

Newsmaker Transcript

President Donald Trump Participates in Roundtable Discussion on Immigration and Border Security in McAllen, Texas

Thursday, January 10, 2019

TRUMP:

Well, thank you very much. I appreciate it and it's an incredible honor to be here and to meet--we just said hello to Reggie and I've seen so much with--with Reggie and his incredible brother and family and we're with you. You know that, right? You know that.

And we're here to make a tour in a little while of the border and we have fantastic people with us including our great senators from the State of Texas. And thank you very much, John and Ted. Thank you very much for being here. And our lieutenant governor, who's been my friend for a long time and I also hear your son is doing a very good job.

PATRICK:

He's working hard every day.

TRUMP:

I hear he's doing a good job, so I want to thank all of you for being here and we're going to go around the table and say a few words. Attorney general, thank you very much for being here. Appreciate it. What a job you've done. The job big victory you had recently, too.

PAXTON:

It is.

TRUMP:

That's a very important victory, the individual mandate, we're going to see if that holds up because it should. That was the excuse they had and now we'll see if it holds up, right? But I think you're going to be in great shape. I'm honored to be in McAllen, Texas with the heroes of Border Patrol. And they are heroes. You know, you have so much--Border Patrol, ICE, and law enforcement, generally you take so much heat, you take so much abuse from people don't know what they're talking about. I want to just say that you have a friend with this administration and you have a friend with me. Nobody does a better job.

(APPLAUSE)

Nobody does a better job. And I--and I have to add you have no idea how much you are loved by the public. Maybe not by the fake news, but your loved by the public beyond belief.

(LAUGHTER)

And that includes my friend, Brandon. And Brandon, thank you very much for being so great. You've been getting the word out how important it is, border security, the wall, or the steel barrier, they can have any name they want, but we have had it and it's going to happen. But law enforcement and ICE and Border Patrol, incredible job you're doing. The public loves you. The public, not like, they love you. And I just hope that none of you run for president because that--you may be the one people I--person that we have a problem with because you are--you are highly respected in our country and beyond our country.

We know what you do with MS-13, we know what you do with the gangs, we know what you do with crime, and we also see what you do on the border. Boy, I'll tell you what, it's--it's tough stuff but it could be a lot easier for you and you could be spread a lot differently if we had the walls and we'll get it. We'll get it. I think we are winning the battle in a very big way. So I just want to thank you all in particular for being with us. Thank you very much, fellas. Thank you very much. Really incredible.

I want to thank also Secretary Nielsen and Commissioner McAleenan for being with us. We made the trip down from Washington. And again, Senator John Cornyn has been an incredible champion of what we are doing and a very popular man in Texas. And I think we are running in two years together, and that's very good for both of us, I hope.

(LAUGHTER)

I think it is. I think--it's my honor, John. I want to tell you. The people in Texas love you.

(APPLAUSE)

And we have another great friend of mine, Ted Cruz, and he is a friend of mine except for about four or five months in between.

(LAUGHTER)

I was telling John that Ted and I in the campaign, we liked each other so much and I said look, sometime that'll end, right, Ted? But we actually would do joint appearances together and the press would say when's it going to end? I said it'll happen. Ted would say, too, it'll happen. We didn't know it would be quite that violent, but then the friendship is at least equal to what it was.

And I just want to congratulate you because I was here, we had that arena with about 22,000, that was the--the Houston arena. That was an incredible night, right? And we had I think 109,000 106,000 people wanting to come. They had thousands outside and that was a few weeks before the election. I said I think he's going to win. I think he's going to win nicely and I want to just congratulate you. That was not easy.

CRUZ:

Thank you.

TRUMP:

And now he lost and he wants to run for president and I said I thought you had to win to run for president, right?

(LAUGHTER)

But you did a great job, Ted. We appreciate it. Texas Attorney General, Ken Paxton, whose lead some incredible cases, Ken, thank you very much and Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, who's been, again, a friend of mine for a long time. I also want to thank the governor, he's going on Fox tonight and he sends his regards and we're going to either see him later. He's coming into Washington. But the governor, who just had a great campaign also, he's been fantastic and a big believer in what we're doing. So say hello to him and I'll speak to him later.

Thanks also to Brandon Judd and the National Border Patrol Council. So Brandon, I've known him from the beginning and almost before I announced he was for my ideas and he was for us. He was for me. And I appreciate it and I appreciated all you guys coming up last week. They had a big impact. We said to them, what do you want? Who knows better than them? He knows better than all of us put together and that group was fantastic that we had in Washington just a few days ago.

And they went on television and anybody that listened wouldn't even have a doubt about it. So Brandon, thank you everybody we appreciate it very much. You've done a fantastic job. The border patrols Rio Grande Valley sector. Who is from the--the sector? Do you have any specific guys here from--and--and ladies?

UNKNOWN:

Quite a few.

TRUMP:

Quite a few. Now, are you tougher than the rest? Are you just tougher than the rest? I don't know, maybe, but I heard special--Oh, there they are. How are you? Come on over here. Come here a minute.

(LAUGHTER)

Come here.

(APPLAUSE)

Thank you. That's fantastic. And I've heard so much about all of you and we're going to spend a little time with little while together. I don't if we're walking or flying, but either one is okay with me. We're going to see a lot. But thank you for being here.

In a few moments, the American people will hear it directly from our frontline border agents about the tremendous flood of illegal immigration, drug trafficking, human trafficking, a phenomenon that has been going on for 1,000 years or more and that you think was something that modern society wouldn't have and, I hate to tell you that, because of the internet, it's worse than ever before. Human trafficking. It's a horrible thing.

And much of it comes--it's a world problem, not a U.S. problem only. And they come across the border and it's a--it's a bad thing. And they drive. They just go where there's no security, where you don't even know the difference between Mexico and the United States. There is no line of demarcation. They just go out and where there is no fencing or walls of any kind, they just make a left into the United States and they come in.

And they have women tied up, they have tape of their mouths, electrical tape, usually blue tape as they call it, it's powerful stuff, not good. And they have three, four, five of them in vans, or three of them and back seats of cars, and they just drive right in. They don't go through your points of entry. They go right through.

And if we had a--a barrier of any kind, a powerful barrier, whether it's steel or concrete, if we had a barrier, they wouldn't be able to make that turn and they wouldn't even bother trying because they can't go through the points with people. So we would stop that cold. We would stop a cold. And they can't fly it, obviously for obvious reasons, so we'd stop human trafficking in this section of the world. I think we'd stop it 90, 95 percent, a tremendous percentage would stop.

