

**“Communication Tactics for Agents — Internal Distribution Only”**

**Memorandum**

To: Fire Team Members US Border Patrol

From: Jay Evsky, Fire Team Supervisor

Date: January 20, 2021

Subject: USBP Suggestions, Strategies / Orientation Scripts for Use with Detainees

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**USBP guidance on how to talk to new detainees.** Enclosed are a range of possible responses contributed informally by Fire Team members. Feel free to use any or all of the responses, remarks and observations in the list below in your daily interactions with detainees. Adopt, modify, or use verbatim the script list below, as required by situational parameters.

1. Records somewhere indicate: you are six years old, or 10, or 12, 15, 16.
2. **You!** Stand up straight and sharpen your listening. Sever yourself from the mob pacing around the room. Peel yourself away from the spiderweb of coughing at

the back of the throat. Finally, tear off the cloak of clatter clinging to your nervous system. If you do, your faculties will emerge from their muffling dusk and enjoy a newfound clarity. You can do more than just bear the unbearable — you can *thrive* here. Think of the period of indefinite detainment as being no more than a minor inconvenience. Let it chisel and sculpt away the shifty, untrustworthy aspects of your character so that you emerge a better boy or young man.

3. Get used to the clang of disorientation everywhere throughout these tented facilities. Get used to the chaos like the billowing aftermath of a terrorist's jack-in-the-box explosion, which hijacks midnight from the sky and inserts it into the middle of noon. Your compatriots' cries will tirelessly scale the steep air here. You must learn to ignore them if want to continue to survive. Of course, nothing here is promised. You must grasp the concept of compliance to authority, an idea that will be explained to you in careful detail during your detainment, a period of time which might seem to stretch long as a clockless coma. Right now you are in the temporary "influx shelter" that has been converted into a migrant detention facility in Homestead, Florida. Take an interest in your surroundings, know the history of your environment. Did you know that oranges are the number one fruit export in Florida, sweetening the state economy, picked by laborers who, with no need of thanks, stretch sore spines along ladders leaning in groves? Although sunlight stomps the percussive heat of the Sunshine State through their flesh and into the marrow, workers gladly make this sacrifice for

consumers, knowing full well that our savory orange jewels when bitten can transform a parched mouth into a sparkling oasis.

4. Although ... YOU! ... although many Border Patrol agents speak Spanish, you will not hear the flourishes and saffron-petaled flowers of your language. You will not hear languorous lilt and waterfalls that trill and tide the tongue in a sleepy southern legato of seductive babbling passing for speech. You will hear your language heaped and spoken with flat jackhammer authority, unruly r's shackled rather than rolled. By necessity, all the sweet silver water has been siphoned from the soft glands of your words. And all the spaces between words will be whitely spackled with resolve, the same steel and surge and insatiable hunger that fed manifest destiny, which to this day continues to cast its net of acquisition over the globe and will one day extend out into the far-flung universe, across the dark suburbs of infinity — so much emptiness freely available for the taking.
  
5. Always consider this truism: Words are brittle at best, crumbling into sand whenever people attempt to speak to each other, or try to bridge the serrated distances between them. In this culture when people attempt to connect, they do so as two untranslatable worlds, each one spinning alone on a droning axis. Because the bridges of words so frequently crumble, it is *action* that matters, *action*, and a lie is as good as the truth when the bridge of sand inevitably dissolves ... your takeaway, since you are striving to emulate U.S. citizens, should be that *this* is how Americans hurl themselves into *action*. Action should always be taken immediately or as soon as possible. It is especially justified

