

# Worth Noting

***Compiled by Elizabeth Hill***

## **Executive Orders on Immigration Encourage Greater Interagency Cooperation**

President Obama recently announced a set of initiatives and Executive Orders to address immigration. The purpose of these actions is to reduce the strain on the current U.S. immigration system, which the President describes as “broken.” The new policies effect undocumented immigrants, communities, businesses, and employers.

The executive actions also encourage increased interagency cooperation, and call for the creation of an interagency working group made up of the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, and Labor, and other related government agencies and groups. The working group will focus on promoting worker cooperation with enforcement authorities while ensuring employers do not use federal agencies to undermine worker protection laws.

Additional initiatives include the allocation of immigrant visas and increased and expanded work authorization for immigrants. ***IAJ***

## **Obama Calls for Interagency Review of Hostage Policy**

In late November 2014, the White House announced that President Obama has ordered a comprehensive review of U.S. policy concerning American hostages held overseas. The decision to review the policy comes after an increase in Islamic State militants capturing and detaining U.S. citizens, including journalists and aid workers.

Historically, U.S. policy has not allowed for hostage negotiation with terrorists. However, policy reform during the Bush administration made allowances for ransom payments under certain circumstances. National Security Presidential Directive 12, which was signed in 2002 and is still in effect, dictates the roles and responsibilities of various related U.S. government agencies and was also the nascence of the “hostage working group.”

The proposed review, according to a letter from Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Christine Wormuth, will focus on several areas related to hostage cases, including family engagement, intelligence collection, and diplomatic engagement. Wormuth also stated that the review will “seek to integrate innovative and nontraditional solutions to result in recommended actions to improve interagency coordination and strengthen the whole-of-government approach” led by the FBI and Department of State.

White House National Security Council spokesman Alistair Baskey said in a statement that, while the Obama administration could not reveal all the details surrounding efforts to free U.S. hostages, “we will continue to bring all appropriate military, intelligence, law enforcement, and diplomatic capabilities to bear to recover American hostages.” ***IAJ***