



# U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

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**STATEMENT**

**OF**

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**U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT  
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

**REGARDING A HEARING ON**

**“DEPORTEES IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE”**

**BEFORE THE**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE**

**Tuesday, July 24, 2007 @ 3:00 pm  
Rayburn House Office Building**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Good afternoon, Chairman Lantos, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Gary Mead, and I am the Assistant Director for Management in the Office of Detention and Removal Operations (DRO) at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). It is my privilege to appear before you to discuss the enforcement mission of DRO as well as the removal process.

DRO is responsible for promoting public safety and national security by ensuring the safe and efficient departure from the United States of all removable aliens through the fair enforcement of the Nation's immigration laws. As such, DRO's core mission is the apprehension, detention, and removal of inadmissible and deportable aliens, the management of non-detained aliens as their cases progress through immigration proceedings, and the enforcement of orders of removal.

DRO effects the removal of illegal and criminal aliens to all countries of the world in essentially the same manner. The differences are in the notification processes, timeframes, and means of removal used, such as commercial airlines, chartered aircraft, the Justice Prisoner and Alien Transportation System (JPATS), or ground transportation in the case of Mexican and Canadian nationals. The differences are based upon volume or individual agreements with different countries.

## **REMOVAL PROCESS**

Once an illegal or criminal alien has been issued a final order of removal and if no valid travel document or passport is otherwise immediately available, our field offices request travel documents from the appropriate foreign consulate. Travel document requests will typically include:

- The charging document, which states the reason the detainee is removable from the United States
- The removal order
- Photos
- Form I-217 (Information for Travel Document or Passport), which contains biographical and personal data, including addresses of family or associates abroad, whether there are identifying marks such as scars or tattoos
- Warrant of Deportation
- Fingerprint records and, if required, copies of identity documents and any applicable passport applications
- For cases involving criminal aliens, a copy of the conviction document.

Many countries, including El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, require a personal interview of their nationals by a consular official prior to issuing a travel document.

The interviews assist in the determination of nationality. There are several ways that the interview process may occur: DRO field offices can transport the detainee to the local consulate, the consular official can go to the detention facility or field office to conduct the interviews, or the interviews can be conducted through video conferencing (VTC). ICE has

installed VTC equipment in the consulates of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to facilitate the interviews of nationals of these countries. The need to transport detainees to and from consular or field offices has decreased, or in some cases been eliminated, due to VTC usage. Once a travel document is received from the foreign government and no impediments to removal exist, the actual removal is scheduled via commercial aircraft, chartered aircraft, or JPATS, or by ground transportation.

### **REMOVAL VIA JPATS**

JPATS is a joint ICE – U.S. Marshals venture through which criminals and illegal aliens are securely transported throughout the United States and abroad. JPATS operates regular flights to the following countries:

- Colombia – on a monthly basis with approximately 70 criminal deportees per flight.
- Dominican Republic – every two weeks with approximately 70 deportees per flight, the majority being criminal deportees.
- El Salvador – one daily flight, Monday through Friday, with one flight per week dedicated to criminal deportees only, and up to 120 deportees per flight.
- Guatemala – daily flights, including Saturdays, if needed, and sometimes more than one each day depending upon volume. Removals are augmented by utilizing chartered aircraft.
- Haiti – every two weeks with approximately 50 deportees per flight, both criminal and non-criminal.
- Honduras – daily flights, including Saturdays, if needed; as with Guatemala, chartered aircraft are used to augment removals if the need exists.

- Jamaica – monthly flights with 45 criminal deportees on each flight.

