

Family arrivals surge at border between U.S.-Mexico in August

By ELLIOT SPAGAT
Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — U.S. border authorities arrested dramatically more immigrant families at the Mexico border in August compared to previous months in a spike that a Trump administration official said Wednesday was the result of “legal loopholes” allowing children to avoid immediate deportation to their homelands in Central America.

The number of families arriving at the Mexico border reached 15,955, up from 12,274 in July, according to Customs and Protection. Families accounted for more than one-third of people who were stopped at the border.

Commissioner Kevin McAleenan called the increase “a direct response to gaps in the legal framework,” adding, “we’re not surprised by it, but it’s been a very stark trend.”

The numbers offer a glimpse into the impact of the Trump administration’s “zero tolerance” policy on illegal crossings introduced in April, which resulted in the separation of more than 2,500 children from their parents. President Donald Trump effectively ended the practice of separating families in June amid heavy criticism.

The statistics also come as the midterm elections are approaching and immigration remains a key issue in campaigns across the country. McAleenan, a Trump appointee, called the situation “a crisis of significant proportions from a humanitarian perspective and a security perspective.”

Overall, people arrested or stopped at the border totaled 46,560, up from 39,953 in July and 30,567 in



In this July 18, 2018 file photo, a Honduran man carries his 3-year-old son as his daughter and other son follow to a transport vehicle after being detained by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol agents in San Luis, Ariz. Border arrest figures for August 2018 are the latest reminder of how crossings have shifted over the last decade from predominantly Mexican men to Central American families and children. The number of family arrivals reached 15,955, a sharp increase from July that Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Kevin McAleenan said was one of the highest on record.

AP Photo/Matt York, File

August 2017. Arrests have risen from July to August in four of the previous five years, indicating seasonal factors may be an influence.

Administration officials have been encouraging asylum seekers to turn themselves in at official border crossings, instead of going around them, but the August figures suggest that message isn’t getting through.

Family arrests by the Border Patrol, a component of Customs and Border Protection that polices between ports of entry, soared to 12,774 in August from 9,281 in July. The increase in families arriving at official crossings climbed only slightly, to 3,181 from 3,027.

The arrest tally is the latest reminder of how border crossings have shifted from predominantly Mexi-

can men to Central American families and children.

Last week, the Trump administration moved to abandon a longstanding court settlement that limits how long immigrant children can be kept locked up, proposing new regulations that would allow the government to detain families until their immigration cases are decided.

Administration officials said that ending the so-called Flores agreement of 1997 will speed up the handling of asylum requests while also deterring people from illegally crossing the border.

The move angered immigrant rights advocates and is expected to trigger a court battle.

Border arrests are an imperfect gauge of illegal crossings because they don’t

indicate how many people got away.

Trump touted border arrests when they fell sharply during his first few months in office to less than 16,000 in April 2017. The arrest tally rose in 11 of the following 12 months, topping 50,000 in March, April and May of this year.

The administration said Tuesday that it will expand its tent shelter for immigrant minors crossing the border to 3,800 beds and keep it open through the end of this year. The facility at Tornillo, Texas, which originally opened with a 360-bed capacity for 30 days, is being expanded based on how many children are in the care of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Senate approves 1st spending bill to avert partial shutdown

By MATTHEW DALY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As a major hurricane menaces the East Coast, Congress is moving to avert a legislative disaster that could lead to a partial government shutdown just weeks before the November midterm elections.

Senators approved a \$147 billion package Wednesday night to fund the Energy Department, veterans’ programs and the legislative branch. The bill is the first of three spending packages Congress hopes to approve this month to avoid a government shutdown when the new budget year begins Oct. 1.

The measure, which represents a compromise between House and Senate negotiators, was approved 92-5. The House is set to vote on the package on Thursday.

If all three compromise spending packages are approved by both chambers and signed by President Donald Trump, they would account for nearly 90 percent of annual spending, including the military and most civilian agencies.

Lawmakers would still need a short-term patch for a portion of the government, including the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees Trump’s long-promised wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Approval of the initial spending bill was so important to Republican leaders that they moved up a vote planned for Thursday, citing the threat of Hurricane Florence bearing down on the Southeast U.S. coast. The storm is expected to make landfall Friday or Saturday

in the Carolinas and create havoc along the East Coast.

