



Risk Mitigation Consulting Inc.

Intelligence and Analysis Division

WHITE PAPER SERIES

DoD Housing of Immigrant Detainees: Security Implications

INTENT

This white paper is designed to provide analysis of relevant, publicly available information on threat and hazard events/trends and their potential impacts to the interests of the United States, both at home and abroad. This product provides a brief overview and is not intended to be an all-encompassing assessment of the subject.



DoD Housing of Immigrant Detainees: Security Implications

Introduction

Over the past two years, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection has reported a record number of Central American immigrants, including both those seeking asylum and those crossing illegally, at the Southwest border. Per U.S. Customs and Border Protection, between October 2017 and May 2018, 375,759 arrests were made at the U.S. Southwest Border. This eight-month period equates to 90% of the total Southwest Border arrests made in FY17 and 66% of FY16’s total.¹ This substantial increase of undocumented immigrants, as compared to the previous fiscal year, has prompted the United States government to explore using Goodfellow Air Force Base and Fort Bliss to house the immigrants. The Department of Defense (DoD) may allocate space on these installations to house the people while other agencies oversee the required logistical support.² This large influx of people potentially creates security concerns for the military installations and surrounding communities, such as civil disturbance, biological hazards, criminal activity, and insider threats.

Analyst Note. *The individuals crossing at the Southwest Border who may be housed on DoD installations come from a number of countries, primarily Central American. This includes individuals who attempted to cross the border illegally as well as asylum seekers. For the purposes of this paper, the aforementioned groups of individuals will be collectively referred to as “immigrants” or “detainees,” depending on the context.*

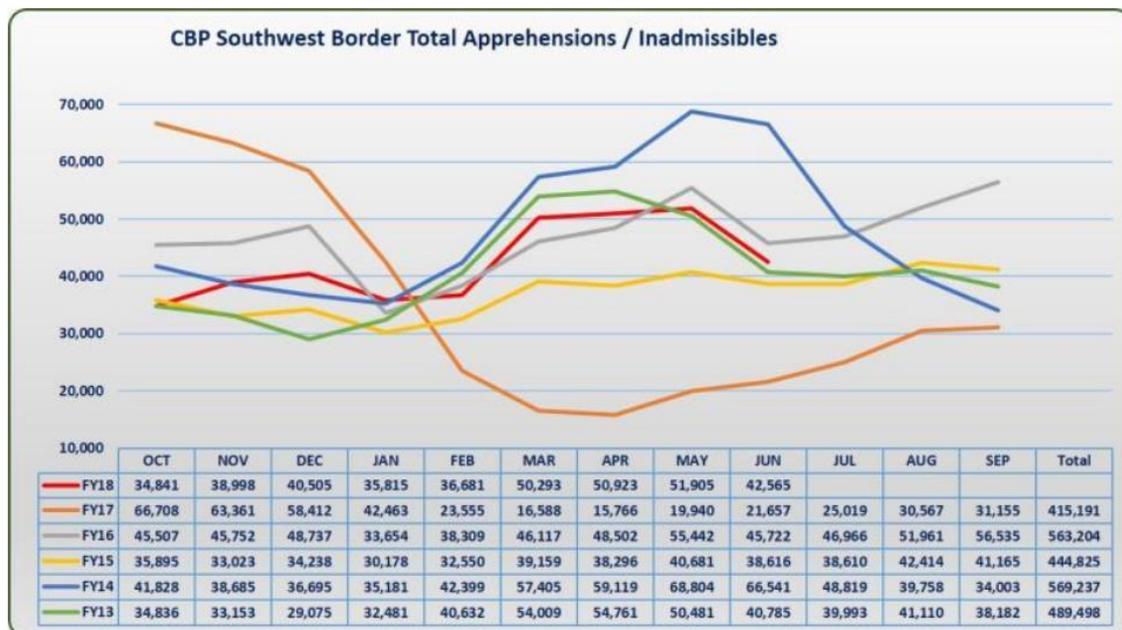


Figure 1: CBP Southwest Border Total Apprehensions/Inadmissibles – FY13-June FY18



Protest Activity/Civil Disturbance

In recent months, the detention of immigrants at the southern border (particularly the separation of immigrant families) has become a high-profile political issue. A number of protests of varying sizes have occurred in response to the Trump administration's handling of these issues. Most notably, on 30 June 2018, a national day of protest was organized, with over 600 peaceful marches throughout the U.S. and some marches drawing crowds numbering in the thousands.³ Just two days prior, however, 575 other immigration protestors were arrested by Capitol Police at the Hart Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C.⁴ Moreover, protestors in Portland, OR forced an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facility to temporarily close due to security concerns. The Portland protest inspired similar protests in cities to include Detroit and New York, both of which resulted in brief disruptions of regular ICE operations.⁵

Because the DoD installations selected to house the detainees were publicly identified in media reporting, the potential for protest activity directed toward the installations remains a viable concern. While most protest activity throughout the country remains peaceful, the potential for violent escalation exists (as well as the potential for violent clashes with counter-protestors). Moreover, even peaceful protests can have notable impacts on the installations involved. Protestors may attempt to block entry/exit routes, and installation personnel may be required to implement enhanced security measures. As previously noted, recent immigration protests have a varied history, from large peaceful gatherings to successful disruption of government facility operations.

