



1 The Homeland Security Act of 2002 defines the term “**unaccompanied alien child**” (often abbreviated “UAC”) to mean a child who has no lawful immigration status in the United States, has not attained 18 years of age, and has no parent or legal guardian in the United States or available to provide care.

2 The **2008 Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA)**, codified the current process for the treatment of all unaccompanied migrant children in the United States and established special rules for children from contiguous countries (Mexico and Canada).

3 **DHS screens Mexican children within 48 hours** of apprehension to determine if the child is a victim of trafficking or has a claim to asylum based on fear of persecution. If the child does not meet those standards, they can agree to a voluntary return and speedy repatriation to Mexico.

4 Under the law, DHS must transfer **unaccompanied children from countries other than Mexico and Canada to the custody of the**

Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Department of Health and Human Services within 72 hours of apprehension and they are guaranteed an immigration court hearing.

5 Since **most of the children arriving in the last few years at the southern border are from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador**, the children cannot be quickly screened and sent back through voluntary return when no fear of trafficking or persecution exists.

6 When the 2008 TVPRA was enacted, only about 3,300 unaccompanied children a year were apprehended from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador; **since FY 2014, nearly 147,000 UAC** from those three nations have been apprehended.

7 **Economic opportunity is a significant driver of immigration from these countries.** A Government Accountability Office report notes all three countries face significant challenges in education, housing, and healthcare, and according to World Bank data, over 60 percent of Hondurans, 50 percent of Guatemalans, and 30 percent of Salvadorans live below the poverty line.

8 **Crime is also a significant push factor for migrants.** While crime is a problem in all three countries, it is worse in El Salvador and Honduras. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime found that El Salvador was the deadliest nation in the Western Hemisphere in 2015, while Honduras has had the highest murder rate in the world since 2010.

9 Since 2014, **the Obama administration has attempted to stem and deter the migration** by detaining more migrant families, collaborating with Mexico to increase their border enforcement, and launching a public awareness campaign in Central America to counter rumors that migrants would be allowed to stay in the United States. In addition, the administration created a new in-country parole and refugee-processing program in Central America.

10 So far in FY 2016 (October 2015 – May 2016), over **43,000 unaccompanied minors have been apprehended at the southern border.** This represents a 64 percent increase from the same time period in FY 2015, but a 24 percent decrease from FY 2014.

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