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ARRESTS AT U.S. BORDER FELL IN JULY AMID CHANGES IN IMMIGRATION POLICY

In first full month after family-separation policy ended, 9,258 immigrants traveling as families were arrested

By Alicia A. Caldwell
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The number of people arrested for illegally crossing the border declined for the second consecutive month in July, according to government arrest data.

U.S. Border Patrol agents arrested 31,303 border crossers last month, an 8 percent decline from June, according to the arrest figures compiled by U.S. Customs and Border Protection and reviewed by The Wall Street Journal.

July is the first full month after the Trump administration halted its policy to separate families and prosecute parents for crossing the border illegally. About 9,258 immigrants traveling as families were arrested in July, compared with about 9,400 in June. Most are expected to ask for asylum in the U.S.

The number of families and unaccompanied children caught crossing the border illegally had been on the rise in recent months, and the overall volume of illegal border crossers has been described as a crisis by Trump administration officials.

Fewer than 4,000 unaccompanied children were also arrested at the border in July, a decline of more than 1,000 compared with June.

The number of immigrant families who presented themselves at legal U.S. border crossings rose slightly from June to July, when 3,027 people asked to come into the U.S., the government data shows. Trump administration officials, including Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, have encouraged families and other immigrants seeking asylum to present themselves at such border crossings.

Since the start of the budget year in October, more than 77,800 immigrants traveling as families and more than 41,000 unaccompanied immigrant children have been arrested at the border. More than 40,000 families and 7,000 unaccompanied children have asked for refuge at legal border crossings.

More than 2,600 immigrant children were ultimately separated from their parents before President Donald Trump signed an executive order ending the practice on June 20. A week later a federal judge in San Diego ordered the government to reunite the families by late July. More than 1,800 children have been returned to their parents. As many as 400 parents may have been deported or otherwise left the U.S. without their children.

U.S. District Judge Dana Makoto Sabraw last week ordered the government to appoint a single person or group to lead its efforts to find those parents and reunite as many children

as possible. Not finding those parents, Judge Sabraw warned, could lead to hundreds of children being permanently orphaned.

"That is 100 percent the responsibility of the administration," Judge Sabraw said during a hearing last week in San Diego.