Biological Hazards

The presence of detainees potentially poses a number of biological hazards. Per the CDC, cross-border movement between the U.S. and Mexico has been linked to the transmission of a number of diseases, including "HIV, measles, pertussis, rubella, rabies, hepatitis A, influenza, tuberculosis, shigellosis, syphilis, *Mycobacterium bovis* infection, brucellosis, and foodborne diseases."⁶ Although data is limited regarding the health status of the detainees, the possibility exists that detainees could be carrying and/or infected with one of the aforementioned diseases as well as others not listed above. Installation personnel who come in contact with the detainees may be at risk for disease transmission, which could ultimately result in an outbreak onboard either of the installations.

Insider Threats

DoD Directive 5205.16 defines "insider threat" as "the threat an insider will use her or his authorized access, wittingly or unwittingly, to do harm to the security of the United States," including damage to the U.S. "through espionage, terrorism, unauthorized disclosure of national security information, or through the loss or degradation of departmental resources or capabilities."

⁷ The probability of an insider threat emanating from the detainee population is likely extremely low, however, the consequences could be severe. Access to U.S. military installations is typically very restrictive, and the introduction of thousands of individuals who have not been thoroughly vetted is cause for concern. While unlikely, it is possible that one or more individuals could choose to take advantage of their presence onboard the installation to conduct nefarious activities, such as conducting espionage (for a foreign government, criminal organization, or terrorist group), or even



conducting a low-skilled terror attack out of politically-motivated anger. The security surrounding the housing process and facilities is still unknown, however any successful insider threats will likely be very difficult given the probable security measures.

Military Installations

The two initial bases identified by DoD for the housing of immigrant detainees are Goodfellow AFB and Fort Bliss, both of which are located in the border state of Texas. However, a DoD spokesman also stated that officials are considering additional locations in Texas, as well as Arizona, New Mexico, and California. Goodfellow AFB will be used to house unaccompanied minors, while Fort Bliss will house detained families.² Goodfellow Air Force Base is 1,002 acres and home to about 5,000 military personnel. Goodfellow AFB carries out cryptology and intelligence training, along with firefighting training for military personnel.⁸ The installation is located next to San Angelo, Texas. Fort Bliss is 1.12 million acres and home to the 1st Armor division. Fort Bliss is located in El Paso, Texas, with a shared border road to the El Paso International Airport, and Interstate 54 runs along the base border.⁹

In addition to Goodfellow AFB and Fort Bliss, the Department of the Navy has released a list of identified locations that could potentially house immigrants as well. Locations identified include: Camp Pendleton, Naval Weapons Station Concord, Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, and abandoned airfields near Mobile, Alabama.¹⁰

Outlook

While the overwhelming majority of the detainees likely have no malicious intent, the presence of several thousand detainees onboard DoD installations comes with a variety of security implications. First, the presence of immigrant detainees raises the potential for protest activity near the installation, which may result in mission impacts to include the blocking of entry/exit routes or heightened security posture. The potential for protest activity cannot be discounted due to the recent documented history of immigration-related protests nationwide, including some that have hampered the day-to-day operations of government agencies. Second, cross-border movement between the U.S. and Mexico has been linked to the transmission of a number of infectious diseases, some of which may be carried onboard DoD installations during the influx of detainees. Finally, the presence of thousands of unvetted individuals pose a potential insider threat concern. Although a remote possibility, it is possible that some of the detainees would be able to engage in espionage, criminal, or terror-related activities while being housed onboard the installations. While the aforementioned threats and hazards are not an all-inclusive list of the security concerns facing the identified installations, they highlight some of the challenges that DoD faces in the wake of this recent announcement.

Source List

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6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). U.S.-Mexico Cross-Border Health. (<https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/toolstemplates/entertainment/tips/us-mexico-health.html>)
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8. Air Force Technology. Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas.
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10. Fox 5. *Navy Identifies Camp Pendleton As Potential Housing Location for Migrants*. 22 June 2018. (<https://fox5sandiego.com/2018/06/22/navy-memo-outlines-potential-military-housing-for-thousands-of-migrants/>)