The bill represents a marked departure from recent years, when Congress has routinely ignored agency-specific spending measures in favor of giant “omnibus” packages that fund the entire government all at once. Trump has said he won’t sign another bloated bill, and lawmakers have been working to approve a series of smaller spending measures.

“The American people expect us to get our work done. If we continue to work together in a bipartisan manner, we can successfully fund nearly 90 percent of the federal government on time through regular order — something Congress has not been able to do in many years,” said Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby, R-Ala.

“This package is not perfect, but that is the nature of compromise,” added Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy, the top Democrat on the Appropriations panel.

Leahy said he was concerned that the bill does not do enough to cover costs associated with a program that allows veterans to receive government-paid health care at private facilities.

“We do our veterans no favors when we make promises to them that we cannot keep,” he said.

While generally upbeat about the progress on spending legislation, lawmakers from both parties remain wary of a government shutdown, which Trump has threatened unless he gets billions of dollars for the wall — a key Trump campaign promise.

BRIEFLY

Graham goes all in on Team Trump

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — By the end, Sen. John McCain had rejected President Donald Trump. The president was so infuriated by McCain he put a biting reference to the dying Republican senator in his stump speech. Yet one man in Washington still had hope for bridging the gap between the two.

“I regret that he didn’t have more time with President Trump,” Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham told The Associated Press this week about McCain, his late friend and mentor. Graham noted McCain was able to forgive his captors during the Vietnam War. “Who knows what would have happened over time?”

Graham’s unexplained optimism, his eager attempts to soften Trump’s rough edges, have confused colleagues and caused double-takes across Washington. The South Carolina Republican was McCain’s best friend in the Senate, a self-described student of his politics and personal integrity. But he has deviated dramatically in his approach to the tempestuous and divisive president.

When establishment Republicans recently nodded knowingly at an anonymous editorial criticizing Trump’s run of the White House, Graham was on Fox calling it a left-wing strategy to show Trump as “crazy” and echoed the president’s unproven charge that the Russia probe “is falling apart.”

In an interview with the AP, Graham said McCain, who lost two bids for the White House, taught him that the country must move forward after elections. That means “you have an obligation” to help the president, especially a fellow Republican, he said. Graham says he’s warned to the president.

Pope Francis calls summit on abuse

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis summoned the presidents of the world’s bishops’ conferences Wednesday to a summit on preventing clergy sex abuse and protecting children, responding to the greatest crisis of his papacy with the realization that Vatican inaction on the growing global scandal now threatens his legacy.

Francis’ key cardinal advisers announced plans for the summit early next year the day before the pope meets with U.S. church leaders embroiled in their own credibility crisis from the latest accusations in the Catholic Church’s decades-long sex abuse scandal.

The meeting, scheduled for Feb. 21-24, would assemble more than 100 churchmen to represent every bishops’ conference. Its convening signals awareness at the highest levels of the Catholic Church that clergy sex abuse is a global problem, not restricted to some parts of the world or a few Western countries.

Victims’ advocates immediately dismissed the event as belated damage control, an action publicized hastily as allegations regarding Francis’ record of handling abuse cases — and accumulated outrage among rank-and-file Catholic faithful over covered-up crimes — jeopardized his papacy.

“There’s absolutely no reason to think any good will come of such a meeting,” given the church’s decades of failure to reform, David Clohessy, former director of the victims’ advocacy group SNAP, said.

Video shows encounter with rape accuser

NEW YORK (AP) — A video of Harvey Weinstein aired on television Wednes-

day showing him boldly propositioning a woman who later accused him of rape and repeatedly touching her and stroking her arm and back during what was supposed to have been a business meeting.

Melissa Thompson, who sued Weinstein in June, said she made the recording, shown by Sky News, while demonstrating video technology for the movie mogul-turned-#MeToo villain at his New York City office in 2011.

Weinstein is seen on the video rejecting a handshake from Thompson and then hugging her instead and rubbing her back.

He then caresses her shoulder as they sit side-by-side in front of her laptop computer.

At one point he tells her: “Let me have a little part of you. Can you give it to me?”

‘60 Minutes’ chief Fager fired

NEW YORK (AP) — CBS News on Wednesday fired “60 Minutes” top executive Jeff Fager, who has been under investigation following reports that he groped women at parties and tolerated an abusive workplace.

