

Top Health and Human Services official warned White House not to separate families



Washington, August 2 (RHC)-- In the United States, a top Health and Human Services (HHS) official told lawmakers at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing that he had repeatedly warned the Donald Trump administration against separating immigrant families at the border.

Jonathan White, commander of the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, a branch of HHS, said: "During the deliberative process over the previous year, we raised a number of concerns in the ORR program about any policy which would result in family separation, due to concerns we had about the best interest of the child, as well as about whether that would be operationally supportable with the bed capacity we had."

ORR stands for the Office of Refugee Resettlement. During the hearing, Connecticut Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal also questioned Jonathan White about the psychological impact of separating children from their parents. White responded that separating children from their parents "entails significant risk of harm to children." He further stated that separation means a "potential for traumatic psychological injury to the child."

Despite Jonathan White's testimony, a top official with ICE -- the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency -- tried to defend the Donald Trump administration's practice of separating children from their parents by comparing the child detention facilities to "summer camp."

Matthew Albence, head of enforcement and removal operations for ICE, said: "I think the best way to describe them is to be more like a summer camp. These individuals have access to 24/7 food and water. They have educational opportunities. They have recreational opportunities, both structured as well as unstructured. There's basketball courts. There's exercise classes. There are soccer fields that we put in there."

About 700 children forcibly separated from their parents at the border have still not been reunited with their parents.

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