And you also had the criminal gangs coming in. They'd walk through the points of entry, they come where nobody's around and you're talking about hundreds and hundreds of miles. 2,000 miles, but we need 500 miles of border. One of the things that has happened is, and I was explaining to the two senators and to Dan in the car that one of the--the things that really is happening is, without saying it too loudly, and I told him, I said, "Dan, can you repeat that story?" When I say Mexico is going to pay for the war wall, that's what I said, Mexico is going to pay. I didn't say they were going to write me a check for 20 billion or 10 billion. Told you there were going to write a check, I said they're going to pay for the wall.

And if Congress approves this incredible trade bill that we made with Mexico, and Canada, by the way, but with Mexico in this case, they're paying for the wall many, many times over and Dan said, "Would you do me a favor and say that?" And I do and I do say it, but the press sort of refuses to acknowledge it. When I say Mexico is going to pay for the wall that's what I mean. Mexico is paying for the wall. And I didn't mean please write me a check, I mean very simply they're paying for it in the trade deal. And sometimes I'd say that. So hopefully people will start to understand.

Now, if the deal doesn't get approved by Congress, which would be hard because it's so much better than NAFTA, NAFTA was a horrible trade deal, one of the worst ever made, it really hurt our country, but now we have the USMCA and it's a great deal and I think that--I think that you're

going to see some tremendous improvement for the farmers and for the people of Texas. So law enforcement professionals at DHS, the men and women in this room have told us what they need to secure our borders. These are the people we went to. It's not only the wall or the barrier, it's the equipment for seizing the drugs.

We have tremendous equipment today. It's expensive, but tremendous equipment that when you do drive through one of the ports of entry, we have equipment that will be able to detect the drugs and it's the finest in the world and we're getting it ready. It's part of what we're asking for, it's not only the wall. And we've taken their recommendations straight to Congress, but Congress, as you know, the Democrats are holding us up because they don't want it. They think it's good politically. I think it's a disaster for them politically but I'm not doing for politics, I'm doing it because it's right. I'm doing it because it's right.

And before when I left Washington I said they--they can't have a problem with crime because the people that are coming in, the criminals, the gangs, the traffickers, the drugs, it's all crime and the only way you're going to stop it is the way these people are strongly recommending that it be stopped, Brandon. So hopefully I hear we are making a a lot of progress. I even hear certain members of the--of Congress, the Democrats are saying we better get this thing going. This isn't working out too well for us because nobody's going to win the battle of strong borders and no crime as opposed to open borders and crime doesn't matter because that's what they're saying, crime doesn't matter.

We have people that have been so horribly hurt, families that have been so horribly hurt by people just come in like it's--like, just come into the United States, do whatever they want. In many cases they leave and then they'll come back or, in many cases, they stay and we've done a very good job at the border considering we're not given the right laws. We have laws that are so bad. They're archaic and they're horrible and we don't have the barrier.

So our plan includes drug detection technology and our ports, more offices and agents, far more, more beds to house the influx of--the influx of unlawful migrants, medical support, closing the disastrous loopholes that incentivize child smuggling--the single biggest victims of what is happening at our border are children. They're being used by the coyotes, they're being sold left and right, people are grabbing them to get in because our laws are really lousy and if you have a child with you it's easier to get in. These people know it better than anybody, far better than the people in Washington.

And I think the biggest victims are children and women. Women would be right there with the children. These are the victims and it's women mostly in terms of the smuggling and what's going on with that. So we're going to take care of this problem. And to think anybody can even think about fighting it is ridiculous.

So we're going to build a powerful steel barrier. They didn't want to use concrete. I said, "Okay, I'll use steel, and stronger. It's also more expensive, by the way, but it's stronger. I'll use steel. So we'll call it a steel barrier. Now people should be happy. They said, "Concrete, we don't want a concrete wall." I said, "That's okay, we'll build a steel wall." I like it better, if you want to know

the truth, Ted. And we'll call it a barrier instead of a wall. And I'm okay with that too. I don't care what you call it, but it's got to be there.

Democrats have refused to listen to the border agents and they say this is a manufactured crisis. That's their new soundbite. All over I turned the television--you know, I call it the opposition party. It's called the fake news media. And what happens is every--every network has manufactured crisis. This is a man--every one of them. It's like they, you know, send out everybody let's use this soundbite today. So it's a manufactured--but it's not.

What is manufactured is the use of the word manufactured. It's manufactured by them. Every single of the negatives, but they're not winning because it's--it's common sense. It's common sense. They say a wall is medieval. Well, is a wheel. A wheel is older than a wall.

(LAUGHTER)

And I looked and every single car out there, even the asked really expensive ones that the Secret Service uses, and believe me, they are expensive, I said, "Do they all have wheels?" Yes. Oh, I thought it was medieval. The wheel is older than the wall. You know that? And there are some thing that work. You know what? The wheel works and a wall works. Nothing like a wall.

The government shut down because Democrats will not fund border security, plain and simple. And again, more than just the walls. Their open borders agenda threaten all American families, including millions of legal immigrants throughout our nation. In the last two years alone our courageous ICE officers, many of whom were with us, arrested criminal aliens charged with or convicted of 100,000 assaults, this is in last year, 30,000 sex crimes, and 4,000 violent killings.

We are deeply moved to have with us Reggie Singh, whose brother, Ronel--Ronel Singh, incredible guy. I mean, I watched, and I--I've rarely felt worse and watching news of our nation than watching your family and the love that you have for your brother. I can see that, Reggie, the--the way it came through. It came through loud and clear. And there are so many other people who have the same--nobody covers them.

You know, when they're talking about how unfair, how this, how that, nobody talks about how unfair it is to the victims of these brutal killings. And by the way, over the years there's thousands of them. I don't mean hundreds, I don't mean in the teens, I mean thousands of them. And these officers could all tell you about them. And I'd like to, if I could, because I--I watched a family right around Christmas time, and I watched them suffer and I'd like to ask Reggie, maybe you could say a few words about your incredible brother, the job he was doing. He was so beloved by the people of the department and beyond the department and maybe you could say a few words about your brother. Please.

