

Biden administration detains more than 200,000 immigrants along US-Mexico border last month

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Despite record heat and rising coronavirus cases, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) announced this week that more than 208,887 migrants were detained in August along the southern border with Mexico. It was the first month since Joe Biden became president that the number of border arrests did not increase, but the decline was only 2 percent down from July's 21-year record of 212,672 immigrants detained.

President Biden had said that the increasing numbers of immigrants caught at the southern border was in keeping with seasonal patterns, but the border crossings have continued despite record temperatures and rising cases of coronavirus brought about by the Delta variant. More than 1.5 million immigrants have been detained since the start of the fiscal year.

The Biden administration has continued to expel immigrants using the U.S. public health code known as Title 42. While ostensibly designed to limit the spread of the pandemic, Title 42 was invoked by the Trump administration to stop all immigration into the U.S. Nearly 1 million people were deported under the rule.

Authorities now claim that Title 42 has resulted in repeat border crossings saying that last month 25 percent of detained migrants "had at least one prior encounter in the previous 12 months," compared to an average rate of 14 percent in prior years, according to CBP.

The number of migrants in detention under Title 42 has also declined, with only 44 percent of those in custody taken under that law last month. Out of 86,487 "family unit members" caught by authorities last month, only 19 percent were deported because of Title 42, while the rest were allowed to make asylum claims in the U.S.

Title 42 did not apply to unaccompanied minors, who arrived in record numbers this year. In August, 18,847 teens and children crossed the border alone, a one percent

drop from last month. It should also be noted that almost all single adults caught at the border are immediately deported under Title 42.

In response to the influx and criticism from Republicans that the White House has been lax in enforcing immigration laws, the Biden administration has started deporting families on "expulsion flights" to southern Mexico, where they are usually loaded onto buses by Mexican police and taken back to Central America. Once home, they will return to the extreme poverty, violence, and hunger that forced them to leave in the first place.

The dire situation at the southern border has forced hundreds of migrants to gather under the International Bridge between Del Rio, Texas and Ciudad Acuña in Mexico in recent days. The migrants include Haitians, Venezuelans, Cubans and Africans, who languish in makeshift camps and try to protect themselves under bushes from 97 degree Fahrenheit heat.

A 40-year-old Haitian man, who identified himself to Reuters as Archalge, told the news service, "We want water, we haven't eaten," and that he had been there for three days.

The migrants have access to 22 portable toilets but no running water. Food is bought in Mexico while the migrants have to sleep on dirt underneath floodlights, security cameras, and armed border guards.

The Border Patrol estimated that more than 9,000 migrants were waiting under the bridge to be processed. A week earlier the temporary camp only had a few hundred people. Authorities say thousands more will attempt to cross the Rio Grande in the coming days and have requested more Border agents to the area.

Republican Governor Greg Abbott ordered state police and National Guard to help with Border Patrol and attacked the White House for not doing enough saying,

“The Biden Administration is in complete disarray and is handling the border crisis as badly as the evacuation from Afghanistan.”

In addition to banning abortion and opposing mask mandates in his state, Gov. Abbot has also instructed local police to arrest migrants for trespassing to deter migrants who are already in the country awaiting resolution of their asylum claims.

Abbot has also said he will close entry points at the Mexican border to prevent the town from being “overrun.” Local jails are already being crammed with immigrants from the Governor’s anti- “trespassing” orders.

The vast majority of those who arrived under the bridge appear to be from Haiti, which is still suffering from natural disasters and the assassination of its president, Jovenel Moïse, in July. Return flights to Haiti are expected to resume Monday for deportees and the Department of Homeland Security will send additional officers to help with the backup of asylum claims.

In a setback for the White House, a judge in Texas ruled that the Biden administration could not turn away families under Title 42, and must comply within 14 days.

U.S. District Judge Emmet Sullivan wrote that “in view of the wide availability of testing, vaccines, and other minimization measures, the Court is not convinced that the transmission of COVID-19 during border processing cannot be significantly mitigated.”

He added, “Indeed, the government has successfully implemented mitigation measures with regard to processing unaccompanied minors in order to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission.”

The judge’s order however, does not prohibit the White House from deporting single adults under Title 42. Moreover, the Supreme Court’s ruling last month that the Trump administration’s “Remain in Mexico” policy stay in place, will mean that most asylum seekers will be turned back from the border anyways.



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