when the threat of violence is believed to be implicit, and perceptions are shaped by the darker, amygdala-driven embodiments of subjectivity, coiling into the very real fear and certainty that one's life is in peril: for this reason, very often *action* should be preemptive. Well-weaponed security and peace officers know this all too well. To strike, rather than to be struck, is the American way and predilection, a privilege exercised by the country's citizens spread across the 3,200 miles unspooling on US-50 between the nation-bracketing foam of coastlines east and west. If an agent sees you move in a way that triggers the recollection of a similar movement displayed by a past detainee whose behavior was infuriating or foreshadowed resistance, you will function as that earlier detainee's proxy. This means you may receive blows delivered by American hands, perhaps for the first time in your life. The blows will be delivered speedily and boldly with fists or batons or even with the palm-caressing butts of H&K P2000 pistols. Do not take these blows, these tools of edification, personally. And remember, your own government and the circling vultures of your oligarchic drug cartels have been known to obtain their ends by using more primitive forms of violence to which you are undoubtedly accustomed — a violence indiscriminate as a lightning strike on the open Savannah plain, more savagely random and less instructive than what you would endure here at the Homestead facility. Know that blows delivered by agents of the U.S government are undertaken tacitly on behalf of each and every one of the approximately 325 million average U.S. citizens. On their behalf, whether or not these citizens agree in principle.

6. Through blind air you have crossed an invisible line of demarcation. You offered up prayers to Mary, the Virgin Mother. Some of you may have even petitioned the Black Madonna. It has been explained that the Black Madonna, “dark mother and goddess archetype,” symbol of “resistance against oppression and of female empowerment,” is revered in some parts of Latin and South America, as well as in the exotic cultures of Brazil, Africa, Eurasia and Cuba, the Caribbean and even, surprisingly, Poland, Spain, France, Switzerland. Some in this country might find this offensive. The Black Madonna is not widely embraced in the U.S, as it would ignite revulsion and inflame many Caucasian citizens, who prefer to see representations of their deity that reflect their own whiteness, the pure and choiring whiteness of doves, rather than to see a holy image depicted in shades of black, brown, or any of the renegade skin tones in between, which tend to be associated with juvenile superstition, lower intelligence, powerlessness. Yet to each their own. FYI: In the United States there is but one true God, never simplistic or childish, and He displays eminent intelligence and omnipotence, a mature God, mysterious but accessible, familiar and recognizable, who sometimes strays outside the boundaries of logic, but only when absolutely necessary. He is always available to answer loyal citizens’ prayers, providing for their robust animal and material needs. Any other God or divinity would be un-American, opposed to U.S. core values and systems of belief.
7. You may have corkscrewed with your family forward through passages carved in rock by your previous countrymen who tried in vain to flee to an America you

have now learned does not exist at this unbottled intersection, where soul-dark ink has been spilled, smearing and overwriting previous U. S. history, which had functioned as an open invitation to the world's refugees and dreamers. You, Pedro/Miguel/Jose, may have slipped in and out of these passages, between and through the wily tentacles of tunnels. Departing dirt and rock, you then moved toward the rush of water, sought buoyancy on the swirling Ouija board of a river of unanticipated events, the Rio Grande with its death magic, gothic treachery and imploding vortices. How many times did the brutal hands of waves push down on the crown of your dog-paddling head, your legs cycling feverishly through the glue of epileptic currents underwater? You arrived limp as a wave unraveling onto these shores. In your own country you may or may not have known that so-called refugees were not being accepted here with open arms. If you knew, you decided to take a chance. This, then, is the result. Your intuition, so strongly evident in your quaint folk tales and your delightful little clay pots, in the flamenco guitars you strum with the fierce but ultimately useless energy of children — your famed intuition has failed you. Refugees have arrived here in the hundreds of thousands and been delivered into custody. Each one has arrived with the urgency of a hurricane, resisting ICE and USBP attempts to steer them back to their homelands. On asylum documentation requests you claim that your cities are seething with satanic-red flames, political murders and kidnappings, rape and assassination. Did you know that cities here also burn with heinous crime, but of a more sophisticated pedigree, one that makes U.S. movies so popular around the world to eyes that appreciate more nuanced

orchestrations of violence, guns that move like a baton in the conductor's hand? Your journey has been a dangerous weight hovering over a frail moving structure of flesh and memory, a Steinway grand piano teetering and ready to drop from a 30-floor window, snapping innocent but not entirely blameless arms and legs, crushing brown and black skulls teeming with ideas marching like children to toy-drum rhythms of freedom. Ideas that unleashed tides of wishful or magical thinking, of hope and salvation, or fanciful notions of streets smocked in gold.