SINGH:

So Ronel Singh, we are originally from Fiji Islands, he always wanted to be in law enforcement. So legally we migrated to America to fulfill his dream to join the law enforcement. After--English is our second language. He worked on that, got his education, applied for law enforcement agency

and he was asked to get his citizenship. He worked towards that and he became a cop, K-9, Corporal K-9.

And the way he was killed, what my family is going through right now, I do not want any other family, law enforcement person to go through that. Whatever it takes to minimize, put a stop to it, my family fully supports it. At 33 years old, Ronel Singh was cremated and I had to pick up his remains. It breaks my heart and no one should ever, ever go through that. Looking at that five-month-old baby looking for his dad, no one should ever go through that on Christmas Day. That's all. That's it.

TRUMP:

Thank you. Thank you. Were with you, you know that, right?

(APPLAUSE)

That was a tough one, too. That was a tough one for a lot of people, not only the family, for a lot of people in this country. That was a tough thing to watch. Also with us, Marie Vega whose son, Border Patrol agent Javier Vega Junior, who is another person who was loved by so many in the department, on the Border Patrol, we had so many people talking, they're still talking so much about him. It happened in 2014. He was out fishing with his wife, his parents, and his kids. And Marie, I'd like to maybe have--say a little bit about your son because he is so loved and respected still in this room. Please, thank you. Thank you.

VEGA:

My name is Marie Vega(SP). We have two sons, my husband, Javier, and I. Very proud of both of them. Growth of them Marines. Harvey(SP) at a very young age expressed a love for law enforcement and like you know the parent that wants the child to grow up and be something and be a productive human, we supported him.

And he showed interest in the police force; numerous times he rode with the police officers around our town, surrounding towns. When he was in high school, he told us that he wanted to be a Marine and of course it was like okay, you want to be a Marine. You are going to start this, you are going to follow through and you are going to finish it and that's what he did. He became a Marine.

Upon leaving the United States Marine Corps he went to college, became a biomed engineer and almost immediately after graduating he was offered a job at Christus Spohn in Kingsville. While working at Christus Spohn, because he was surrounded by agents and saw how they worked and still with that love for law enforcement in his heart he came to me, came to my husband and said mom, dad, I want to be a border patrol agent. And of course again okay, you want to be a border patrol agent then you're going to be a border patrol agent and he became an agent.

I always worried about him like--like I worry about our family now. I want them to go to work, be safe, come home to their families safely. And I always every day I was you know scared that I would lose my son. Never in my wildest dream did I ever imagine my son dying as a family outing.

It was supposed to be a peaceful, fun, fishing afternoon and it--it didn't happen that way. It didn't happen that way because we had a criminal illegal alien that killed him. He came thinking that he was entitled to one of the two vehicles that we had there. This--no family like Mr. Singh(SP) says should go through this, no one. No family should suffer the loss of a child. A parent should not have to bury their child.

We need the wall and when I say we need the wall I don't mean just build the wall. There's other things that we need to do also. We need to enforce immigration laws. We need tougher judges. We need the wall itself. Our border patrol agents need to have what they should have, the equipment, the materials they need to do their job.

TRUMP:

Thank you very much and you're 100% right. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

He's very proud of you right now. Thank you very much, Marie. What Marie said is right. More than just the wall. We have to give these incredible people the tools to work with. We are not doing that.

The politicians in Washington that say--they don't know the first thing about--. They've never been here. They don't know the first thing about what we are talking about.

So we are going to hear from a couple of our landowners, a couple of the folks that live in the area and areas that we are discussing. I think I'd like to start off with our Texas leaders and they are indeed leaders and say a few words about what we are here for and what we support and what's going to happen. We have no choice.

And maybe we'll start with John Cornyn, Senator Cornyn. Say a few words please.

CORNYN:

Thank you, Mr. President for being here.

TRUMP:

Thank you.

CORNYN:

And for hearing firsthand from not only the people who suffered at the hands of the crime that occurs as a result who don't come here to achieve their American dream but people who come here to cause death and destruction and human misery.

Before you, you see maybe we will have someone go through some of the things that are in front of us but I see here for example heroin and methamphetamine that's been seized. You see bulk cash, \$362,000. When the drugs are sold in the United States, they have to get the cash back across the border to the cartels.

And you see the sorts of weapons that are used by the drug cartels and others and you can imagine the violence that goes along with that. And so when I--when people like Ted and I hear our colleagues in Washington say that this is a manufactured crisis we kind of wonder what planet they've been living on. Because this is not just about economic migrants, this is about people who exploit the vulnerabilities in our border.

This is about the 70,000 people who've died of drug overdoses in America just last year. A substantial portion of it is from heroin that comes from Mexico, 90% of the heroin that is used in the United States comes from Mexico and as you point out the human tragedy associated with human trafficking, sex slavery, modern-day--

TRUMP:

Right.

CORNYN:

--slavery. All of that is associated with our inability to control the way we need to control our southern border. So thank you for being here.

TRUMP:

Thank you.

CORNYN:

Thank you for your concern and I want to particularly thank Mr. Singh and Ms. Vega for their willingness to come and tell their story and their courage.

TRUMP:

Thank you, John, very much. Senator Cruz?

CRUZ:

Mr. President, welcome back to Texas.

TRUMP:

Thank you. Yes.

CRUZ:

Glad to--glad to welcome you to the Valley. One of the things you said a minute ago about the men and women here in border patrol and ICE is you referred to them as heroes and that is exactly right. These are brave courageous leaders.

I've been out on midnight patrol with the agents here in the RGB(SP) sector and--and they have a difficult job that they do each and every day. They risk their lives. All of us, Mr. Singh, our prayers are with your family. The tragedy you endured nobody should have to endure.

Ms. Vega, we love you and--and Mr. Vega is--is sitting back here as well. And this whole community loves the Vega family and has mourned their son's loss alongside them.

Illegal immigration produces tragedies every day. Human smuggling, drug smuggling, children being abused, women being sexually abused. Opioids that are destroying--last year 72,000 people lost their lives to drug overdoses, more than car accidents in this country and much of those drugs are flooding across the southern border. And so I just want to commend you for standing up and fighting this fight.

One thing there's not a lot of in Washington is backbone and--and--and I want to commend you for helping infuse some more backbone in Washington. This is a fight the people of Texas and the American people want the borders secured. They want the federal government to have the backs of the men and women in this room that are risking their lives to keep us safe and--and so thank you for highlighting this crisis.

