region.
- **Expanding access to international protection** to provide safety to individuals closer to their homes by building and improving national asylum systems, enhancing efforts to resettle refugees, and scaling up protection efforts for at-risk groups.
- **Establishing Migration Resource Centers** in the Northern Triangle countries with the support of international organizations and in coordination with governments in Central America to provide referrals to services for people seeking lawful pathways for migration and protection. The centers also provide referrals to reintegration support for migrants returned from the United States and other countries.
- **Restarting and expanding the Central American Minors (CAM) program** to provide children the opportunity to receive protection and reunite with parents in the United States. In March 2021, the United States reopened the CAM program and, in June 2021, expanded it to additional categories of eligible U.S.-based relatives who can petition for their children.
- **Expanding refugee processing in the region**, including in-country processing in Northern Triangle countries, and helping international organizations and local non-governmental organizations to identify and refer individuals with urgent protection needs

to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and other resettlement countries. The U.S. Department of State and Department of Homeland Security have resumed interviewing individuals via the Protection Transfer Arrangement (PTA) to expand protection for vulnerable nationals of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

- **Expanding access to temporary work visas in the region.** DHS announced a supplemental increase of 6,000 H-2B visas for temporary non-agricultural workers from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador in FY 2021. The Administration is also exploring ways to enhance access to H-2A visas for temporary agricultural workers when there are insufficient qualified U.S. workers to fill these jobs, while ensuring strong labor protections for all workers. The Administration will also encourage other governments to develop and expand regional labor migration programs that protect workers' rights and allow access for individuals to find meaningful, temporary work.
- **Reducing immigrant visa backlogs.** The United States aims to reduce the backlog of immigrant visa applications for Northern Triangle nationals as quickly as possible.

## INVESTING IN CENTRAL AMERICA TO ADDRESS THE ROOT CAUSES OF MIGRATION

We cannot solve the challenge at our border without addressing the lack of economic opportunity, weak governance and corruption, and violence and insecurity that compel people to flee their homes in the first place. The impact of two major hurricanes in late 2020, a prolonged drought, and COVID-19 have aggravated these long-standing challenges. The FY 2022 Budget requests \$861 million to address the root causes of migration.

- **Addressing economic insecurity and inequality** by investing in programs that foster a business-enabling environment for inclusive economic growth; enhancing workforce development, health, and education; and building resilience to climate change and food insecurity so individuals can find economic opportunity at home. The U.S. will also work with stakeholders to increase trade and diversify industry, as well as with the private sector to build on the *Call to Action* to catalyze investments in the region and support economic development.
- **Combatting corruption and strengthening democratic governance** by working with governments, civil society, and independent media to improve government services, increase transparency, promote accountability and respect for human rights, sanction corrupt actors, and provide protection to at-risk youth, victims of violence, and other marginalized populations.
- **Promoting respect for human rights, labor rights and a free press** by working with governments and civil society to strengthen legal frameworks and build institutional capacity, hold perpetrators accountable, promote labor rights compliance, and ensure citizens have access to information from independent sources to inform their choices.
- **Countering and preventing violence, extortion, and other crimes** by strengthening accountable law enforcement, focusing on crime prevention, and encouraging regional cooperation to address shared criminal threats.
- **Combatting sexual, gender-based and domestic violence** by working with governments and civil society to prevent and prosecute violence and support victims.

While President Biden can implement significant parts of this strategy within his executive authority, **Congress must also act.** Millions of noncitizens call our country home. Immigrants are key a key part of our communities and make significant contributions to our economy. Over the past year, millions of immigrants have risked their health to work side by side with other Americans to perform jobs that are essential to the functioning of the country. They are Americans in every way but on paper. The American public supports a path to citizenship and a fair and efficient legal immigration system that welcomes talent from around the globe and allows families to reunite and make a life in our country.

**Congress should pass** through reconciliation or other means:

- The U.S. Citizenship Act (H.R. 1177/S. 348) that reunites families, gives businesses access to a workforce with full labor rights, and creates a path to citizenship for those already living and working in the United States. These critical reforms, coupled with measures to address the root causes of migration from Central America, will relieve pressure at the border by dissuading irregular migration.
- The Dream and Promise Act (H.R. 6) and Farm Workforce Modernization Act (H.R. 1603) to create a path to citizenship for Dreamers, TPS recipients, and farmworkers. Both bills passed the House with bipartisan support. They will protect millions of families, children, and essential workers who live, work, study, and worship in our communities.