

EXHIBIT 2

Trump presses more countries take back U.S. deportees in immigration success



President Trump has created a determined focus at the Homeland Security and State departments, which are both involved in speeding up deportations. (Associated Press/File) more >

By Stephen Dinan - *The Washington Times* - Tuesday, May 16, 2017

Between cajoling, threats and actual punishments, Homeland Security has managed to drastically cut the number of countries that habitually refuse to take back immigrants whom the U.S. is trying to deport, officials said Tuesday, notching an early immigration success for President Trump.

The number of recalcitrant countries has dropped from 20 to 12 over the months since the presidential election, and some longtime offenders — including Iraq and Somalia — have earned their way off the naughty list. The list of countries is the shortest this decade.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials couldn't immediately say how many people have been deported because of the changes, but Somalia has taken back 259 just seven months into the fiscal year. That is far more than the 198 it took back in all of 2016 and the 17 it took in 2015.

Marlen Pineiro, assistant director for removal operations at ICE, said the efforts began under the Obama administration but that Mr. Trump has created a determined focus at the Homeland Security and State departments, which are both involved in speeding up deportations.

"The wind being at our wings is really driving us forward," she said.

In many cases, that means criminals who otherwise would have been released onto the streets are now being sent to their home countries.

Recalcitrant countries have long been among the serious issues that didn't get much attention, though the consequences can be extreme.

In one notorious case, Haiti refused to take back an illegal immigrant who had served time for attempted murder, and U.S. officials were forced to release him. He killed a young woman in Connecticut just months after his release.

Another illegal immigrant, Thong Vang, was released from prison in 2014 after serving time for rape convictions, and his home country of Laos refused to take him back. He was sent to a California prison last year and shot two guards, police said.

Armed with those kinds of cases, Mr. Trump made recalcitrant countries a part of his presidential campaign. He vowed to begin putting pressure on countries to take back their deportees.

One of his first executive orders instructed Homeland Security to take steps to pressure other countries, including potentially stopping the issuance of visas to governments that refuse to cooperate.

Jessica Vaughan, policy studies director at the Center for Immigration Studies, said Mr. Trump and his Homeland Security Department should get most of the credit for the changes for ramping up pressure beyond the diplomatic "demarche" letters that the Obama administration used.

"On matters like this, the Trump administration is speaking not so softly and waving the sharp stick of visa sanctions," she said. "That's a lot more effective than apologetically delivered demarches."

Still on the naughty list are Cuba and China — the two biggest offenders over the years. As of last year, the U.S. was trying to deport some 35,000 Cubans with criminal records. The number of criminal migrants awaiting deportation to China stood at 1,900.

Even there, progress is being made, Ms. Piniero said. After the Obama administration's diplomatic outreach, Cuba signed a deal to begin taking back any new migrants — though it is still reluctant to eat into the backlog.

"They are accepting all the removals under the joint statement that have come in after Jan. 12," Ms. Piniero said.

China remains a tougher situation, despite Mr. Trump's efforts to advance relations with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"We are working on China. We're preparing our recommendations," Ms. Piniero said.

Other countries still on the recalcitrant list are Burma, Cambodia, Eritrea, Guinea, Iran, Laos, Morocco, South Sudan and Vietnam. Hong Kong was added into the list this month because its repatriation policy is controlled by China.

The countries that dropped off the list, in addition to Somalia and Iraq, were Afghanistan, Algeria, Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

Iraq earned its way off the list after it promised better cooperation in the wake of Mr. Trump's first extreme vetting executive order.

U.S. law allows for penalties, including denying visas, against countries that refuse to take back their deportees.

That punishment has been used twice, and both times only on a limited basis. The Bush administration stopped issuing visas to officials from Guyana in 2001. Within months, the country had taken back 112 of the 113 Guyanans whom the U.S. was trying to deport.

Late last year, after intense pressure from Congress, the Obama administration triggered the penalty for the Gambia, stopping issuance of visas for government officials and their families.

The Gambian Embassy said it quickly took steps to comply by issuing travel documents to the people ICE had requested and by reviewing new cases.

"Our country respects the laws of the United States, and we are working closely with the U.S. authorities to take care of the situation," Hamba Manneh, a counselor at the embassy, told The Washington Times in October after the penalties were issued.

Thanks to that action, the Gambia has been taken off the recalcitrant list, though it is still one of 47 countries on the "at-risk" list. The visa penalty on the Gambia hasn't been lifted.

In the case of Somalia, the U.S. has deported its citizens who were in custody. Voice of America reported last month that some 4,000 other Somalis are still on the target list.

Most of them were released from custody over the years because of resistance by their home governments, and now the U.S. must track them down to deport them.

Ms. Pineiro said ICE has moved to create a more formal process for identifying recalcitrant countries.

In the past, she said, the list was based on a sense of the state of each country. Now, she said, officials look at specific metrics such as how long it takes to issue travel documents, whether the country will conduct identity interviews to facilitate deportation and whether countries have a favorable deportation-to-release ratio.