When we see politicians go on TV and say the border is secure and--and there is no crisis they are ignoring reality. They are ignoring the lives that are jeopardized each and every day. So thank you for leading this fight, Mr. President.

TRUMP:

Thank you very much, Ted. I appreciate it. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

Thank you. Dan, if you could say a few words. Also I'd like to have somebody get up and give us just for the media a little definition of exactly what's in front of us because it looks pretty brutal.

This is not a manufactured deal. As you say this is the real stuff and this is nothing compared to what they have. This is actually nothing compared to what they have. So is somebody going to be able to explain to this to us quickly?

UNKNOWN:

Yes, Carlos.

TRUMP:

Good. Carlos, please. Go ahead. Please. Thank you.

RODRIGUEZ:

Mr. President, welcome to South Texas.

TRUMP:

Thank you. Thank you, Carlos.

RODRIGUEZ:

I am the port director for the (INAUDIBLE) port of entry.

TRUMP:

Good.

RODRIGUEZ:

Before you you see some narcotics that have been seized by the men and women of (INAUDIBLE). As you can see right here on the two tables to my far right and left here these are 117 kg of methamphetamine and 12 kg of heroin that we're seizing in commercial conveyance that was making entry at our port of entry.

Officers noticed some discrepancies. The conveyance was referred to x-ray technology and it was it was during--during the exam they were able to identify anomalies within the conveyance. With the use of our canine detector dogs we are able to--to seize this merchandise.

Right here at this particular one these are fire extinguishers. These fire extinguishers were intercepted at the Port (INAUDIBLE) of Texas. It was a male that was driving into the United States and the two fire extinguishers were used in the--the portation(SP) of methamphetamine and heroin, 100 g of heroin and the eight keys of methamphetamine as well.

Also we have some weapons that were seized at our ports of entry also with the assistance of our federal partners and state partners as well. So we have three Colt handguns that are goldplated encrusted with diamonds. Those were seized at the Laredo port of entry. We have AR15 that was seized with the assistance of our state and local partners with the task force officers.

We have an AK-47 that was seized by the officers at the (INAUDIBLE) port of entry going southbound during a southbound inspection. There was nervous behavior that was displayed by the driver, subsequently the officers were able to find the AK-47 hidden in the back seat.

We also have a 50-caliber rifle. During the inspection at the port of entry officers would use NII (SP) equipment or x-rays were able to detect a compartment. That compartment was found in the backseat of a vehicle subsequently with the assistance of our homeland security investigative partners and Air Marine there was a surveillance that was conducted on the vehicle, went to an undisclosed location from that location a traffic stop was conducted and a 50-caliber rifle was found, sir.

Now these three guns that you see are goldplated handguns and with diamonds encrusted.

TRUMP:

Okay. That says it all. This is just all recent. This is all very recent. They didn't have to go, they didn't have to go very far. This is all very recent. Okay.

LUCIO:

Good morning, Mr. President and welcome to the (INAUDIBLE) station. I am (INAUDIBLE) in charge here of the (INAUDIBLE) station and we are very pleased to have you here.

\$362,000 this is a multi-agency seizure. It actually was detected by a (INAUDIBLE) border patrol station canine handler. What ended up happening there was a suspected currency smuggler who went to a traffic stop, resulted in further investigation, He gave us consent into his house. The canine came in, searched and this was caught.

This suspect was suspected also of marriage fraud. He was an overstay. He also had multi-thousands of dollars of financial transactions, all illicit activity. 362,000 of many.

TRUMP:

That's something. And the dogs are incredible, aren't they?

LUCIO:

They are a great tool.

TRUMP:

In terms of finding the drugs but also, they find money and drugs. They find drugs.

LUCIO:

They also find people.

TRUMP:

And they find people.

LUCIO:

People that are hidden away.

TRUMP:

Yeah. That's pretty incredible.

LUCIO:

If we get a chance I I have some other things I would like to call to your attention.

TRUMP:

Sure. Go ahead.

LUCIO:

Yes, absolutely. I will start over here. Sorry, sir. If you will, so (INAUDIBLE) checkpoint which is north of here two suspects that were being smuggled in the trunk of a car. It just so happens after records checks were run one of the subjects act--actually had an Interpol hit. He was actually wanted out of Spain for murder.

Here we've got pictures depicting some seizures of marijuana and firearms. It just so happens when this multi-agency task force border patrol included, went to go execute a warrant the suspects inside the house actually started trying to burn the marijuana and actually tried to throw it throughout the yard. But we were able to successfully get in, seize the marijuana and make the arrest as well as other seizures.

This here, very sad. Your words resonate with me. It's very dangerous. We've got a vehicle that failed to yield to border control agents. This vehicle, eventually the driver lost control, impaled the vehicle onto a pipe gate, a juvenile died in that vehicle, 15 to 16 other subjects seriously injured, all illegal in the United States.

Here you're seeing the inside of a horse trailer where smugglers endanger these folks that they were smuggling again at the (INAUDIBLE) checkpoint. Here, this is just a couple of miles from here from where we're standing. This is a tunnel. This is the second tunnel that recently that we have located. This is an area that we actually have wall, and we actually have some technology and agents. That piece of area was really important to the criminal organization. We are doing such a great job utilizing the right resource in that particular area that they've become so frustrated they're using other tactics. They're actually digging tunnels. This is about 25 feet long, about two to three feet high. We were fortunate enough that when the--the station next to us, their boat control actually launched in our area, went down. They're very vigilant. They look for new landings. They look for anything that was different the day before, and they were actually able to see--this was

very well hidden, but they were so vigilant they found this. There is no telling what all else is going to come through this if they were successful.

Here, this vehicle was actually floated across the Rio Grande River with narcotics, floated on a trailer with barrels, narcotics in the bed of the truck, narcotics in the--in the cab of the truck.

This is technology that we have here in the McAllen area making use of. That group is actually in along the Rio Grande but on the Mexican side, getting ready to cross the United States. That technology is so important so our agents have time to go over there and deter that traffic. We've got large groups coming in.

And sadly, this is a deceased subject, somebody who probably was trying to cross the Rio Grande who didn't make it, and he died. He drowned.

TRUMP:

Thank you. Do you want to go ahead?