8. Take note that everyday citizens would simply stare at a brown or black boy flattened squirrel-like by a piano, watching from sidelines where they could observe the crushed victim clearly and unemotionally, without unnecessary involvement or nagging intimations of conscience. They would hover safely in the background, spectators bewitched by the dark magnet of a catastrophic event whose deadly randomness only the genuinely entitled could dare feel exempt from. Such tragedies can only be the rightful sphere of the dissimilar *other*.
9. You will not be wretched in welcomes that widen your chest with warmth, and it is unfair of you to expect to freely inhale the lush perfume of well wishes reserved for others immigrating here from, for example, the continent of Europe. Or even those reserved for Canadians migrating here from their homeland, that snow-dimmed and lesser imitation of the United States, a country so like a little brother following his older American sibling awe-eyed, thumb plugging his mouth. Feel free to ask why, why those countries but not your own, but no response can be

offered at this time. Any answer explaining how things came to be invites the probing of wounds filled with fog that once walled the darkest of underworlds and necessitates a testimony capable of bearing close scrutiny. In the same way that a body in repose below the salute of a polished coffin lid in a wake is exposed to the bold gazes of friends and enemies.

10. Dragged across the shore of a thousand trepidations by a hymn-less river bending its talons of grit down your foaming throat. Whoever told you to dream your torn desert dreams?
11. Do not expect to cling to the iron of a brotherly hand pulling you across that dead and vibrant scar of land called *border*.
12. You now spend each moment in a free-fall of blazing fire and fear. What is this worth to you? If you think about it, isn't *this, here, now*, easily and truly of a magnitude of misery greater than the turmoil you were running from? It may have felt like desperate fleeing but it was only ordinary everyday running. *Back away*, cease waving that note against the glass in the hope that passersby wearing more formal attire in the hallway will read it, some pity-eyed member of Congress touring these facilities with omniscient cameras mirroring their every move, as a pilot fish shadows the shark. You are not in a position to offer your version of the truth, because your knowledge of what is now occurring is limited and sadly insufficient. For all you know, this could be an extermination camp. Consider yourself lucky that this facility has not been so designated. Nevertheless, you do not occupy some privileged position from which you are



free to showcase your view of reality. Though it's a platitude, you will quickly come to realize that the place you fled is your true home, and there is no other place awaiting your return. Here you are like a spurned lover, though many of you are too young to understand the betrayals and miseries of love.

13. Your mother or father irresponsibly allowed themselves to become separated from you, they are gone, drifting somewhere through the swollen labyrinth of U.S. officialdom, with its inefficiency aloof as an unstringed helium balloon. These institutions are lumbering elephants capable of trampling whole segments of everyday life as lived by individuals who depend on the hopes and diminished dreams these official entities manufacture and deliver under unsuspected guises. Your father and mother may never be found. It would be appropriate right now to learn the English phrase "good-bye." Try saying it slowly, allowing, if necessary, a solitary tear to crawl over your cheeks as though on destitute palms and knees. Do not be surprised if the smile you try to compose in imitation of an adult's, quivers on a spinning coin's rim of wobbling collapse. Say it: "Good ... bye..."

14. Your *madre* is gone, your *padre*, your *hermana* or *hermano*. The shore-long list of misplaced relatives extends to far distant horizons, since your national mentality, against the injunctions of reason, does nothing to discourage the populace in your native lands from the enterprise of wanton and savage procreation blind to inhumane consequences — even as poverty's shriveled face glares over your shacks and over your doleful huts and alleyways, while dogs roam the streets with carnivoral tin-can teeth, ribs resembling the twisted metal

rods of stripped umbrellas. There, children play amid all the raw embellishments of sewage, disease and deprivation, pitting their lethargic cries against the blank gray specificity of the sky. Surely you have not forgotten. The point is, the relatives you have relied on for strength in the face of adversity are gone. In English this would be the time to use the phrase "... I love you ... I will most likely never see you again ... remember me ..."

