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Statement by Secretary Johnson on the Resumption of Removals to Haiti

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Following the tragic earthquake that struck Haiti in January 2010, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) ceased removing Haitians to Haiti. In 2011, we resumed the removals of Haitians on a limited basis, who had final orders of removal and had been convicted of a serious crime.

On September 22, I announced we would resume removals of Haitian nationals in accordance with our existing enforcement priorities. This includes those apprehended at the border attempting to enter the country illegally. In light of Hurricane Matthew, which struck Haiti on October 4, removal flights to Haiti were briefly suspended.

Removal flights from the United States to Haiti have now resumed. In the last several weeks ICE has removed over 200 Haitian nationals and plans to significantly expand removal operations in the coming weeks.

Haitian nationals currently covered by Temporary Protected Status (TPS) are unaffected by the resumption of flights to Haiti. Specifically, those Haitian nationals who have been continuously residing in the United States since January 12, 2011 and currently hold TPS may remain in the United States and are not subject to removal. These beneficiaries also remain eligible for employment authorization. TPS for Haitian nationals has been extended through July 22, 2017.

Recently, we have seen an increase in the numbers of those apprehended on the southern border. I have instructed our border security and immigration enforcement personnel to take steps to keep pace with this increase. As a result, there are currently about 41,000 individuals in our immigration detention facilities, including over 4,400 Haitians. Typically, the number in immigration detention is about 31,000 to 34,000.

I have authorized ICE to acquire additional detention space so that those apprehended at the border and not eligible for humanitarian relief can be detained and sent home as soon as possible.

We must enforce the immigration laws consistent with our priorities. Those who attempt to enter our country illegally must know that, consistent with our laws and our values, we must and we will send you back.

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