LUCIO:

Mr. President-- Right here, two juveniles from Mexico trying to smuggle over 1,000 pounds here, again in the McAllen area. They actually rammed the vehicle, they rammed into a border patrol agent. That's an assault. They were trying to get away - two juveniles, over 1,000 pounds of marijuana.

This is a stash house, Mr. President. The smugglers, they don't care. They're treating human beings as commodities. They put them in deplorable situations. Sometimes, they're in these houses up to eight days, sometimes even more. This is terrible. This is just--the American people need to understand, like you stated just now, we know better. We know what the cost is to families, to our families, to our communities, to the country. We're here to serve, and we're here to protect, not just ourselves and everybody in the country but even the people who are being taken advantage of.

TRUMP:

That was a great presentation. Thank you very much. Very impressive.

(APPLAUSE)

Dan?

PATRICK:

Mr. President, I wanted to share with you that our state troopers seized 94 1/2 pounds of Fentanyl last year, which on the street breaks down to 21 million lethal doses, 21 million lethal doses, and we talked about our opioid crisis. To those of you who say this is a manufactured crisis, it's a manufactured cover-up by your opposition. We have--we had 500,000 people apprehended

crossing the border from San Diego to Brownsville last year, more than half in Texas and most of those in this sector between Brownsville and Falcon Dam. We need the wall. We need the fencing. We have 54 miles. You are about to build 22 more miles, which leaves about 128 miles. On the other side of the border here, about 10 miles away, Mr. President, there's a city of a million people, Reanoso (SP) without a police force every night running gunfights in the streets between the Mexican Marines and the cartels just eight miles from here. And anyone who says we don't need a fence or a wall or a barrier or more law enforcement, they're deceiving the American people. So, you're right, Mr. President, and we're with you.

TRUMP:

And they say it's immoral. What's immoral is all the killing that's taking place by people just walking across.

PATRICK:

Deceiving the American people, that's immoral.

TRUMP:

They are, they are, and they know better, and they all know--it's an indefensible position. And even people that aren't into it like we are where we're studying it and working and we want to end it and we can't end it, everybody knows that what we're saying is right. They can't--.

PATRICK:

--And the economic impact to the country and Texas, we have a million students who aren't proficient or don't speak English, and these are good people that wanted to come here, but there's a tremendous cost to the taxpayer. That's about one out of every five students. The healthcare cost and the humanitarian cost--no one should have to die trying to come to America. And the Democrat opposition is creating that situation.

TRUMP:

Yeah. Okay. Well, I want to thank you, and I think a lot of--.

PATRICK:

--Thank you for coming--.

TRUMP:

--Are getting it now because it's very simple. It's not complex.

TRUMP:

If we don't have a barrier, a very substantial barrier of some kind, you're never going to be able to solve this problem. And everybody gets it. Whether you're educated in this world or not educated in this world, you don't have to be at all, they'll get it. That's why you see Congress now. Democrats in Congress are coming out and saying hey, we don't like the subject. It was just a big article.

I won't give your competition the publicity, but there was a big article in a very important media outlet that just came out where a lot of the young Democrats just elected to office are breaking up in there saying hey, wait a minute, this--our position, meaning the Democrats position of no barrier, no wall, is indefensible. And it's going to happen. It's going to happen more and more because it's common sense. Mark, would you say something, please? You've done a great job.

ESPER:

Well, Mr. President, I'd like to say that, as a--as you well know, the Department of Defense is fully supportive of the Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border patrol with thousands of service members, the multiple components, and we continue to leap forward and willing to support in them as soon as we look ahead.

TRUMP:

And I called on you and I called on the Department of Defense to come down and help because we had caravans forming. We have another one forming, believe it or not, in Honduras and we pay them millions--tens of millions of dollars. They do nothing for us. They do nothing and if you think that country is trying to stop, don't believe it, okay? And that goes for Guatemala, that goes for El Salvador, if they want to stop it, they can stop it.

But they form and then they come in through Mexico, they break in and you saw what happened, they broke in because they didn't have the wall and I think they're thinking about building a wall on their southern border now. But I want to thank the military. They been incredible. They came up and from day one, they worked, nobody's seen anybody work like that and they put the, essentially, barbed wire, but it's called barbed wire times 10. And it was very effective, to put it mildly, very effective.

Without that, we would have been--it would've been a stampede right into our country. So I just want to thank the military. I know you're thinking still working with us on it and I'm, unfortunately, I have to tell you that they have another one forming and we'll handle that as it happens and we're working with Mexico. We appreciate that, but we're working with Mexico very much. Attorney General, please say a few words.

PAXTON:

Sure. Thank you so much for coming to the border. So many people in Washington talk about the borders, that they know what's going on and they don't come down here, so thank you. Also, thank you for your vision, your persistence, your willingness to stand up. I think like no other leader we've had, president or non-president, you've done more for border security to push this forward.

And look, we--we have two stories, horrific stories of people losing their lives and in Texas, unfortunately, you're not the only two families that have suffered. We keep track of statistics in Texas related to border security. Our state police has addressed hundreds of thousands of crimes, hundreds of homicides, and so we have hundreds of thousands of stories just like this that have affected real people and our--and our families in Texas. And so thank you for--for addressing that.

We also hear that the narrative is that the wall won't work. If you go to El Paso, we put up a barrier there. I think it was under the Bush administration. It's over 100 miles long. El Paso used to have one of the highest crime rates in America. After that fence went up--went up and separated Juarez, which still has an extremely high crime rate, the crime rates in El Paso now are some of the lowest in the country. So we know it works. So the narrative is--is incorrect and we've tested it in Texas.

And finally, I wanted to say something about your comments about human trafficking. I started human trafficking in my first year in office and I did it because, largely because of the border, we have the second largest human trafficking rate in the country. Over 300,000 people are victims of that crime every year. That's the--the research. Houston is the worst city in America and so we're addressing that and border security will clearly have a positive impact on--on those horrible and horrific--horrific statistics that are affecting our women and our children. So thank you very much, Mr. President.

TRUMP:

And thank you very much. And what you're saying is interesting because you'll have a wall or a barrier and then you won't. And what they do is they walk up can't, can't get through, they come in and they eventually find an opening and it's the openings where they come in. And we don't want to have the openings. We're going to have gates where they come in legally, but other than that, we don't--we don't want to have openings.

And you'll see the crime rate in this country go way down and we are already doing very well in terms of crime rate, but it's not being helped by what's going on. We could make it a lot better. So I appreciated very much. Thank you very much, Ken. Brandon?

