El Salvador’s homicide rate—the world’s highest—helps drive waves of undocumented immigrants, young and old, northward on a dangerous journey by land to the United States. Listen as a U.S. consular officer talks about how U.S. immigration policy mingles with reality on the ground in one of the world’s most politically and economically challenging regions.

Joey Leavitt is serving his third Foreign Service tour overseas in El Salvador, having previously served as a political/economic officer in Saudi Arabia and a media analyst in Jordan. Leavitt studied Arabic for a year in Syria as an undergrad on his way to receiving a BA in Middle East Studies/Arabic and a JD from BYU. He and his wife are the parents of four children, and Leavitt enjoys trail running, photography, and forcing his children to listen to David Bowie albums on replay.