



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## **DHS closes loophole by expanding Expedited Removal to cover illegal alien families**

*New facility in Texas opens today for illegal alien families*

WASHINGTON, DC – As part of the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Secure Border Initiative, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) today announced the expansion of the process known as Expedited Removal to cover illegal alien families apprehended in areas along the nation’s southern, northern and coastal borders. To house these families, a new 500-bed facility in Williamson County, Texas which is specially-equipped to meet family needs opened today.

“By expanding Expedited Removal to cover illegal alien families, DHS is closing down a loophole that has been exploited by human smugglers and helping stop future illegal immigration,” said Julie Myers, Assistant Secretary for ICE. “This new facility enables us to have deterrence with dignity by allowing families to remain together, while sending the clear message that families entering the United States illegally will be returned home.”

Because of limited family bed space families caught at the border were often released with “Notices to Appear.” Smugglers were well aware of this practice and often exploited this loophole to create the image of a family unit by encouraging children to be brought on these dangerous journeys, thus putting them in harm’s way. In cases where families were detained, the families, including children, were detained separately.

Under the new policy, illegal alien family units caught at the border are now subject to Expedited Removal, a process that provides DHS with the authority to expeditiously return applicable illegal aliens to their country of origin as soon as circumstances will allow. The new policy is part of DHS’s Secure Border Initiative, which among other things, is designed to eliminate the practice of “catch and release” and replace it with a practice of “catch and return.”

Illegal alien family units that have spent 14 days or less in the United States; are either apprehended within 100 miles of the border with Mexico or Canada; or arrive by sea and are apprehended within 100 miles of a coastal border area are subject to the new policy.

Expedited Removal disrupts the various human smuggling cycles that occur along the border by substantially reducing the time from arrest to ultimate removal from the United States and foreclosing opportunities for these illegal aliens to reconnect with their smugglers and guides.

Assuming processing efficiencies consistent with single adults placed in expedited removal proceedings, DHS anticipates that ICE could remove approximately 1,000 individuals per month through the Williamson County facility.

Expedited Removal authority was established by the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 and applied initially at the nation's ports-of-entry. Since last September, DHS has successfully implemented Expedited Removal between the ports-of-entry at all nine U.S. Customs and Border Protection Border Patrol Sectors on the Southwest border. In January 2006, DHS expanded Expedited Removal to the entire U.S.-Canadian border and all U.S. coastal areas.

#### # ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*