JUDD:

Absolutely. Mr. President, I came here in this big gentleman right here, he said he didn't like that--that 50 Cal pointed at his head.

(LAUGHTER)

He played football--

TRUMP:

--That's right--.

JUDD:

--He played football at University of Missouri, I told him it wouldn't even put a dent in them.

TRUMP:

That's right. He might be able to handle it.

JUDD:

He was the right person to put that in front of.

(LAUGHTER)

I appreciate--I appreciate the leadership that you provided. I appreciate the access that you have given our border patrol agents to our leaders like Secretary Nielsen. Nobody has ever come down and spoken to our agents as much as Secretary Nielsen has and we appreciate that. We appreciate the neat leadership Commissioner McAleenan and has provided and the access that you have allowed our agents with--with these individuals.

I appreciate you having Senator Cornyn and Senator Cruz here with us today. These two individuals played such a huge role in getting Javier Vegas death declared as a line of duty death. Without their leadership, that wouldn't have happened and I appreciate you allowing them to be here.

From a personal experience as a border patrol agent, I can tell you what barriers do. I started my career in El Centro, California 21 years ago. We had very few barriers. We had illegal border crossings that were out of control. It was the busiest sector at that time. We put up physical barriers and illegal border crossings dropped exponentially.

I then went to Naco, Arizona. We were the busiest station at that time. 2004, 2005 we were arresting, one small station, we were arresting over 100,000 illegal aliens per year at that station. We built physical barriers. It dropped from 100,000 to down to 20,000. That's how physical barriers work. They work and we appreciate the leadership that you're providing in order to get us those--those things that we need, such as personnel technology and the infrastructure, which is barriers. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

TRUMP:

Thank you very much. And--and Brandon has been--you just sit here listening and it's like not a contest. There's no two sides or anything. And all they're doing is looking at 2020 and they figure they can't win, maybe I can do this or they can come up with some other issue. I could tell you about another couple of issues they're using and because we've had great achievement, but I won't consider myself to have that great achievement unless we can straighten out your border. And we're working on it.

And your son and your brother will not have died in vain. I can tell you that. They will not have died in vain. It's a very important purpose to all of this, very important. Monte, I agree. That's a very uncomfortable position.

(LAUGHTER)

I don't know. I wouldn't want to be in that chair but you're a tough guy, you can handle it.

AWBREY:

Yes, sir.

TRUMP:

Please, say a few words.

AWBREY:

Mr. President, first thing I want to say is thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to come down here and address the situation that we do live on a daily basis. Not only us as ranchers or anything, but all the law enforcement agencies. Senator Cruz hit--hit it right on the head whenever he said, you know, you've got a backbone and that's exactly why we elected you and--and wanted you in the White House. And we appreciate you not giving up on that.

I grew up in the Rio Grande Valley. Home--born and raised on here. My family is--I'm third generation down here. 15, 20 years ago, we didn't have this kind of problem. We had a great flow of illegal immigrants coming across, but those people were harmless and they wanted to come over here for a better life and work. Unfortunately, is not the same thing anymore.

There's been many times where we be out on a ranch or even at 3:00 in the morning, cold, drizzly, rainy night, have a family come up and beat on my back door on the front porch. I go out there and it's a family in distress. You know, we feed them, we water them, and they're asking for help. We are passionate people and that's--that's what we do so we call for help, we get them over there, we feed them, clothe them, whatever we had to do.

Unfortunately, a few times we've also had a few young females come up that you could tell had been sexually assaulted. They were scared out of their mind. They get led around in the brush for three or four days and get disoriented on their direction and told by their coyotes that Houston's right there. This is where you want to go. These people paid \$3,000 apiece to come across. It's everything that they could garnish up, you know, wage wise, to pay these people.

They walk them 10 miles across the border, walk them around in the brush and disappear on them. They're are lost, they're hopeless, they don't know what to do, so they give up and they say, "Can you call border patrol for me?"

Border patrol, my hat is off to you guys. I see how you work all the time. You're--you're undermanned. Sheriff Department, everybody, we got a great sheriff in Hidalgo County and--and proud to call him my friend as well. Anytime that we've had any incidences--I lost my father five years ago and when--when that happened, there was a lot of traffic going on. I didn't live at the ranch at the time, but I would have to go out there every night. So I was--I was a constant bother to the sheriff, I'm sure, and he was--he was there to help me all the time.

These guys, they're--the border patrol right now, their hands are tied and--and these immigrants, they know it. So they know that they get over here and they're going to get caught but they're going to get let go. That's--to me that something that I think that really needs to be addressed and yes, I agree with the wall.

There's a lot of farmers and--and landowners that I know that are on the river and they're a little upset because of the enemy and eminent domain. That brings up the question there as far as, you know, all the acreages that they're losing without wall. Maybe there's something that you can devise with those owners and say hey, you know what, we don't want to drill right down through the middle of your property, let's--let's rearrange it and get a little bit closer to the river or something. And I think that that would probably forgo, and you'll see a lot more cooperation with that.

TRUMP:

I think--I agree with you. I think you're right, Monte.

AWBREY:

Thank you, Mr. President.

TRUMP:

And--and the laws are a big problem. You know, they call one catch and release. You catch them and you release them. You know, other countries for the most part, you go into the country and they say, "Excuse me, these people, get out. You have to get out. Sorry." And nobody tries to get in because they know they can't.

With us we take them through court proceedings. We have to hire hundreds of judges. How do you get hundreds of judges? Hundreds of judges, you go through a proceeding, they check you in, then they can't do the preceding because there's 800,000 people now waiting. 8--think of it, 800,000 people. How ridiculous is this? If they set one foot on US property, so to speak, they end up having to go to a trial.

So they take the name and they say, "You can go now, come back in three years, you have a trial." This is the United States law, by the way area and--and made worse by the Ninth Circuit. The Ninth Circuit is a disaster, made worse by the ninth--if you go to the Ninth Circuit if you're on the other side of what everybody in this room is all about, and frankly what most of the people in the country are all about, it's almost like an automatic loss. It's like an automatic one.

They take a case to the Ninth Circuit that's nowhere near the Ninth Circuit that has nothing to do with the Ninth Circuit. So we are bucking a bad system and we're bucking a lot of things that are bad and we are apprehending more people than ever apprehended before. But the laws are really against us and we're doing well and it way. But we have to do much better and we can do only better if we have a physical barrier because this way we don't have--even with the bad laws, you have the physical barrier, they can come onto the--into our country.