15. You become a question mark of bones, incapable of declarative belonging.

16. The fear is that your dark skin will absorb the ample but carefully rationed light of this shining city and use it to your benefit.

17. You should know that the country you have broken into peaked into greatness during the sorely vanished decades of the 40s and 50s. Our collective exertions are now spent trying to return to that golden era, but once the baby is born there is no returning to the magic of the womb. Do you understand? The only Latinos here at that time were those shown on the "I Love Lucy" show. Since that more innocent time the ascendancy of this nation has dwindled. It has become necessary to divert energy and resources into the fight to create laws protecting the country from an undiagnosable brown-or-black-tinted otherness. The nation has begun closing its doors, barely able to absorb so much color-based differentiation in its own citizenry. The swelling seams are beginning to burst in state after state. For many, the time for diversity has passed, the opposite is now being sought: the creation of the mono-State where like-minded people can live in utopian equilibrium.

18. You are young and, per pronouncements from highest office in the land, fated rapists in the tawdry inevitable making.
19. The fear cannot be understated and bears repeating: This great city exhales a pure and glittering light, and your smoky skin will dim and dampen the light until it is extinguished.
20. Your daily meal has been poured into a simple soulless bowl that will deliver a gelatin-flavored substance to the belly. This fabrication may congeal, creating a soup-shaped, plaintive warmth in the stomach. Each meal will be essentially unvarying for purposes of simplification. It is common to experience hunger in-between mealtimes, but no food-augmenting exceptions for detainees can be made — certainly not for those who feign sickness because of extreme youth and disability, and not for those who faint flat or fling themselves against the glass in what appear to be convulsive seizures of varying intensities. If you had remained in Chipas, Guerrero, Juarez, Guatemala, you would be eating a seductive breakfast of huevos rancheros with tortillas and beans, or a lunch of several mouth-eroticizing courses, featuring tortillas, soup, meat and beans, atole thickened with oats or perhaps instead of that, hot chocolate, and a late dinner as light or robust as the appetite dictates.
21. Under certain conditions you are allowed to spread your palms against the glass. You can do so in order to lean against it as with a cane when you stand, if your legs have gone slack with weakness due to dehydration or the abrupt

introduction of the more utilitarian U.S. institutional diet. As long as there is no feces or urine visible in toilet water, a small amount may sustain you until a harried agent can scrape out time to deliver limited drinking water to your zone of confinement. When the toilet is flushed, the youngest of you should gather round the toilet base linking hands and leaning your small heads together. In the toilet you may hear the voices of your ancestors pluming up hollow and guttural, speaking to you in the oracular voice of water choked and braided — chiding you, abandoning you, settling into the lowest gears of silence, showing you that the future you have picked like a lock reveals a vault that is empty as the arctic.

22. Pick a spot before all available space on the floor is overwritten by the sweat-chalked bodies of your countrymen.
23. The hour for sleep is approaching. You must sleep on the floor. It is regrettable that the operational budget here does not allow for beds or even at this facility, which did not anticipate the government's novel immigration strategies, or the unforeseen metastasis of people at the borders that such strategies may have inadvertently produced.
24. The floor is ugly with cold hammered into the concrete.
25. Or for the younger ones who believe in *brujos*: There are witches riding invisibly in the air who will eventually sink into the ground, where they have come to bury bundles of icy bones just under the surfaces of these bedless floors.

26. However, all is not lost. A Mylar blanket has been provided for your comfort.

Much younger children can soothe themselves by performing suckling motions with their lips, which may stimulate visceral memories of the mother's breast.

