



Trump and Sessions Rev Up the Mass Deportation Machine

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With his speech at the southwestern border this week, Attorney General Jeff Sessions made it painfully clear that he is **seeking to use the full power of the Department of Justice to go after immigrants**. This, on top of a leaked plan **reported by the Washington Post**, makes it clear that DHS is gearing up to aggressively pursue what Sessions backs: an **extreme and unpopular** mass deportation strategy.

This should come as no surprise. Sessions earned and deserved his reputation as the most anti-immigrant Senator, before becoming an early supporter of candidate Trump. And while many pundits are hyperventilating over Trump's more conventional approach to foreign and economic policy the past few days, nothing of the sort is happening on the immigration front.

New DOJ Focus on Immigration Enforcement Will Distract and Harm from DOJ's Core Mission

In a must-read assessment in *The Daily Beast*, Betsy Woodruff **writes** that the Sessions speech "officially weaponized the Justice Department to crack down on undocumented immigration."

Reacting to the Sessions speech, **Jenny Durkan, former U.S. attorney for the Western District of Washington from 2009 to 2014**, said:

Which prosecutors and agents does he want to divert from the growing threats like terrorism, cybercrime, the opioid and heroin trade, organized crime and cartel activity? ... The 'surge' philosophy always requires taking agents, money and prosecutors from other priorities. In fact, the cost of satisfying Washington will reduce the ability of every U.S. attorney to address the greatest threats in their communities.

As the *Washington Post* noted, **Paul K. Charlton, the former U.S. attorney for Arizona from 2001 to 2007** said,

Sessions's new directive would simply overburden the U.S. district court system, which is already struggling to handle the volume of immigration cases. He said that when he was U.S. attorney, his office had the highest number of prosecutions in the country, 'yet the number of people entering illegally did not dramatically decrease ... No one understands better than I do that prosecutions have a deterrent effect, but it's not a solution. Prosecution and incarceration do not adequately address the real need, which is a reform of the immigration laws.

Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration expert at the libertarian Cato Institute, also **told Woodruff**,

Every dollar spent on prosecuting an illegal immigrant for illegal reentry is a dollar that could have been spent on prosecuting or investigating a real crime ... It's a shame the government is prioritizing the enforcement of, essentially, labor market regulations over violent and property crimes.

Woodruff also quoted an **unnamed veteran federal prosecutor, who summed up of Sessions's plans** for DOJ with perhaps the punchiest quote:

*It's f*cking horrifying ... It's totally horrifying and we're all terrified about it, and we don't know what to do.*

No “Extreme Vetting” For Hiring the Deportation Force at CBP

Meanwhile, according to a new **internal Department of Homeland Security assessment obtained by David Nakamura of the Washington Post**:

Trump administration is quickly identifying ways to assemble the nationwide deportation force that President Trump promised on the campaign trail as he railed against the dangers posed by illegal immigration. An internal Department of Homeland Security assessment obtained by The Washington Post shows the agency has already found 33,000 more detention beds to house undocumented immigrants, opened discussions with dozens of local police forces that could be empowered with enforcement authority and identified where construction of Trump's border wall could begin.

The agency also is considering ways to speed up the hiring of hundreds of new Customs and Border Patrol officers, including ending polygraph and physical fitness tests in some cases, according to the documents.

James Tomscheck, a former assistant commissioner for internal affairs at Customs and Border Protection, **told** the *New York Times* that “any attempt to speed hiring by lowering standards leaves the agency vulnerable to corrupt or compromised agents. ‘I can't see how this makes the border any more secure,’ he said, calling the polygraph change ‘preposterous.’”

ICE and CBP have in the past repeatedly been criticized for their lack of transparency and accountability: **Politico** once called Border Patrol “America's most out-of-control law enforcement agency.” **The Texas Observer** has written about how multiple other agencies have had to investigate CBP officers. In 2013, a teenager **died** after Border Patrol told him to drink liquid meth, and the agents involved still work for CBP. A **2014 independent review** found that agents would deliberately step in the path of cars to justify shooting at the drivers. CBP has **shot and killed** children for throwing rocks and been **accused of sexually assaulting minors** who cross the border. Immigrants have died in custody after being **tased**, **assaulted**, or **neglected**, and few from ICE or CBP have been held responsible.

Given that border crossings have been declining for 20 years, Trump and Sessions' obsession is wholly unwarranted. As J. Kevin Appleby of the Center for Migration Studies told the **Washington Post**, “They're throwing a lot of public resources at a problem that should not be a priority.” The federal government already **spends more on immigration enforcement** than all other types of federal policing *combined*.

And even with Bannon's star falling, his impact to date is seen in the Administration's immigration approach. As Greg Sargent of the *Washington Post's* “Plumline” **writes**, “The

strains of Bannon's nationalism that have turned up in actual policy are mainly the nativist ones. And whatever happens to Bannon, there's no indication that those strains won't continue to shape Trump's agenda."

According to Frank Sharry, Executive Director of America's Voice Education Fund:

Many in the press and punditry are still eager to write the story of a Trump Administration 'pivot.' Well, nothing of the kind is happening on immigration policy. The radicalism of this Administration is unparalleled in modern American political history, and it will take wave after wave of resistance to stop our government from committing errors of historic proportions. Fortunately, the resistance is strong, our belief in America as a welcoming nation is strong, and the support for pro-immigrant policies among the American people is strong.