AWBREY:

If I may, Mr. President, I also--I married into a law enforcement family. Agent Jaime Zapata was the agent killed down in Mexico. You know, it was--it was pretty hard going through that and I kind of feel y'all's pain. Jaime and I were not all that close at first. We--we--we gained, you know, became really, really good friends after that.

After that happened, I don't know how, but the killers, when they got went--went up to DC, they--they were allowed to bring their entire family and put them up on the taxpayer's dollar in front of--in front of his parents just paraded them around and--and it was like a stab in the back. You know, for the government that he gave his life for--and it just--.

TRUMP:

When was that? How long ago? Sir, that was--that was right at last year when they finally went to sentencing. So--.

TRUMP:

--Convicted?

AWBREY:

Somebody took the fall for it. I can't say that it was the correct person to pull the trigger.

TRUMP:

Yeah, that's bad stuff.

AWBREY:

Yes sir.

TRUMP:

Pastor, please.

PENA:

Well, thank you Mr. President, first, for coming to Texas and--.

TRUMP:

--Thank you--.

PENA:

--And--and for the Rio Grande Valley. I especially want to thank you for calling this what it is, a humanitarian crisis. When you use that language it really set bills to ringing because that is what it is. People in my profession see the suffering, the human suffering wrought by drugs, by the arms that are brought across--across making our communities more violent, the trafficking of women and children, especially, and boys and young males as well.

And the--the truth that needs to be talked about that is seldom talked about is the amount of underreporting of the crime. When these things happen, and the shadows people are not always eager to point out the crimes that are taking place and it goes underreported. But people in my profession, especially Spanish-speaking pastors, especially Spanish-speaking pastors in this sector know firsthand the human suffering, the human toll that is taking place because of the onslaught, the sickness, the disease, the lack of sanitation that's going on because of the bunch up them at the border and people trying to come in.

So I just want to give a very heartfelt thanks because I have had the privilege of visiting with you before, I know your heart of compassion, although some don't want to paint you as having a heart of compassion, I know you as a man that does have this heart of compassion that's genuine and authentic. And the fact that you called it what it is, it's a--it's a crisis and a humanitarian crisis, and again, the pastors that I'm here representing today salute you and thank you for wanting to bring an end to untold suffering is taking place on our southern border. Thank you, mister. President.

TRUMP:

Thank you, Pastor. Very nice. Good to see you again.

PENA:

Thank you.

TRUMP:

Appreciate it. Thank you. Commissioner?

MCALEENAN:

Thank you, Mr. President. Obviously, you came to the right part of the border to really bring this border security and humanitarian crisis into focus. Number one, for illegal crossings, number two

for hard narcotics. That hole between our ports of entry, as you saw from the briefing (INAUDIBLE), and then humanitarian cost. The families and children crossing here, over the over half the families that cross our border in the whole country across here in South Texas.

And so we have our men and women, are trained law enforcement officers dealing with care for the children of family members and a very challenging environment. And so I just wanted to say I'm incredibly proud of--of the agents, officers, and (INAUDIBLE) professionals that are serving down here, staying focused on--on the mission despite the challenging environment at this time. I'm very proud of the briefing from Melissa and Carlos.

TRUMP:

Absolutely

MCALEENAN:

I tell you, their heart and soul and what they do every day to protect our country and our fellow citizens and I just got to say the resources the administration is asking for from Congress are directly targeted at all three elements of this crisis. The border barrier, technology, agents and officers that we need to address the security threats and we were building a new barrier, as the lieutenant governor noted, starting in February right here. Thank you.

Also, the technology at the ports of entry disrupt the drugs, that's a critical element and very importantly you asked for humanitarian resource and we could provide different facilities, medical support to get our agents out of the childcare business and help protect families that are crossing and end this violent cycle. It's all controlled by violent criminals in Mexico, primarily transnational criminal organizations and we want to combat that with these resources. So thank you for this support

TRUMP:

Thank you, Commissioner.

MCALEENAN:

I look forward to showing you more on the road.

TRUMP:

Thank you. A little while, we'll be there and a little while. That's great. One of the things that Dan Patrick suggested, which I thought was very interesting, was give the State of Texas a relatively small amount of money, they'll build a wall themselves because they want to build it. And I thought that was not the worst I've ever year although I still think I can do it cheaper than you.

(LAUGHTER)

I still think I could do it.

PATRICK:

(INAUDIBLE) you could do it cheaper we are--we are (INAUDIBLE).

TRUMP:

I do like the idea and we're going to look at a couple of ways of doing it where you guys get it up. You do things very well in Texas. And I like that idea, so we'll take a look. And Dan, could I ask you to say a few words, please?

BIBLE:

Yes, Mr. President. I'm Dan Bible, I'm the Field Office Director with ICRO for the San Antonio field office. And with the inflow of the immigrants that are coming across in these unprecedented numbers, our officers also are coming down of the border to support that effort to deal with the women and children, but those are the same officers that we'd be using in--in the communities themselves looking for those public safety threats and criminal aliens, which are now reprogrammed to come down here to deal with humanitarian crisis.

Over this past year, I--I--I would say over half the time those--those officers on my task force and everything are--are--are--were brought back down to deal with these crises. And when we look at the family units and stuff that come across in reality, we either just release them out the door once we get--once we take the men if they--if they're not in a composition that can go into one of our family residential centers, but in it even if they get to one of our family residential centers to do some of the legal decisions and stuff, we have 20 days to release them from there. So essentially, they're would be just released to the street as well. So pulling our officers away from criminal enforcement--.

TRUMP:

--These are our laws. Terrible--.

BIBLE:

--To just basically release family units, it's kind of a deterrent in the system and also we do see in the--the secondary--secondary--or the secondary, how would you put it, barrier for them to keep coming, right? I mean, once you get--get past while my agents are--are at--at the border doing this, they kind of get a free run in the communities, which make the communities less safe.

TRUMP:

You're right. And it's not just what's going on at the border, that's really almost a lesser problem. They get through the problem and then they filter out throughout the whole country and you have MS-13 all over Long Island and all over the other places. We're getting them out by the thousands.

