

Trump aide threatens one million immigrants with deportation

By Patrick Martin
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In appearances on two Sunday television interview programs, a top aide to President Trump on immigration issues said that Immigration and Customs Enforcement was preparing to deport all one million immigrants who have been issued final removal orders by federal immigration judges.

Ken Cuccinelli, nominated by Trump to head the unit of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that handles refugee claims, appeared on both Fox News Sunday and the CBS program “Face the Nation” to represent administration policy on immigration. He was speaking after Trump told reporters Friday that the mass deportation campaign would begin “fairly soon.”

The former Republican attorney-general of the state of Virginia, Cuccinelli is an immigration hard-liner in the mold of top White House aide Stephen Miller. Last month he suggested that the Salvadoran father who drowned in the Rio Grande, along with his 23-month-old daughter, was to blame for his own death for attempting the risky crossing after Customs and Border Protection agents would not allow him to file a claim for refugee status.

Asked about Trump’s statement on June 22 that the administration was delaying mass raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents on immigrant neighborhoods by two weeks, Cuccinelli said the raids were being prepared.

“At this point, it’s been put in Matt Albence’s hand, the acting director at ICE,” he said. “He’s a career ICE officer. He came up through the ranks. And they’re ready to just perform their mission, which is to go and find and detain and then deport the approximately one million people who have final removal orders.”

Asked about the figure of one million deportations, he said, “I am just pointing out that the pool of those with final removal orders is enormous.” He added, “Who among those will be targeted for this particular effort or not is really just information kept within ICE at this point.”

Cuccinelli also outlined demands by the White House on Congress, including new legislation that would authorize

longer detentions of children—under current court orders, limited to 72 hours—and speedier rejection of refugee asylum claims. He claimed that “the level of judicial activism to stop this administration is historically unprecedented. We have never seen anything like it before.”

In actuality, it is the level of lawlessness and brutality on the part of the Trump administration that is “historically unprecedented,” provoking a series of negative court rulings even by Republican appointees on the federal bench.

On Fox News Sunday, Cuccinelli repeated the one million figure, declaring: “there’s about a million—approximately a million people in this country who already have removal orders. They’ve been all the way through an extremely generous due process pipeline, had removal orders ... [and] are still awaiting removal by ICE. And the president commented, I don’t call these raids, I would agree with him. This is just what ICE is supposed to do. The fact that we’ve fallen to the point where we’re talking about it like it’s news tells you how far that we have fallen in the enforcement side.”

Actually, even under the direct spur of constant demands by Trump and Stephen Miller for more arrests and expulsions of immigrants, ICE deportations only reached 250,000 last year. This total was exceeded by the 400,000 deported by the Obama administration in its largest anti-immigrant effort. Both figures are far less than the one million called for by Cuccinelli Sunday, let alone the “millions” demanded by Trump in one of his tweets last month.

Deportations on such a scale would require nearly continuous mass raids against immigrant neighborhoods in major cities throughout the United States, and the creation of a new array of detention camps to hold those arrested, pending their actual deportation, or the mobilization of a vast number of planes, buses and trains to effectuate the physical removal of so many people from the country.

The preparation of such massive sweeps goes forward amid exposures of the horrific conditions facing the far smaller but significant number of refugees and immigrants

currently in detention. The *New York Times* lengthy front-page report Sunday, based largely on reports from unnamed Border Patrol agents and immigration lawyers, on the conditions in the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) facility in Clint, Texas, four miles from the US-Mexico border, where as many as 750 children have been held at one time.

The *Times* report found: “Outbreaks of scabies, shingles and chickenpox were spreading among the hundreds of children who were being held in cramped cells, agents said. The stench of the children’s dirty clothing was so strong it spread to the agents’ own clothing—people in town would scrunch their noses when they left work.”

This account followed a harrowing report by the inspector general of DHS, issued July 3, which found children and women deprived of showers, soap and toothpaste, and in some cases denied hot food for days at a time, with overcrowding so severe that some adult prisoners had to stand in their cells more or less indefinitely.

DHS Acting Secretary Kevin McAleenan appeared on the ABC Sunday interview program “This Week” and delivered a series of barefaced lies about the conditions in which detained immigrants and asylum-seekers are being kept. He claimed that the allegations by the *Times* and even by his own inspector general were “unsubstantiated,” while blaming poor conditions on the “extraordinarily challenging situation” created by more than half a million refugees crossing the border so far this year.

While McAleenan made excuses, his boss in the White House confirmed that hellish conditions in detention facilities are a positive feature, deliberately created to deter immigrants crossing the border. Tweeting on Wednesday, Trump said, “if Illegal Immigrants are unhappy with the conditions in the quickly built or refitted detentions centers, just tell them not to come. All problems solved!”

Such declarations should become evidence at a trial for crimes against humanity.

The death toll from the deliberate mistreatment of immigrants continues to rise. A 52-year-old man from Nicaragua died in US government custody Friday, according to a statement from the CBP. The man was one of 36 migrants who surrendered to the Border Patrol near Sasabe, Arizona, and were being processed when he collapsed. The man, whose name was not released, is the 12th immigrant to die in US custody since last September.

The Democratic Party will do nothing about the persecution of immigrants because it essentially agrees with Trump’s overall policy, even if objecting to some of the more gruesome details.

This reality was further demonstrated by the intervention of Jeh Johnson, secretary of DHS in the Obama

administration, an official responsible for deportations at a rate exceeding even that of the Trump administration.

Johnson penned an op-ed column in the *Washington Post* which warned Democratic presidential candidates not to “publicly embrace a policy to not deport those who enter or remain in this country illegally unless they commit a crime. This is tantamount to a public declaration (repeated and amplified by smugglers in Central America) that our borders are effectively open to all...”

While the Democratic candidates took that stand during a show of hands at the recent Miami debate they have absolutely no intention of actually carrying out such a policy. Rather, they are seeking to spread illusions among voters appalled by Trump’s brutal crackdown. In office, any Democratic president will act according to Johnson’s warning that any reduction in criminal penalties for illegal entry would multiply the number of border crossers.

Johnson also defended House Speaker Nancy Pelosi for pushing through legislation providing another \$4.6 billion to operate ICE and CBP concentration camps along the US-Mexico border, denouncing claims that this represented a “capitulation” to the Trump White House.

Pelosi dropped House Democratic demands for (largely token) restrictions on the operation of the concentration camps, in favor of a Senate version of the bill which had no restrictions at all, and gave ICE, CBP and the federal government as a whole a green light to systematically brutalize refugees and their children. The bill won majority support among Democrats in both the House and the Senate.

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