

Statement of

# The Honorable John Cornyn

United States Senator  
Texas  
June 7, 2005

U.S. Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Citizenship  
U.S. Senator John Cornyn (R-TX), Chairman

"The Southern Border in Crisis: Resources and Strategies to Improve National Security."

Tuesday, June 7, 2005, 2:30 p.m., Dirksen Senate Office Building Room 226

Thank you Mr. Chairman for holding today's hearing. I know that both you and Senator Feinstein have spent significant time working on the issues associated with our southern border and I appreciate your staffs taking the lead on setting up this hearing. I look forward to working with the both of you to provide better security along for our nation's borders.

I also want to thank the ranking member of the Immigration subcommittee, Senator Kennedy, for working with me to bring about several productive immigration hearings this year. I look forward to working with Senator Kennedy and the rest of our Senate colleagues as we now move towards comprehensive immigration reform.

Senator Kyl and I have been working together to identify and develop solutions to the critical problems plaguing our immigration system. We are conducting a top to bottom review of our nation's border security and enforcement efforts. That review has provided important information that we have used to draft the proposed enforcement provisions that will better secure our nation. I look forward to continuing our work in this area as we move towards crafting a comprehensive immigration reform bill.

Our immigration and border security system is badly broken and has suffered from years of neglect. This leaves our borders unprotected, threatens our national security, and makes a mockery of the rule of law. We cannot continue to ignore our border security in a post-9/11 world.

Today's hearing will illustrate the national security threat posed by aliens from countries other than Mexico, or OTMs, who illegally cross our southern border. Arrests of OTMs at the southern border are reaching record levels. And some of these aliens are from special interest countries; that is a country who is a state sponsor of terrorism.

Additionally, my state, which has 65% of our nation's common border with Mexico, has seen an increase in the number of OTM arrests. In fact, a majority of this year's OTM apprehensions have occurred in the Texas sectors. This year the border patrol has apprehended approximately 96,000 OTMs, 90 % of these arrests have occurred at the southwest border. And, of the southwest border arrests more than 76,000 have been made in the Texas sectors. To make matters worse, the vast majority of these OTMs are simply given a notice to appear letter and released into our country because we lack the facilities to hold them. Whether in Texas, Arizona, California or anywhere else in our country, this state of affairs is unacceptable and needs to change.

These examples highlight the concerns raised by former Deputy Homeland Security Secretary James Loy when he testified that intelligence information suggests that al Qaeda believes that illegally crossing the southwest border through Mexico "is more advantageous than legal entry for operational security reasons."

Accordingly, as Congress debates various proposals to both enforce and reform our immigration laws, we must all remember: Undetected border crossings by unknown individuals from suspect nations pose a clear threat to the

national security of the United States, and any comprehensive solution to our immigration problems must deal with that threat.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about what we should do to confront this problem and ways in which we can further strengthen and enforce our borders. I also look forward to continuing our hearings and working to provide effective comprehensive immigration reform that better serves our national security, our national economy, and our national commitment to the rule of law.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.