The ICE folks are doing incredibly getting them out and they are rough and tough but the--I will tell you a little secret, ICE is a lot rougher a lot tougher and a lot smarter, but still that's a lot of people, a lot of people that they have to get out. But it's not the crime at the border, which has got its own problems, it's what happens when they get through the border and they're dispersed or they dispersed themselves throughout the country and all of that crime is because of it. Yes, John?

TRUMP:

Yes, John.

CORNYN:

Mr. President, and just before you--right before we end I would suspect we'll hear from Secretary Nielsen, who's doing a great job at DHS. But I just want to acknowledge all the local officials here, the mayors and the county judges and others who support these men and women who wear the green and blue uniforms--

TRUMP:

--Right.--

CORNYN:

--and who basically end up having to try to manage this humanitarian crisis, this flood across the border, because of the gaps in our law that you've already described. And you know, we are set up as a country to deal with legal--legal immigration. We applaud legal immigration, but illegal immigration, particularly when it floods over here, we're just not prepared for it, especially with these large caravans and it's created a humanitarian crisis that these men and women who are local elected officials have had to deal with. So I wonder if you wouldn't mind if we asked them to stand--

TRUMP:

--Please.--

CORNYN:

--where we could recognize them and thank them for what they're doing?

(APPLAUSE)

TRUMP:

That's great. Thank you very much. Thank you, John, very much. Secretary?

NIELSEN:

Well, sir, I think everyone here today said it so well. What I would tell you is it's not status quo, it is a crisis, it's a humanitarian crisis, it's clearly a security crisis. For those would like to put their heads in the sand and pretend that it's "manufactured" it's not only an insult and deeply disturbing to those who have lost loved ones, but it's an--an insult to our country, sir. This is a crisis and what a crisis mandates is a decisive leader with a vision - that's what you have. You continue each day to make it very clear to Congress what the crisis is and what the men and women here today have told you is needed to address it and they refuse to do it. So I hope today they're watching. I hope they take a cue from you, they decide to be leaders and they do what this country needs and help us to secure it.

TRUMP:

Well, thank you, Secretary and you're doing a great job and you're working hard, I will tell you that. She's working hard. Every time I speak to her she's in a different location, usually along the border. And Commissioner, you, and the Secretary, and everybody else, we appreciate it very much.

And we're getting there. I think we're making a lot of progress. But I have to say, that my sacred duty, the most sacred duty as president is to defend the people of our nation, that's whether it's from foreign nations or along a border, it's all defending our people and defending them properly and strongly and really rightly and justly and that's what I'm doing. And it would be a lot easier for me not to do this. It would be a lot easier not to say anything and let this go on.

This should have been taken care of 30 years ago, 20 years ago, 10 years ago. It should have been taken care of. I've seen all the speeches made by all the presidents and a lot of people that worked under the presidents and you say, "What happened?" Nothing happened. They were going to build this wall in 2003, in 2006, they were going to build it 20 years ago, they were going to build it forever. And little sections got built. And I will say, we've done a lot of renovation. We have a lot of new wall going up where we took down wall because it was in such bad shape and we put new wall up. We've done a lot of work but we have work to do. So I hope that the Democrats get together and work on a problem that is truly--it's compassion, it's everything.

It's also national security, just like it's a foreign country, it's a foreign world. In many cases it is a foreign country, we're under attack in a certain way. And we're certainly under attack by criminal gangs, by criminals themselves, by the human traffickers, and by drugs of all kinds, much of it comes through the Southern border. And if we can do a really great job - and we will - of putting up the barriers, putting up the walls, putting up the fences, putting up everything that we have planned, fixing what's good but isn't working so well anymore because it's decrepit, it's old, it's torn up from years of abuse and all of the things that happened, we will have done a great service.

And you know, somebody was saying that moving the embassy to Jerusalem, I got it done. Every president talked about it for many, many years, for decades. They talked about it. They campaigned on it. In every instance they campaigned on it, they never got it done. The same thing here. The same exact thing. I got that done, we're going to get this done, too. And this is really the defense

of our country and this is compassion, Pastor, very much so, it's compassion. It's compassion for our people.

And we don't want to have situations like Reggie had and his family where he lost a brother who was special or like Marie had with your son, who was--I mean, they still talk about your son as being such a great young man. We don't want that. We don't want that. So we're working very hard. We're going to get it done. We are really on the right side of an issue and I think actually, I know you don't see it yet, but I feel about things, I think the other side is starting to get it. I may be wrong, but I really believe the other side is starting to understand what's going on. They're on the wrong side of a very important issue. We're going to have it taken care of.

I want to thank everybody. And you're right, John, the mayors and all the representatives that have done such a great job and some of you I know, I'm sure I'll get to know the rest of you. But especially, I want to thank Marie and I want to thank Reggie for being here. And I want to thank all of the people, Border Patrol - Brandon, thank you very much - Border Patrol, ICE, and Law Enforcement for being here. We are with you 1,000%. Thank you. Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

Thank you very much. Thank you much. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

AUDIENCE:

Thank you, Mr. President.

TRUMP:

Thank you. Great job. Thanks. I'll see you--see you in the White House. Yeah. Thanks, John. Okay. Thank you, ma'am.

UNKNOWN:

I appreciate it, Mr. President.

AWBREY:

Sir, would you accept a gift?

TRUMP:

Thank you, ma'am. Thank you. I appreciate it.

LUCIO:

The men and women of the Border Patrol appreciate your support.

TRUMP:

Thank you (INAUDIBLE).

LUCIO:

They put on their boots and badges every day despite the challenges around here.

TRUMP:

Oh, we're going to get it done.

AWBREY:

Would you accept a gift, sir?

UNKNOWN:

I have faith, too. Thank you, sir.

TRUMP:

Go ahead.

AWBREY:

I would like to present you with my belt buckle.

TRUMP:

Oh, wow.

AWBREY:

But I want--you can give it to your son, Barron.

(LAUGHTER)

TRUMP:

He's bribing the President, can you imagine?

(LAUGHTER)

I want this to be out in the open everybody.

AWBREY:

I gave him a buckle. That's for you son, Barron.

TRUMP:

I don't know if this is worth \$0.10 or if it's worth \$50,000, but anyway. Well, that's very nice. Listen, thank you very much.

AWBREY:

Thank you, sir.

TRUMP:

I appreciate it. Thank you. We're doing all that?

AWBREY:

Yes, sir.

TRUMP:

That's very nice. Thank you, everybody. See you. Thank you.