

Influx of unaccompanied immigrant children slowed again in September

By [Jerry Markon](#) October 9

The numbers of unaccompanied minors crossing the nation's southwest border continues to decline and has reached the lowest level in nearly two years, just months after an influx of children prompted the Obama administration to declare a humanitarian crisis.

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson said during a speech Thursday at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington that the number of unaccompanied children crossing the border in fiscal 2014 turned out to be 68,434, not far from the administration's original projection of 60,000.

That estimate had been revised upward to 90,000 during the summer, when more than 10,000 minors were streaming across the border each month, driven by factors that included widespread gang-related violence in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

The number of unaccompanied immigrant children crossing the border has dropped dramatically in recent months. Here, Salvadorian immigrant Stefany Marjorie, 8, watches as a U.S. Border Patrol agent records family information on July 24. (John Moore/Getty Images)

Johnson released new numbers showing a September drop in minors not accompanied by an adult. That month, he said, the total was 2,424, continuing a steady decline from June, when more than 10,000 unattended children crossed the border. The number fell to 5,501 in July and 3,141 in August, Johnson said.

The secretary credited his department's efforts to stem the flow, including building more detention facilities and processing centers, increasing border security in south Texas and enlisting President Obama and Vice President Biden to urge Central American leaders to discourage people from making the journey north.

“Without a doubt, we had a setback this summer, with the unprecedented number of unaccompanied children and others who crossed a narrow area of our southern border in the Rio Grande Valley, in search of a family member and a better life in this country,” Johnson said. “We responded aggressively to this spike, and, in fact, now the numbers of unaccompanied children crossing into the Rio Grande Valley are at the lowest they've been in almost two years ... Our message was simple: our border is not open to illegal immigration, and that, if you come here illegally, you will be sent back consistent with our laws and our values.”

Johnson added that “though the worst is over for now,” the spike in migrations from the summer could return, since much of illegal migration is seasonal. He said the administration has begun a number of prevention efforts, including establishing three new DHS task forces to direct the

border security resources of agencies such as U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

“This is not a ‘mission accomplished’ speech,” the secretary said. “We can and should do more to best enforce the security of our borders.”

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/federal-eye/wp/2014/10/09/influx-of-unaccompanied-immigrant-children-slowed-again-in-september/>