27. Soon, lights out — a blunt guillotine slicing through eyes.

28. You must then quickly undream.

29. To “undream”: In the darkness do not aspire to dream. The faster you master the little known technique of dream reversal, the easier you will adjust to the return trip to your own country. The easier it will be to curl yourself fetal inside the pocket of the slingshot into which you will be fitted, elastic tubing pulled back to the straining maximum and released, so that you soar through the air, arcing back to your faint pre-border existence. The U.S. policies regarding asylum have recently lapsed into a state of uncertainty, contradiction and flux. Apologies for those of you who left your homeland believing that asylum was a viable option.

30. Be prepared. In a dark room, expect that anything can and will happen. When the extinguished lights plunge you over the cliff's edge into darkness, the teenage assassins, aspiring hitmen and gang members, psychopaths and drug peddlers, may assert themselves, as though roots were pressing up through the cracks in the floor and winding around the twigs of your ashen ankles — weeds that cannot be trampled down. If you suspect that anyone among you fits these descriptions, avoid contact with them. If they are sleeping next to you, do not allow their leg to touch your leg. Do not breathe the same air, or at very least,

hold your breath when they exhale in your direction. Please notify a supervising agent on duty by pounding on the shatterproof glass in a way that distinguishes itself from other varieties of pounding. You can also garner attention by pressing your face against the glass until it spreads and seems to smear. The most convincing expressions, those merging with the pores of the glass, will be given the highest consideration: the agent, similar to the angel of death and unwanted transformation, will appear by your side to take your hand, his own protected by a latex glove, as though you were no better than a toxic surface. He will lead you like a kindly avuncular uncle — *tio* — toward new shadowlands of the American experience, dark but edifying. The facility has ordered masks to slow the spread of rampant infection but delivery has been indefinitely delayed. There is not much we can do if you fall ill with the disease, so do not fall ill. We cannot tell you how your parents are faring in this unfortunate epidemic.

31. If you can, visualize disease-carrying microbes as friendly smiley-face icons, floating happily across the stagnant pond of detainees stretching across the room's floor. This positive psychological attitude may boost your immune system, so that you are better able to survive an environment replete with noxious pathogens.
32. You are a detainee in America, not an American detainee.
33. You can certainly ask to see your grandmother.
34. You can ask to see your *abuela*.

35. Look forward. Maybe tomorrow you will be allowed outside for exactly 30 minutes. A repeating echo of similarly hollow-colored days or weeks may pass before you are scheduled for release again, so take advantage. But there will be no trees casting childish shade for you to stand under. You may feel that the humming fence outside is actually the externalization of your skeletal system. Regardless, being outside is a special occasion, a chance to play for a short time, to run away from yourself and the wounding memories of all the people you are chained to by your version of love, which is different from how love is here enacted in this country — a nation struggling to regain its former greatness, but one that still manages to create a model of prosperity based on concepts, standards and norms the world is eager to adopt. For the rare few of you who will be allowed to stay in this country, remember that the positive attitude previously alluded to will help you to “balance out” the scales not tilted in your favor as you are learning to adopt to American society. There is another class of less enterprising Americans who must learn that a perfectly level “playing field” is simply not a reasonable expectation, one akin to a toddler’s fairy tale. It is imperative that you learn to avoid these groups and individuals.

36. Feel free to moan tonight if you think it will provide you with a sense of alleviation as your bones embrace the rigid contours of the floor, a gray unyielding plane laminated with your suffering. But this will help very little. Begging or sobbing will not help, and you would do well to teach this to the very young children among you. True, their bodies are black holes where pain shines its lifted lantern,

but their tiresome trickle of tears as they wander the rooms with their dirty shirts and skinned knees will only anchor them in their own misery. Tell them to simply cease and desist, or they will never be beautiful. Tell them there is no problem, it is only a matter of time before they are reunited with their lost relatives. Let that older boy, Miguel, know that desperately asking an agent to allow him to simply slip away from this facility in the middle of the night and to disappear into the streets of Homestead will never happen. Realize that vicarious satisfaction is a wonderful substitute. Close the eyes and imagine how the average American leaves his own home — how it feels to walk with ease and with no pressing purpose up and down any street he chooses, in any neighborhood he chooses, flowing freely through the bloodstream of the sidewalks, idly whistling phrases of some pop song while riding its merry-go-round of happy repetition. Or to simply watch a bumble bee dozing under a drowsy flower head. As long as there is nothing suspicious or threatening about his appearance. As long as the eyes of the local neighborhood watch group slide lovingly down over the walker's skin, and they are satisfied that the stranger on his stroll has a right to be there.

