

Good morning Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Victor Avila. I am retired ICE/Homeland Security Investigations Supervisory Special Agent.

HSI is responsible for investigating crimes involving immigration, trade, customs, and border security that threaten the security of the American Homeland. While serving with HSI, I personally led criminal investigations of human traffickers, drug smugglers, and violent criminals, many of whom were criminal illegal aliens.

During my tenure as a federal officer, I served under three administrations. As an HSI Special Agent, I served on the border and as an accredited diplomat to Mexico, Spain, and Portugal. I advised these governments on complex and wide-ranging criminal investigations including narcotics trafficking, arms trafficking, human trafficking, financial violations, commercial fraud, and counterterrorism.

While on official assignment in Mexico, I suffered multiple gunshot wounds and survived a violent ambush by the Mexican Los Zetas cartel where Special Agent Jaime Zapata tragically lost his life in the line of duty.

I've witnessed what a human being is capable of doing to another, especially a child. I describe it as pure evil. Drug Trafficking, Human Trafficking, Human Smuggling are just a few crimes that illegal aliens are involved with. I have experienced the violence and imminent threat we currently face from the Mexican Cartels.

What is happening today with our ICE Officers and Agents is unprecedented. The doxing of our men and women of ICE and accusing them of "kidnapping" and "disappearing" people simply must stop. They are upholding their oath and performing their scope of duties. Vilifying ICE officers because some people disagree with the enforcement of the law or because it contradicts their ideology is not acceptable. Thousands of police officers arrest people every day and the officer is not singled out for doing their job. Why are ICE officers being targeted? This is a politically driven issue.

How did we get here? The Biden administration opened the border utilizing illegal policy like the CBP One APP and exploiting our Asylum criteria and Parole systems. The Biden admin was successful in:

- Limiting ICE budget
- Morale in law enforcement was at an all-time low
- Identity was lost
- Stripped of their authority
- Hands were tied
- Interior enforcement was almost non-existent (worksite enforcement)

- Silenced (no media)
- DHS leadership (Mayorkas)
- Limited their scope of employment

The priority of ICE is the removal of criminal illegal aliens; those with existing criminal history in the US or their home country. However, there are illegals in the US that were not properly vetted by the Biden admin and although no criminal history is registered in our databases, many are affiliated with a gang/cartel activity. Those caught as a collateral, will be processed for removal as well.

Illegal aliens detected and arrested by ICE ARE receiving due process. It's important to note that not all illegals face the same removal proceedings. It depends how the illegal entered the US, where they entered, their country of origin, etc. Some illegals are subject to mandatory detention while others can be removed immediately (Visa Overstays). The illegals with final removal orders had their due process through an immigration court making them subject to arrest and removal immediately.

Just to be clear: ICE Officers and HSI Special Agents do NOT require a warrant to conduct an arrest. 90% + of the arrest I conducted in my career were without a warrant.

It is important for Congress to engage with other countries for removal process and establish MOU's with Mexico, Central America and other countries regarding the flow of migrants coming through their countries by holding them accountable and shifting the burden back on countries of origin to care for their citizens and deter illegal immigration. With the help of ICE offices around the world, they can assist in approaching the host country diplomatically.

Congress has a vital role to better support the mission of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The President and Congress must focus on strengthening manpower, infrastructure, technology, and policy. Under CBP, there are three core operational components that, while distinct, share the unified mission of protecting the American people and safeguarding our borders: the Office of Field Operations (OFO), the U.S. Border Patrol, and Air and Marine Operations (AMO). Each play a critical role in securing our land, air, and sea borders, and each requires tailored support to operate at peak effectiveness.

First and foremost, **adequate manpower** is essential. For Border Patrol in particular, which is responsible for directly patrolling thousands of miles of border, this means ensuring sufficient trained agents, and the necessary equipment—particularly patrol vehicles—to effectively cover large, remote, and often dangerous terrain. More agents must also be matched with **expanded infrastructure**, including properly sized and

strategically located Border Patrol stations and sector headquarters. Completing physical barriers like the border wall in key areas remains a crucial part of deterring illegal crossings and enabling better control of border zones.

Billions of tax dollars have been spent on centralized processing centers designed to manage high volume of illegal entrants by the previous administration. Those resources could have been better spent in upgrading outdated CBP and ICE facilities that are long overdue for modernization.

**Technology** is another cornerstone of border security. Cutting-edge surveillance and counter-surveillance systems, including drones and real-time monitoring capabilities, allow agents to detect and respond quicker to illegal activities. At ports of entry, CBP must have access to advanced detection tools to uncover hidden drugs, weapons, and other illicit materials with greater speed and accuracy. These tools not only enhance security but improve operational efficiency.

Beyond equipment and staffing, CBP and ICE need **consistent and supportive policies**. This administration has taken significant steps in disrupting the smuggling networks as well as deliver consequences for those who violate our immigration laws. These gains should not be reversed for political reasons. Cementing these policies with legislation would prevent future administrations from dismantling our borders like the past four years.

Lastly, Congress must show **support for the agents and officers** tasked with enforcing our laws. These men and women risk their lives daily to protect our nation. It is imperative they know and feel the full backing of the legislative and executive branches—not just through words, but through actions and funding that reflect the importance of their mission. The targeting of ICE and CBP personnel will not be tolerated.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today and I look forward to answering your questions.

