

Holdovers Will Continue Obama's Agenda until Trump Puts His Foot Down

by Steve Hecht



The Trump administration [plans](#) to change Obama policy and deport 150,000 illegal child immigrants who “arrived alone” in the United States. Their arrival is a symptom of a problem that needs treatment south of the border, where the deep state is festering alliances.

[According](#) to US Customs and Border Protection, unaccompanied minors arriving from the Northern Triangle – Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras – ballooned from 3,304 in 2009 to 46,893 in 2016. From 2013 to 2014 alone, the increase was 20,805 to 51,705. That’s because in mid 2014 the Obama administration issued a thinly veiled invitation by releasing into the general population minors from non-contiguous countries prior to their court hearings.

Media outlets and federal agencies have mistakenly said

“unaccompanied.” The minors are unaccompanied when apprehended, but most are accompanied until just before that moment.

In August 2014, two US reporters and I interviewed a coyote (human smuggler) in northwestern Guatemala. Using a pseudonym, Juan described his business: his customers travel in air-conditioned buses, eat regular meals, and sleep in decent hotels. He pays off Mexican agencies and criminal cartels as he moves through their territories. The safe trip takes four days.

Once in the United States, Juan directs the children to a location where they make noise until US authorities take them into custody. He calls their sponsors and collects the rest of his fee.

Juan [explained](#) that “Obama has helped us with the children because they’re able to stay in the United States. That’s why so many are coming.” If President Trump wants to discourage the flow of minors, that’s as simple not releasing them prior to hearings. Deporting those whom the law permits would also discourage further migration.

A parallel, much larger problem for the Trump administration, though, is illegal drugs. Besides being more lucrative, drugs don’t breathe, eat, sleep, or use the bathroom, so are even easier to smuggle. Since the United States dominates the air and sea, land routes are the least risky for smugglers.

The only land route from South and Central America is through Guatemala. Its 595-mile border with Mexico is very porous. Juan didn’t even consider it worth mentioning.

The former head of the State Department’s drug and enforcement bureau ([INL](#)), William Brownfield estimated that “As much as 94 percent of the heroin entering America comes from Mexico.” Considering Mexico’s control of its ports and airspace, and its aggressive air eradication program of poppies, most of

that heroin passes through Mexico via Guatemala.

Entering Mexico, as Juan described, is tantamount to entering the United States.

Guatemalan authorities have little presence in their border areas due to the Obama policy that gave control to the successors of the Castro-supported guerrilla from Guatemala's armed conflict (1960-1996). Obama's administration [placed](#) their allies in key government positions, especially the judiciary, where they protect the gangs.

Until recently, the Trump administration appeared to have ceded Latin America policy to State Department holdovers, led by Under Secretary for Political Affairs Tom Shannon. Shannon urged a weak posture toward Venezuela but was [overridden](#) by Trump's staff, a sign that the policy could be changing.

Before Trump can apply that same strength in Guatemala, Obama-favored groups are making a furious effort to consolidate their gains in Guatemala, possibly as a result of Shannon's rebuke. Their battering ram to subvert Guatemala is the [UN-created](#) International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala ([CICIG](#)).

The CICIG uses its control of criminal prosecution to intimidate the president and congressmen. They use flimsy evidence and false witnesses, and have no consideration for the law because their allies control the judiciary. Together, they usurp the other branches of Guatemala's government through illegal actions and rulings.

With deceptive branding, the CICIG has successfully framed itself as a champion against corruption and impunity, echoed by supporters and friendly media. George Soros's Open Society has [said](#) the CICIG is "a potent potential model" for struggling countries.

Trump's new ambassador, [Luis Arreaga](#), arrived in Guatemala on October 3, and he appears to be continuing the Obama policy. Through his first meetings, the former number two in INL sent the message to victims of the Obama policy that he will ignore the corruption of the judiciary and the nefarious role of the CICIG.

The Trump administration can meaningfully reduce the flow of illegal migrants and drugs into the United States from Central and South America. They must undo the tremendous damage created by the Obama Administration's embrace of the Castro-Maduro allies in Guatemala and the resulting lawlessness.

The CICIG and its allies are frantically at work in the opposite direction, trying to remove Guatemala's President Jimmy Morales from office. If successful in replacing him with one of theirs, the opportunity to fix America's effective southern border may be lost for Trump.

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