

**Statement of Ranking Member Tom Carper**  
**“Initial Observations of the New Leadership at the U.S. Border Patrol”**  
**November 30, 2016**

*As prepared for delivery:*

I want to begin this morning by thanking our witnesses for being here today and for their leadership of the Border Patrol. Chief Morgan, Deputy Chief Provost – thank you for your service. Your job is incredibly important, and also incredibly challenging. I’ve always been impressed with the men and women from the Border Patrol who I’ve met on my many trips to the border. I still am. Border security has always been an important issue for this Committee, and it has commanded particular attention during my time as Chairman and Ranking Member. We all want stronger borders, and we all want to keep terrorists out of this country. But we need to remain clear eyed about the real risks and the real solutions.

Unfortunately, during this past campaign season, immigrants and refugees were too often unfairly attacked as a grave threat to our country. We heard a lot about walls and deportations, and not enough about addressing the underlying causes of the real immigration challenges that we face. As a result, many immigrants who have come to the United States from all corners of the globe are anxious that they will no longer be able to care for their families and contribute to our great country. This includes the ‘Dreamers’ who were brought here as children, but are now fearful of being ripped from jobs and schools and deported to countries they may not even remember.

We do not strengthen our country by ignoring the contributions of immigrants or by turning our back on refugees. Helping vulnerable people is part of our moral fabric as a country. Scripture teaches us that we have a moral imperative to the ‘least of these’ in our society and to treat other people the way we want to be treated. Doing so also contributes directly to our economic strength. For generations, our open and diverse society has attracted immigrants of all backgrounds who have continually enriched our country and helped us grow and prosper. The deeply troubling attack this week at Ohio State University, where I was once a Navy ROTC midshipman, weighs heavily on the minds of many of us across this country. It reminds us that we must continue to be eternally vigilant. We must work hard to meet both our security challenges as a nation and our moral imperatives. Indeed, I believe we can and must do both.

Before I highlight some of the tools that I believe can help better secure our borders, I think it’s important to first recognize the significant strides we have already made along our southwestern border. For years, we worried about large scale undocumented migration from Mexico. Now, experts tell us that net migration from Mexico is less than zero. In other words, more Mexican nationals are migrating from the United States back to Mexico than are arriving here from Mexico. The men and women at Customs and Border Protection deserve much of the credit for this turn around, but perhaps the biggest factor for the change is the strengthening Mexican economy. That is an important thing to keep in mind as we talk about whether to reopen trade agreements in the region.

The surge we're seeing today along our southwestern border right now is a different challenge, and mostly a humanitarian one. Thousands of children and families from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras – known as the Northern Triangle – are fleeing extreme violence and poverty in their home countries and seeking asylum in the United States. Haitian migrants, including many who had been living and working in Brazil until its recent economic decline, are another new concern. Most of these migrants are turning themselves in to agents – not trying to evade them – so it's unlikely that we'll fix these current challenges with a wall or new Border Patrol agents. Instead, we must address the root causes of this migration by helping the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras improve the desperate conditions too many of their citizens face every day. I traveled to the Northern Triangle once again this past October, and saw real efforts being made by the governments there to address the extreme poverty, violence, and hopelessness that drive so many of their citizens to make the dangerous journey across Mexico to our border. Last year, Democrats and Republicans provided \$750 million to support these countries as they work to address these difficult conditions. I hope we can continue this bipartisan support. I believe it is cost effective and the right thing to do given that our addiction to drugs fuels much of the lawlessness and instability in the region.

We also have to work with our international partners to crack down on smugglers and traffickers who exploit migrants. I have been impressed, for example, with the vetted units that I have seen during my trips to the Northern Triangle, where our agents and officers work side by side with foreign officers to target and break up criminal trafficking networks. Of course, as the cartels become more sophisticated, we must also continue to evolve and take action here at home. That is why I have supported commonsense and cost-effective solutions to strengthen our border security and will continue to do so. That includes investments in advanced surveillance technologies, such as aerostats and drones, which – if used effectively – can be powerful force multipliers for our agents. It also includes some additional resources such as horses and boats, which may not be as high-tech but can provide our agents with great visibility across the border. Another commonsense solution involves fully staffing our ports of entry and making smart investments in our aging port infrastructure.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not discuss how comprehensive immigration reform can also be a critical force multiplier. As Republican and Democratic Administration officials have testified over the years, immigration reform would create legal channels for migration and 'shrink the haystack' of unauthorized travelers so that border agents can focus on the most serious security risks. Comprehensive reform would also strengthen us economically. According to the Congressional Budget Office, it would provide a 5.4 percent boost in GDP – more than a trillion dollars – by 2033. We should all keep this in mind as we head into the next Congress.

My thanks again to both of our witnesses for being here and for your leadership during this critical time. I look forward to your testimony.