

# Hillary Clinton says U.S.-Mexico border is now secure



*"Now I think it's time to turn our attention to comprehensive immigration reform," Hillary Clinton said, using the term immigrant-rights advocates use for legislation to legalize the 11 million illegal immigrants now in the country. (Associated Press) more >*

By Stephen Dinan - *The Washington Times* - Thursday, March 17, 2016

Democratic presidential front-runner Hillary Clinton said Thursday that the southwest border is secure enough that the government should now turn its attention to trying to legalize illegal immigrants.

In an interview with KTAR radio in Phoenix, Mrs. Clinton said improvements under President George W. Bush and President Obama, including several hundred miles of fencing, have cut net illegal immigration from Mexico to zero.

"Now I think it's time to turn our attention to comprehensive immigration reform," she said, using the term immigrant rights advocates use for legislation to legalize the 11 million illegal immigrants now in the country.

Her evaluation of the border stands in stark contrast to Republican presidential candidates

who say the border is not secure, pointing to increasing seizures of drugs and to the renewed surge of Central American illegal immigrants.

But Mrs. Clinton said they're ignoring how bad it used to be during her husband's administration.

"I think we've done a really good job securing the border and I think those that say we haven't are not paying attention to everything that was done for the last 15 years under both President Bush and President Obama," she told KTAR. "We have increased dramatically the number of border security officers, we have added physical obstructions like fences in many places, and in fact the immigration from Mexico has dropped considerably. It's just not happening any more."

The numbers back up some of Mrs. Clinton's claims.

Border Patrol apprehensions, which are a rough measure of the flow of illegal immigrants, peaked at more than 1.6 million in 1999, when President Clinton was still in office. They've dropped dramatically since, to about 337,000 in 2015.

Also, the flow of new immigrants — both legal and illegal — from Mexico is so low that it's offset by those returning home, gaining legal status here or dying.

But the number of Central Americans attempting the illegal crossing has surged over the last three years, leading some experts to say the border problems have shifted, not gone away.

Border Patrol agents say the new illegal immigrants are drawn by the chance to take advantage of lax enforcement of immigration laws within the U.S., which gives them the opportunity to disappear into the shadows with the 11 million other illegal immigrants already here.

Mrs. Clinton, who will face voters in the Democratic primary in Arizona next week, has come under fire from some Hispanic activists for having voted as a senator for the Secure Fence Act, which called for building 700 miles of double-tier fencing along the southwest border.

"I voted to secure the border when I was in the Senate. I think we accomplished a lot of that work. Obviously we always have to be vigilant," Mrs. Clinton said.

Congress rescinded the fence mandate in 2007, leaving it up to the Homeland Security Department to decide how much fencing to build. The department ended up with about 350

miles of pedestrian fencing, and another 300 miles of barriers designed to stop vehicles, but that are easily bypassed by those on foot.

Copyright © 2016 The Washington Times, LLC. [Click here for reprint permission.](#)