37. In the corner of the room you will find a small pile of square toys. Before lights out, move quickly to grab one of the bleak black blocks that you can hold next to your cheek instead of a pillow. Do not ask what you have done to receive a black box before bedtime, do not ask why there is a noise inside the box that sounds ominous as the rattle of a snake emanating from an unseen corner of a bedroom at 3:00 a.m.



38. In the dark there are so many of you jammed into the insufficient space that your interlocking elbows and knees are the disarrayed angles of music stands haphazardly tossed into a clenched storage room for instruments.
39. There are no pills available for the glassy churn of your bowels. The distribution of toothpaste and toothbrushes may occur at a later date.
40. Have you realized that you are spending your life running either toward or away from walls and electric fences?
41. Even those of you who have become citizens still have difficulties fitting in. A disconcerting percentage of these adults have meager learning skills or IQs on the lower end of the spectrum that prevent them from adopting the English language and becoming fluent. Yet you must make a start, as futile as the attempt may be. Bluntly, and to express what is on the minds of average citizens: if you are not willing to learn the language, why come here at all?
42. A word regarding what you saw earlier in the day. What you thought you saw. When you stepped off the bus and were being herded into a line straight as a soldier's spine, you spied two agents leaving one of the tents, carrying a small stretcher toward a dark boxy vehicle. The double doors at the rear of the vehicle yawned open, a crocodile mouth agape in wide hunger, revealing a misaligned regiment of teeth. It is true the agents were moving quickly, as though their skin might rip at the mere touch of an observer's eyes. However, the white sheet that

seemed to be melting forlornly over the edges of the stretcher only covered a small still oblong of supplies. Supplies. Nothing else.

43. YOU! *Pedro/Miguel/Jose. No water.* Lights out. Now close your eyes, let go of your many unanswered questions, so much not-knowing. Pull the thin thermal blanket up to your chin, which trembles with the looseness of a mirage. It is not like the quilt your *abuela* made for you when you were even younger than are you today, a quilt that wrapped you in the cocoon of a childhood not yet exposed to the coarser textures of suffering. Perhaps you are feeling like the sun at the end of the day, when it relinquishes its burden of mauve and auburn, slips off its pedestal like a woman in narcosis who forgets the vertebrae's purpose and slides from her wheelchair to the wild dark floor. A prayer may lift you on its wings above the sinking ceiling of this sensation. Just take care not to recite the prayer out loud. It would be unfair to disturb your many neighbors, their bodies so close they appear to be zippered together across the room's sweep of tomb-cold surfaces. They want nothing more than to sugar the oblivion of sleep with bright and impossible dreams.

### **Adiós**

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\*Boys, needless to say, do not circulate this email or attachment it contains with anyone not on the distribution list. It is meant to provide a sense of alleviation for us in a time of unprecedented low morale, political difficulty and deep uncertainty

within the department. It allows us to comment, make playful observations, and ask serious questions we would otherwise not be able to pose publicly. It allows us to give voice to things we cannot otherwise say. This document, the result of a loose collaborative effort, is for private circulation among an inner circle, if you will, of agents in need of escape, diversion, release and even a bit of humor — entertainment of a sort. At the very least, this has been an effective team building exercise and strengthens our bonds with each other. (Special thanks to Ted, the aspiring poet among us, for editing the list, polishing it and injecting nuance, even though we may not agree with a few of X's less conservative re-statements! ) "Communication for Agents" is meant for internal distribution only. Let's keep it to ourselves and have a healthy laugh.

-End-