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U.S. Customs and
Border Protection
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Statement from Commissioner McAleenan on Incident at San Ysidro Yesterday Afternoon

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Washington, DC

Today, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Kevin McAleenan conducted a short phone call with several members of the news media. Below is a transcript of his opening remarks.

Good morning. I wanted to provide an opportunity to discuss the events yesterday in San Diego, and provide an update of the incident involving elements of the caravan and their attempts to unlawfully enter the United States. Yesterday, U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents and officers in San Diego effectively managed an extremely dangerous situation involving over 1,000 individuals who sought to enter the U.S. unlawfully in large groups. They did so safely and without any reported serious injuries on either side of the border. Yesterday's incident involved large groups of migrants ignoring and overwhelming Mexican law enforcement, then attempting to enter the United States through vehicle lanes at San Ysidro and El Chaparral, and then through breaches in the international border fence between ports of entry. Elements of the group also engaged in dozens of assaults on agents and officers. Four agents were hit with rocks, but were wearing protective gear and did not suffer serious injuries.

CBP was prepared for multiple demonstrations, marches, and border pushes that we saw yesterday. As we've articulated for several weeks, we have been concerned about the size of the caravan, its primarily single-adult composition, and the aggressive and assaultive behavior at both the Honduras-Guatemala border and the Guatemala-Mexico border. U.S. government officials have noted the presence of criminals in the group, and the Government of Mexico has arrested over 1,000 caravan members for criminal violations in Mexico. All of those concerns were borne out and on full display yesterday in Tijuana. Because we understood this group to present a new and unique concern from the outset, we have temporarily assigned surge forces with specialized training from Field Offices in Texas and elsewhere around the country to support our organic resources in San Diego. It's also why we've deployed CBP aircraft to provide overwatch and advice.

Further, we requested assistance from the Department of Defense, other federal partners, to include the Federal Protective Service in the States of California, Texas and Arizona. As the events unfolded yesterday, quick, decisive, and effective action to close San Ysidro and – on the Mexican side, El Chaparral – prevented an extremely dangerous situation of hundreds – and potentially over a thousand – migrants seeking to rush the border through vehicle lanes. These measures were effective on both the U.S. and Mexican sides of the border and prevented a dangerous situation from getting worse. As a result, groups of caravan participants moved both east and west of the San Ysidro border crossing. East of the port of entry, they breached the international border fence in multiple places – the legacy landing mat portion of the fence – and sought to enter illegally in large groups.

In the course of these events, individuals engaged in active assaults, throwing dozens of projectiles at CBP law enforcement personnel. Our Border Patrol agents were able to counter this activity, address the attempted group entry, and resolve the assaults with presence and less-lethal device deployments. Elements of the group then staged west of the port of entry and sought to press into the United States in the area of the Tijuana River channel. This group again became assaultive, with rocks and other projectiles thrown at our agents. Again, four agents were struck by projectiles in these assaults. This morning began calmly, with caravan members remaining in shelter areas provided by Mexican authorities.

We will continue to monitor the situation closely. And while we seek to maintain lawful trade and travel to the maximum extent, we will be prepared to close San Ysidro again if necessary to ensure the safety of the traveling public, the migrants themselves, and our officers. This is an unfortunate consequence of the caravan's activities, as San Ysidro is a critical economic engine between the U.S. and Mexico, with 110,000 crossings each way every day. We will also continue to engage with Mexican authorities for safe management of the situation.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection is the unified border agency within the Department of Homeland Security charged with the management, control and protection of our nation's borders at and between official ports of entry. CBP is charged with securing the borders of the United States while enforcing hundreds of laws and facilitating lawful trade and travel.

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