

## **Bush says he wants immigration deal**

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GUATEMALA CITY (Reuters) - President George W. Bush said on Monday he wants a breakthrough on U.S. immigration reform by August but defended raids against illegal immigrants, a policy that drew criticism during his tour of Latin America.

Bush discussed immigration and regional efforts against drug trafficking with Guatemalan President Oscar Berger after promoting free trade and U.S. anti-poverty efforts in a trip to the Mayan highlands.

U.S. immigration policies are unpopular across much of Latin America, helping leftist leaders gain sway in the region. Berger, a conservative ally on most issues, made clear he also opposed Bush's stance on immigration.

"Once in a while differences of opinion arise, for example regarding the issue of migrants and particularly those who have been deported without clear justification," Berger said, standing next to Bush.

About 18,000 Guatemalan illegal immigrants were deported from the United States last year, an increase of 60 percent from 2005. Most were caught soon after crossing the U.S. border but a quarter had been in the country more than a year.

In New Bedford, Mass., dozens of young children were stranded at schools and with baby sitters last week after their parents were rounded up by federal authorities who raided a leather goods maker suspected of hiring illegal immigrants. Most were from Guatemala and El Salvador.

"The United States will enforce our laws," Bush told reporters in defending the raids.

But he said he hoped to get the Democratic-led Congress to make significant strides toward an immigration overhaul, including a temporary guest worker program, in coming months.

"As I told the president, it seems like, to me, we've got to get this done by August. I hope so," Bush said.

He failed to get an overhaul through the Republican-led Congress last year due to conservative concerns about a porous U.S.-Mexico border. Whether Democrats in an uproar about the Iraq war will agree to an immigration deal is uncertain.

### **BORDER FENCE**

Bush defended plans to seal off parts of the border with Mexico with a fence, saying it would give skeptical lawmakers confidence to back the guest worker program for immigrants.