

**Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson**  
**Ongoing Migration from Central America: An Examination of FY2015 Apprehensions**  
**Wednesday, October 21, 2015**

As submitted for the record:

Last summer, we witnessed a humanitarian crisis, as more than 51,000 unaccompanied minors from Central America, and almost as many family units, came across the U.S.-Mexico border. Earlier this year, the Committee examined the government's response to this crisis, recognizing that even though the 2015 numbers were lower than 2014, the crisis was far from over as we had not addressed the root cause incentives for unlawful UAC migration.

However, just as the Committee was examining this important topic, apprehensions in the Rio Grande Valley sector in South Texas began to increase. In August, 3,610 unaccompanied minors from Central America were apprehended at the southwest border, up from 2,043 in August 2014—representing a more than 75 percent increase. Representatives from the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department have indicated that they expect apprehension numbers to continue to increase this fall.

In the past, apprehensions along the southwest border have been seasonal, with the majority of migrants entering in the spring, largely in response to the agriculture growing season. This year, for the first time ever, this seasonal pattern has changed, as apprehensions did not begin to rise until July. There are several different rationales for this transition. Some observers have suggested that, rather than come to the U.S. to work, migrants are now traveling when their families already in the U.S. send money to reunite with them. Others have rationalized that numbers were down earlier this year due to Mexico's increased enforcement of its southern border but smugglers have finally been able to find their way around these barriers and re-route people to avoid apprehensions in Mexico.

The purpose of this hearing is to assess the causes behind the ongoing migration from Central America, including the recent influx of unaccompanied minors and family units arriving at the southwest border. After this hearing, I will be traveling with several members of the committee to Central America to witness firsthand how both pull and push factors are contributing to this renewed spike in migration from Central America. I encourage all Committee members to join us on this fact-finding trip.

In the meantime, we have an expert panel of witnesses today, many of whom have traveled to Central America themselves, or, work on the frontline at our borders and have personally interviewed those apprehended in South Texas. I thank all of our witnesses for their willingness to share their important experiences and I look forward to their testimony.