

## Borders Tighten, Immigrants Leave

A recent speech by government officials and ironically, a foreign newspaper, provide perspective for this week's insights into immigration in America.

From HSToday's (Homeland Security Today's) website:

"US Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff welcomed US Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez to the headquarters of US Customs and Border Protection in Washington, DC, Monday to deliver the Bush administration's third state of immigration address, highlighting progress the federal government has made on enforcing border security and immigration enforcement while boosting temporary worker programs.

"For border security, Chertoff highlighted progress on border fencing, staffing for US Border Patrol, and the Secure Border Initiative-Network (SBI-net) surveillance system."<sup>1</sup>

Chertoff's 3-pronged plan briefly included these points:

### 1-Fencing:

"Currently, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has built about 330 miles of fencing out of a target of 670 miles scheduled to be completed by the end of December 2008. The department continues to work with landowners along the US southern border to resolve disputes over the placement of that fencing, Chertoff stated."<sup>2</sup>

### 2-Border Patrol:

"The number of US Border Patrol agents, meanwhile, is increasing dramatically. In fiscal 2002, the agency had 9,800 agents, but it now has 16,471, Chertoff reported. The agency will have more than 18,000 agents by the end of calendar year 2008."<sup>3</sup>

### 3-SBI-net Security System:

"As for SBI-net, Project 28 has produced a functional prototype and key members of Congress have been impressed with its progress, Chertoff remarked. DHS will soon award SBI-net prime contractor Boeing with additional task orders under the program to proceed with deploying the next legs of the operational version of the system, the secretary added."<sup>4</sup>

US Secretary of Commerce, Carlos Gutierrez, taking note of recent attempts by the individual states to set up their own version of the H-2A program, weighed in with this:

"He cautioned states against enacting piecemeal integration laws, calling for comprehensive immigration reform efforts at the federal level.

"This patchwork of laws is untenable in the long-term. But until Congress acts, we will take steps for our nation's security and our economic stability," Gutierrez commented."<sup>5</sup>

From another publication—this one, *The Guardian*, from the United Kingdom, there comes a report of Florida immigrants being fed up and moving out of the state.

“There was no one thing that caused Hector Salinas to pack his bags and give up for good on the trials of life as an illegal immigrant in southern Florida. But the reasons he enumerates are echoed by increasing numbers of Latin American immigrants, both legal and not, who appear to be souring on their job prospects and going home.

... “No hard figures exist, but various surveys and anecdotes from immigrants, their advocates and consular officers in Miami suggest that more Latin Americans are voluntarily heading back home, the apparent result of the US economic downturn and anxiety generated by a federal crackdown on illegal immigration.

“The hardest hit appear to be those in agricultural, construction, food processing and service jobs in which many immigrants work.

“In southern Miami-Dade county, even before the winter growing season came to an end, many farmworkers from Mexico and Central America were leaving for home.

“They can't find work,” said Elvira Carvajal, a volunteer at the Florida Farmworkers Association in Florida City. “Then there is fear in the community because of immigration raids ... What are they going to do? A lot of people are opting to leave.”

... “A recent survey of Latin American immigrants by the Inter-American Development Bank highlights their malaise: 81% said it was more difficult now than a year ago to get a well-paying US job. More than a quarter said they were considering going home in the next few years. And 68% said anti-immigration sentiment was a major problem - almost double the percentage who said so in 2001.

... “One difference, he said: Those coming to stay increasingly have work visas, in part in response to US immigration enforcement.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mickey McCarter, “Immigration Address Highlights Borders, Workers,” June 10, 2008. Website at: <http://hstoday.us/content/view/3721/128/>. (accessed 6-13-08)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> “More immigrants choosing to leave US,” This article was first published on [guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk) on Wednesday June 11 2008. Website at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jun/11/usa>. (accessed 6-13-08)