



Trump cites out-of-context crime statistics in honoring 'angel families' whose loved ones were killed by undocumented immigrants

Michael Dobuski

June 22, 2018

Trying to steer the controversy over immigration back to his favored talking points, President Donald Trump met Friday with what he calls "angel families" whose loved ones were killed by undocumented immigrants.

As his administration has in recent days, he compared their tragedies to the uproar over children being separated from their parents at the border, saying the victims he highlighted were permanently taken away from their families.

"You never hear this side. You don't know what's going on," Trump said. "They're not separated a day, two days. Permanently separated because they were killed by criminal illegal aliens."

Trump then apparently referred to a 2011 Government Accountability Office report and ticked off some statistics.

"According to a 2011 government report, the arrests attached to the criminal alien population included an estimated 25,000 people for homicide. 42,000 for robbery. Nearly 70,000 for sex offenses and nearly 15,000 for kidnapping," he said.

But citing that report, to which he referred to on the campaign trail too, is "misleading and lacks context," the Washington Post's fact-check team reported in November 2016.

The 2011 report collected data from 2003 and 2009 to come up with those figures and used information specifically from five states with the highest populations of inmates who were in the country illegally.

There were 25,064 homicides among that population over six years, but that represents only about one percent of the nearly three million arrests that occurred in the study population. About half of the arrests, overall, were related to immigration, drugs, and traffic violations.

The other offenses and numbers he cites are also correct but again lack context. Robberies and kidnapping both represent one percent of total arrests, and sex offenses represent two percent.

Other studies also show that undocumented immigrants are no more likely to commit serious

crimes than native-born Americans. One study from the libertarian Cato Institute showed that criminal convictions and arrest rates for illegal immigrants in Texas were lower than those for native-born Americans.

A separate study conducted by the University of Wisconsin, Madison criminologist Michael Light, looking at statistics from 1990 to 2014, found that “undocumented immigration does not increase violence. Rather, the relationship between undocumented immigration and violent crime is generally negative, although not significant in all specifications.”

The president also demanded, “Where is the outcry over the savage gang MS-13 and its bloodthirsty creed, kill, rape and control? Because the news media has overlooked their stories. I want the American people to hear directly from these families about the pain they've had to endure losing.”

The Washington Post reported Friday that eleven MS-13 members were indicted in Virginia for the deaths of two teenage boys. Ten of the 11 are in federal custody.