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This Just In... U.S. to Try Enforcing Immigration Laws

Posted by **Bobby Eberle**

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The Department of Homeland Security announced Thursday that it would be implementing a new, revolutionary, cutting-edge, state-of-the-art approach to the illegal immigration problem. What is this "new" approach? Believe it or not, the department declared that the U.S. would now be cracking down on employers who "knowingly and recklessly" hire illegal aliens. In other words, they are going to try a "new" program called "enforcing existing laws." Guess what? It works!

Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Julie L. Myers, Assistant Secretary for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), announced what is being called a "comprehensive immigration enforcement strategy for the nation's interior." The **DHS press release** notes that this effort is "the second phase of the Secure Border Initiative (SBI), which is the Department of Homeland Security's multi-year plan to secure America's borders and reduce illegal migration."

According to DHS, the first phase of the initiative remains focused on gaining "operational control" over the nation's borders through "additional personnel and technology." Phase

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one also focuses on "re-engineering the detention and removal system to ensure that illegal aliens are removed from this country quickly and efficiently."

The three goals for phase two of the SBI are the following:

- The first is to identify and remove criminal aliens, immigration fugitives and other immigration violators from this country.
- The second is to build strong worksite enforcement and compliance programs to deter illegal employment in this country.
- The third is to uproot the criminal infrastructures at home and abroad that support illegal immigration, including human smuggling / trafficking organizations and document / benefit fraud organizations.

In the statement, Myers said, "Reversing growing tolerance for the employment of illegal aliens and for illegal immigration in general is critical to achieving success in this task."

My question is this... Why was there a "growing tolerance" in the first place? It's because immigration laws — laws on the books for years — were simply being ignored. Worse, incidents have been reported where local officials have apprehended illegal aliens only to then release them after pressure from the Feds. Is that a serious approach to illegal immigration and border security? I don't think so.

As noted just yesterday in **U.S. immigration sweep nabs 1,000**, a recent law enforcement crackdown resulted in arrests of more than 1,000 illegal aliens and a number of officials at IFCO Systems, the largest pallet services company in the country.



"A customs official said federal authorities checked a sample of 5,800 IFCO employee records last year and found that 53 percent had Social Security numbers of dead people, children, or individuals who did not work at IFCO."

This is a start, but what really matters is if this is a long term, concerted effort, or just a short term reaction to public opinion. As noted in the **Washington Times**, "Critics say Homeland Security has done little interior enforcement since the department's creation in January 2003, despite existing laws that provide sanctions against employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens."



"The Government Accountability Office (GAO) noted in a July report that ICE issued just three notices of intent to fine an employer for hiring illegals during fiscal 2004 — down from 417 by the now-defunct U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in 1999 during the Clinton administration.

The report described work-site enforcement as a low priority, although it said the opportunity for employment was one of the 'most important magnets attracting illegal aliens to the United States.'"

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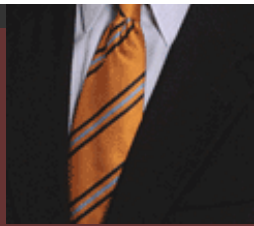
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Even under this new plan, the resources being allocated to the problem of hiring illegal aliens is woefully understaffed. The current plan calls for an increase of ICE agents which would bring the total number to 525 "assigned to track down more than 11 million illegal aliens now in the United States."

If the government is really serious about immigration reform, then enforcing existing immigration laws is a must. Enforcement will go a long way to solving the problem. Before Senators talk more about amnesty, perhaps they should first consider having our current laws enforced. No immigration reform plan will succeed if we don't have the political will to actually enforce the provisions.

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