

DHS: About 2,000 minors separated from families

By COLLEEN LONG
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nearly 2,000 children have been separated from their families at the U.S. border over a six-week period during a crackdown on illegal entries, according to Department of Homeland Security figures obtained Friday by The Associated Press.

The figures show that 1,995 minors were separated from 1,940 adults from April 19 through May 31. The separations were not broken down by age, and included separations for illegal entry, immigration violations or possible criminal conduct by the adult.

Under a “zero tolerance” policy announced by Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Department of Homeland Security officials are now referring all cases of illegal entry for criminal prosecution. U.S. protocol prohibits detaining children with their parents because the children are not charged with a crime and the parents are.

Sessions announced the effort April 6, and Homeland Security began stepping up referrals in early May, effectively putting the policy into action.

Since then, stories of weeping children torn from the arms of their frightened parents have flooded the media and the policy has been widely criticized by church groups, politicians and children’s advocates who say it is inhumane. A battle in Congress is brewing in part over the issue.

Some immigrant advocates have said women were being separated from their infants — a charge Homeland Security and Justice officials flatly denied. They also said the children were being well cared for and disputed reports of disorder and



AP Photo/Evan Vucci

President Donald Trump speaks to reporters outside the White House Friday.

White denies Trump’s opposition to immigration bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump ignited eleventh-hour confusion Friday over Republican efforts to push immigration legislation through the House, when he said he wouldn’t sign a “moderate” package. But the White House later walked back the comments, formally endorsing the measure and saying Trump had been confused.

The campaign-season tumult erupted as GOP leaders put finishing touches on a pair of Republican bills: a hard-right proposal and a middle-ground plan negotiated by the party’s conservative and moderate wings, with White House input. Only the compromise bill would open a door to citizenship for young immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children, and reduce the separation of children from their parents when families are detained crossing the border — a practice that has drawn bipartisan condemnation in recent days.

“I’m looking at both of them,” Trump said when asked about the proposals during an impromptu interview on Fox News’ “Fox & Friends,” adding: “I certainly wouldn’t sign the more moderate one.”

The comment prompted widespread confusion on the Hill.

Earlier this week, House Speaker Paul Ryan told his colleagues that Trump supported the middle-ground package, and White House aide Stephen Miller, an immigration hard-liner who has been accused of trying to sabotage immigration deals in the past, told conservative lawmakers at a closed-door meeting that the president backed that plan.

But a senior White House official later said Trump had misspoken and believed his Fox interviewer was asking about an effort by GOP moderates — abandoned for now — that would have forced votes on a handful of bills and likely led to passage of liberal-leaning versions party leaders oppose.

Judge jails Manafort, ex-campaign chair for Trump, ahead of trial

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump’s former campaign chairman Paul Manafort is going to jail.

On Friday, Manafort was ordered into custody after a federal judge revoked his house arrest, citing newly filed obstruction of justice charges. The move by U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson made Manafort the first Trump campaign official to be jailed as part of special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation.

Already under intense pressure to cooperate with prosecutors in hopes of securing leniency, Manafort now loses the relative freedom he enjoyed while he prepared for two criminal trials in which he faces the possibility of spending the rest of his life in prison.

In issuing her ruling, Jackson said she had “struggled” with the decision but she couldn’t “turn a blind eye” to his conduct.

“You have abused the trust placed in you six months ago,” she said.

A federal grand jury indicted Manafort and a longtime associate, Konstantin Kilimnik, last week on charges of obstruction of justice and conspiracy to obstruct justice, adding to the multiple felony counts he already faced. The charges do not relate to his work on the Trump campaign or involve allegations of Russian election interference.

Manafort, 69, and Kilimnik are accused of attempting to tamper with witnesses in the case by trying to get them to lie about the nature of their Ukrainian political work.

Prosecutors say Manafort and Kilimnik tried to get the two witnesses to say that lobbying work carried out by clandestinely paid former politicians only occurred in Europe and not the U.S., a contention the two witnesses said they knew to be false.

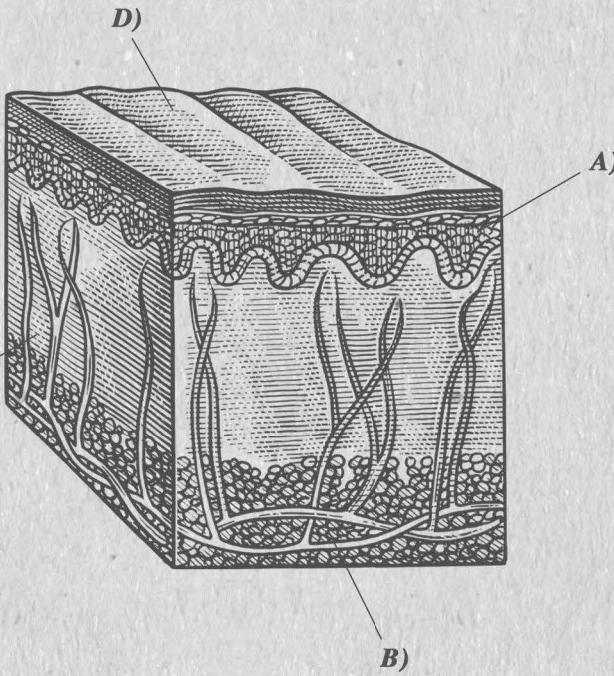
The distinction matters because unregistered foreign lobbying in the U.S. is a crime, while lobbying solely in Europe would be outside the special counsel’s jurisdiction.

Manafort’s attorneys have accused prosecutors of conjuring a “sinister plot” out of “innocuous” contacts. They filed a memo written by one of the witnesses for Manafort that his attorneys say shows the work of the group, known as the Hapsburg group, was European focused.

In response, prosecutors filed additional documents showing extensive lobbying contacts by the group in the U.S., which they said showed “the falsity of his representation.” One of the documents was a 2013 memo from Manafort to former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich. It described how Manafort had designed a program that used the Hapsburg members to lobby U.S. lawmakers and influence American public opinion including meetings on Capitol Hill.

Manafort also pleaded not guilty to the latest indictment on Friday. Kilimnik, who prosecutors say is living in Russia, did not appear in court. Mueller’s team has said that Kilimnik has ties to Russian intelligence agencies, a claim he has previously denied.

Manafort will remain in jail while he awaits trial.



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