## **NOTIFICATION PROCESS**

In 1997, the U.S. Government entered into an agreement with 24 countries within Central America and the Caribbean stating that the U.S. would provide the receiving countries at least three days notification of the intended removal of criminal aliens and escorted non-criminal aliens. In keeping with this agreement, DRO notifies the receiving country of all aliens being removed. Once the removal is scheduled via commercial or charter aircraft or JPATS, a cable notification is prepared indicating the name, date of birth, alien registration number, reason for removal, any special notes regarding the deportee, and the itinerary. The cable is sent through the Department of State cabling system to the U.S. Embassy in the receiving country. If there is an ICE Attaché in the country, the Attaché informs the local immigration and/or law enforcement authorities of the impending arrival. In the case of JPATS flights, the names are included in a manifest and transmitted in the same fashion. If there is no Attaché, the cable is routed to the Regional Security Office in the U.S. Embassy, which informs the receiving country of the impending arrival of the flight.

In the case of juveniles, each DRO field office has an officer assigned as a juvenile coordinator. The juvenile coordinator works with consular officials and known family members to ensure that there will be family or government officials waiting for the juvenile upon arrival in his or her home country. Pursuant to ICE policy, unaccompanied juveniles are always escorted to their home country, usually by a DRO officer.

In cases of persons requiring medical attention during transport and/or upon arrival in their home country, DRO conducts significant coordination with consular officials and the U.S. Public Health Service to ensure that proper medical assistance is provided.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Fiscal year (FY) 2006 was a record year for DRO, with 196,707 individuals removed from the U.S. FY 2007 is currently on pace to exceed the FY 2006 total of removals by ten percent.

DRO has consistently increased the total number of removals during the last four years. To illustrate, in FY 2003, there were a total of 151,941 removals from the United States; in FY 2004, a total of 169,733; and in FY 2005, a total of 173,651. Combined, removals to Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras have accounted for approximately 83 percent of the total removals from the United States in previous years. In FY 2007, through June 18, 2007, removals to these four countries have accounted for 88 percent of total removals.

Below are FY 2006 statistics for removals to the top ten countries in the Western Hemisphere, including criminal and non-criminal:

- Mexico – Total 114,640, criminal 64,306, non-criminal 50,334 (*these totals do not include Mexican nationals removed by CBP or returned to Mexico at the border*)
- Honduras – Total 26,526, criminal 5,559, non-criminal 20,967
- Guatemala – Total 18,386, criminal 3,589, non-criminal 14,797
- El Salvador – Total 10,312, criminal 3,679, non-criminal 6,633

- Brazil – Total 2,996, criminal 555, non-criminal 2,441
- Dominican Republic – Total 2,805, criminal 2,241, non-criminal 564
- Colombia – Total 2,290, criminal 1,306, non-criminal 984
- Nicaragua – Total 2,241, criminal 585, non-criminal 1,656
- Ecuador – Total 1,542, criminal 432, non-criminal 1,110
- Jamaica – Total 1,426, criminal 1,249, non-criminal 177

## **TECHNOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENTS**

DRO has maximized efficiencies in the removal process to improve the management of detention capacity. In doing so, DRO has used key technological tools such as VTC capability and the Electronic Travel Document System.

As I mentioned previously, VTC capability allows for the remote interviews of detainees by foreign consular officials, thereby reducing the need for in-person interviews during the travel document issuance process.

The Electronic Travel Document System allows DRO to work with cooperating foreign governments to process and obtain travel documents required for removal electronically, avoiding the need for slower, less efficient, mail-based correspondence. This system has reduced the processing times for travel document issuance from weeks to days and in some cases to just a few hours. In addition, the Electronic Travel Document System will provide foreign governments with valuable biometric information about deportees. In addition to their Ministry of Foreign Affairs obtaining information on deportees through the travel document

issuance process, foreign law enforcement agencies will have immediate access to information through the Electronic Travel Document System on each deportee. Currently, the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras are participating in the Electronic Travel Document System. ICE DRO plans for all countries to participate in the program, particularly those in the Western Hemisphere.

### **CONCLUSION**

The integrity of our immigration system requires fair and effective enforcement of our Nation's immigration laws. By aggressively enforcing these laws, we seek to deter criminal and terrorist organizations who threaten our way of life, and we seek to strengthen the legal immigration process for worthy applicants.

I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the men and women of DRO, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.