The network news president, David Rhodes, said Fager’s firing was “not directly related” to the allegations against him, but came because he violated company policy. A CBS News reporter working on a story about Fager revealed that he had sent her a text message urging her to “be careful.”

Fager is the third major figure at CBS to lose his job in the past year over misconduct allegations, following news anchor Charlie Rose last November and CBS Corp. CEO Leslie Moonves on Sunday.

CBS News reporter Jericka Duncan said she received Fager’s message

after she started work on a story about him on Sunday, following the posting of a New Yorker story with fresh allegations that were denied by Fager.

“There are people who lost their jobs trying to harm me and if you pass on these damaging claims without your own reporting to back them up that will become a serious problem,” Fager wrote, according to Duncan.

U.S. ‘likely’ takes top oil spot

The United States may have reclaimed the title of the world’s biggest oil producer sooner than expected.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration said Wednesday that, based on preliminary estimates, America “likely surpassed” Russia in June and August after jumping over Saudi Arabia earlier this year.

If those estimates are right, it would mark the first time since 1973 that the U.S. has led the world in output, according to government figures.

The energy information administration and the International Energy Agency, a global group of oil-consuming nations, had predicted that the U.S. would eventually pass Russia and Saudi Arabia but possibly not until 2019.

U.S. production jumped in recent years because of techniques including hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” which is the use of chemicals, sand, water and high pressure to crack rock formations deep below ground, releasing more oil and natural gas.

Apple shows off its most expensive iPhone to date

CUPERTINO, Calif. (AP) — Apple unveiled three new iPhones on Wednesday, including its biggest and most expensive model yet, as the company

seeks to widen the product’s appeal amid slowing sales.

CEO Tim Cook showed off the iPhone XS Max, which has a bigger screen than the one on last year’s dramatically designed model, the iPhone X. It’ll cost about \$1,100, topping the iPhone X, which at \$1,000 seemed jaw-dropping at the time. An updated iPhone X, now called the XS, stays at \$1,000.

As with the iPhone X, both new phones have screens that run from edge to edge, an effort to maximize the display without making the phone too awkward to hold. The screen needs no backlight, so black would appear as truly black rather than simply dark. The Max model looks to be about the size of the iPhone 8 Plus, though the screen size is much larger.

The iPhone XS Max, which will be available on Sept. 21 — with orders open the week before — represents Apple’s attempt to feed consumers’ appetite for increasingly larger screens as they rely on smartphones to watch and record video and to take photos wherever they are.

By making more expensive iPhones, Apple has been able to boost its profits despite waning demand as people upgrade phones less frequently. iPhones fetched an average price of \$724 during the April-June period, a nearly 20 percent increase from a year earlier.

Organization picks Chinese-born doctor as leader

NEW YORK (AP) — A Chinese immigrant who fled her native country when she was 8 was named Wednesday as Planned Parenthood’s new president, the first doctor to hold the post in five decades.

Dr. Leana Wen will assume the role Nov. 12, six days after midterm elections in which Planned Par-

enthood’s political wing plans to spend \$20 million on behalf of candidates who support abortion rights.

Wen, who has been Baltimore’s health commissioner for since 2015, will be Planned Parenthood’s sixth president over a century of work providing millions of Americans with birth control, sex education and medical screenings.

The organization also is the largest provider of abortions in the U.S., making it a perennial target for anti-abortion activists. In recent years, its foes have been striving — thus far unsuccessfully — to halt the flow of federal funds that help Planned Parenthood provide some of its non-abortion services.

Wen succeeds Cecile Richards, who had been president since 2006 before resigning earlier this year.

‘Miraculous’: Boy survives meat skewer in skull

HARRISONVILLE, Mo. (AP) — A 10-year-old Missouri boy is recovering after he was attacked by insects and tumbled from a tree, landing on a meat skewer that penetrated his skull from his face to the back of his head.

But miraculously, that’s where Xavier Cunningham’s bad luck ended. The skewer had completely missed Xavier’s eye, brain, spinal cord and major blood vessels, The *Kansas City Star* reports.

Xavier’s harrowing experience began Saturday afternoon when yellow jackets attacked him in a tree house at his home in Harrisonville, about 35 miles south of Kansas City. He fell to the ground and started to scream. His mother, Gabrielle Miller, ran to help him. His skull was pierced from front-to-back with half a foot of skewer still sticking out of his face.