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# Statement by Secretary Jeh C. Johnson on Southwest Border Security

Release Date: February 2, 2016

In connection with the latest monthly release of the numbers of apprehensions on our southwest border, Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh C. Johnson made the following statement:

"In January 2016, overall apprehensions on our southwest border – an indicator of total attempts to cross the border illegally – declined 36 percent from the previous month, and were at the lowest levels since January 2015. Also, in January 2016, apprehensions of unaccompanied children declined by 54 percent compared to the month before, and apprehensions of those in families declined by 65 percent in the same period.

	<u>UACs</u>	<u>Family Members</u>	<u>All</u>
July 2015	4,182	4,503	28,388
August 2015	4,638	5,159	30,239
September 2015	4,485	5,273	30,286
October 2015	4,944	6,026	32,727
November 2015	5,612	6,471	32,847
December 2015	6,786	8,974	37,017
January 2016	3,113	3,145	23,767

While the one-month decline in January is encouraging, this does not mean we can dial back our border security efforts. Recent enforcement actions, which focus on those apprehended at the border on or after January 1, 2014, will continue.

I have spoken or met with a number of members of Congress, advocates and attorneys concerned about the enforcement actions that took place on January 2-3. I have great respect for the views expressed and those who expressed them. But, as I have explained in these discussions, immigration enforcement policy must be two sides of a coin.

On the one hand, the new enforcement policy announced by the President and me on November 20, 2014 makes clear that our limited resources for immigration enforcement will not be dedicated to the removal of those who have committed no serious crimes, have been in this country for years, and have families here. Under our new policy, these people are not priorities for removal.

On the other hand, our new policy is focused on public safety and border security, as it should be. Those who commit serious crimes or who are apprehended at the border are priorities for removal. These have been our priorities consistently since we announced them on November 20, 2014, and they have not changed. Our borders are not open to illegal migration. If someone was apprehended at the border, has been ordered deported by an immigration court, has no pending appeal, and does not qualify for asylum or other relief from removal under our laws, he or she must be sent home. We must enforce the law in accordance with our enforcement priorities.

We also know that smugglers are taking advantage of parents and children, including the risk of physical harm and sexual exploitation. With the Department of Justice, we are doubling down on our efforts to prosecute smugglers.

I also reiterate that, when enforcing the immigration laws, our personnel will not, except in emergency circumstances, apprehend an individual at a place of worship, a school, a hospital or doctor's office or other sensitive location.

Finally, we recognize that many who seek to flee Central America may be regarded as refugees. Secretary Kerry announced on January

13 that we are expanding our Refugee Admissions Program to help vulnerable men, women and children in Central America. The U.S. government is partnering with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and non-governmental organizations in the region to implement this as soon as possible. This approach builds on our recently established Central American Minors program, which is now providing an in-country refugee processing option for certain children with parents in the United States, as well as the existing asylum process.

Our policy is clear: we will continue to enforce the immigration laws and secure our borders consistent with our priorities and values. At the same time, we will offer vulnerable populations in Central America an alternative, safe and legal path to a better life.”

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