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Operational

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### ICE shifts resources to address crisis at Southwest border

ICE HSI stepping up investigations into fraudulent family units seeking illegal entry into the US

WASHINGTON – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is reallocating resources to the Southwest border to investigate human smuggling operations and the use of fraudulent documents to create fake families seeking to exploit U.S. immigration laws.

This fraud may include the use of forged birth certificates or other fraudulent documents to establish parentage. Forged or other fraudulent documents are also being used by adult illegal aliens to falsely claim they are minors under the age of 18. By fraudulently entering as a family unit or unaccompanied minor, illegal aliens can exploit loopholes in immigration laws to enter the U.S. and avoid detention.

“ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) is redirecting resources to the border in response to cases of fake families using forged documents to illegally enter our country and avoid detention. Our highly-skilled teams are working to stop individuals, networks and organizations facilitating child smuggling and document fraud,” said ICE Acting Director Matthew Albence. “ICE along with our partners at CBP, remain committed to protecting children by ensuring they are not used as pawns by individuals attempting to gain entry to the U.S. through fraud.”

During the week of April 16, HSI deployed three teams to support U.S. Customs and Border Protection interdiction efforts in El Paso, Texas, and Las Cruces, New Mexico. During the week of April 22, ICE Homeland Security Investigations HSI deployed three additional teams to Eagle Pass and Harlingen, Texas; Yuma, Arizona; and El Centro and San Diego, CA. The teams were chosen for their human smuggling and trafficking expertise and include criminal analysts, interpreters, document analysts, forensic interview specialists and victim assistance specialists.

ICE is committed to ensure child safety and welfare and to decrease the number of minors being exploited to gain access into the United States. ICE HSI has unique expertise and authorities to investigate potentially fraudulent claims of familial relationships and to identify and dismantle the criminal smuggling operations profiting from the surge at the border.

Throughout April, HSI special agents have conducted about 100 family unit interviews and have found evidence of fraud in more than a quarter of cases.

On April 22, HSI special agents identified two suspect family units presenting as two fathers with their sons. The four individuals, two of whom were discovered to be 23-year-old men pretending to be minors, are being prosecuted for visa fraud and making false statements.

On April 18, an adult Honduran man presented a false birth certificate for a 7-year-old child traveling with him. During an interview, the adult admitted that he was completely unrelated to the child. The man was prosecuted for illegal entry and the child was turned over to the Office of Refugee Resettlement as an unaccompanied minor, according to procedures required in the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRRA).

Additionally, ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations has temporarily shifted approximately 330 deportation officers to areas at or near the border or to areas within the U.S. most deeply impacted by the unprecedented surge being encountered at the Southwest border.

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