

# Mexican truckers block border crossings protesting Texas vehicle inspections

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Truckers ended blockading the north and southbound lanes on the Mexican side of the Pharr-Reynosa International Bridge Thursday after four days, switching to other crossings, after a criminal gang reportedly set fire to some of the trucks and engaged in a shootout with responding police, according to local media.

The protest was sparked by Texas Governor Gregg Abbott's reactionary order for state troopers to begin stopping and inspecting commercial trucks Monday, which led to truckers' pay plummeting due to lengthy wait times. The blockage caused commerce to drop to a fraction of its normal level across the Texas-Mexico border, with backups lasting half a day or longer. A similar protest appeared to take place in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico on Monday, affecting traffic in and out of El Paso, as well as at two other bridges.

One protesting driver, Raymundo Galicia, speaking to Reuters, said it took 17 hours to cross to the US and return due to the inspections.

Notably, the bridge handles a majority of the produce that crosses into Mexico, according to the *Texas Tribune*, which includes avocados, broccoli, peppers, strawberries and tomatoes. According to *Forbes* magazine, roughly \$150 million worth of fruits and vegetables are stalled at the south US-Mexico border.

The Mexican government has said that Abbott's order was causing "serious damage" to trade, with cross-border crashing to a third of normal levels.

Abbott himself was well aware of the impact the order would have, warning last week inspections would "dramatically slow" border traffic.

This has caused supply chain delays for the grocery industry, according to John McCord, executive director of the Texas Retailers Association, in an email to Bloomberg. According to Bloomberg, other shipments including those of semi-trucks and electronics have been stalled.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that Mexico accounted for 22.3 percent of US agricultural imports in 2021, meaning that the stalling of trade across the border could further exacerbate the rise in food costs for working

people, amid some of the worst inflation in decades, with food, fuel and other costs far outpacing wage growth, threatening millions with destitution.

Under the order by Abbott, the Texas Department of Public Safety (TXDPS) troopers inspect commercial vehicles. Abbott said he had taken what he called "unprecedented actions" in response to the Biden administration's planned end of the reactionary Title 42 order, which forces asylum seekers at the border and southern border to remain in Mexico, denying asylum to immigrant families and adults. The Biden administration previously announced in March that it would continue the Trump era order, before reversing course and announcing that it was ending the use of the Title 42 order on May 23.

Abbott said in an April 1 Twitter post, "Ending Title 42 expulsions will signal to cartels & migrants that our border is now wide open—inciting more violence & lawlessness," conflating refugees and immigrants fleeing violence, poverty and hunger with violent criminals and drug traffickers.

Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) reported that Border Patrol officials have said that as many as 18,000 arrivals daily could take place once Title 42 ends, compared to around 7,100 migrants coming per day as of last week. These numbers come as the rise in cost of food, fuel and other necessities is causing a massive decline in living standards around the world, but especially in lower income countries.

If anything, Abbott's reactionary order's purpose is "inciting more violence & lawlessness" from the fascistic dregs within the Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the far-right militias they turn a blind eye to or actively support along the border who attack refugees, as well as the military and police deployed there in preparation for broader provocations against immigrants and the working class in Texas and the United States more broadly. This comes as no surprise as Abbott, as well as leading sections of the increasingly fascistic Republican Party, supported ex-President Donald Trump's January 6 coup attempt to overthrow the US Constitution and establish a fascistic

dictatorship.

Invoking Title 42 was initially justified by Trump, and then Biden, on the basis of public health concerns in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As evidenced by both administrations' disastrous response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the order had nothing to do with public health and was politically motivated. Both the Trump and Biden administrations have embraced mass infection and death under different names, leading to over 1 million American deaths from the disease, despite China showing that public health measures can effectively stamp out transmission of the virus and prevent deaths, of which China has only seen five deaths since May 2020.

Both administrations worked feverishly to attack immigrants and refugees, imprisoning thousands of men, women and children in concentration camps in subhuman conditions.

According to the Texas officials, more than 3,400 commercial vehicles were inspected as of Monday with more than 800 being placed "out of service" for violations, including defective brakes, tires and lighting. Noticeably absent was any mention of whether the inspections found immigrants or drugs.

The opposition in the capitalist political establishment to Abbott's policy almost exclusively fixated on the impact on businesses, with little said on its impact on ordinary working people, and basically nothing was said on the reactionary implications on the rights of immigrants and refugees. In fact, the political establishment by and large agrees with the reactionary framework of preventing so-called "illegal immigration," only differing on the effectiveness and cost to business of Abbott's policy.

It is true, however, that the policy stands to impact both the Texas, Mexican, US and international supply chains. Trade between Texas and Mexico accounted for \$212 billion in 2019 and between the US as a whole and Mexico \$677.3 billion.

The Biden administration's spokeswoman Jen Psaki made lukewarm criticism of the order, calling it "unnecessary and redundant," that is, that the Biden administration has no principled opposition to the policy aimed at preventing immigrants and refugees from crossing the border, but that it merely feels existing federal policy already accomplishes this well enough.

Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller, a Republican, speaking for certain sections of business, had much harsher criticism, calling the inspections a "catastrophic policy" that forced trucks to reroute as far as Arizona. Addressing Governor Abbott, he said, "Your inspection protocol is not stopping illegal immigration. It is stopping food from getting to grocery store shelves and in many cases causing food to

rot in trucks—many of which are owned by Texas and other American companies." He added that the policy is "simply political theater" and instead called on Abbott to devote the billions spent on his border policy to defending Title 42.

Abbott's action takes place amid the campaign for a gubernatorial election in November, where he faces the corporate Democrat Beto O'Rourke. At a press conference in McAllen with local business owners who rely on Mexican imports, O'Rourke called Abbott's policy a "stunt" that is "killing businesses and the Texas economy," does nothing to stop illegal drugs, and cynically stated that "It does nothing to stop the smuggling of human beings." O'Rourke has no principled difference with Abbott on violating the rights of refugees and immigrants. No part of his statement opposed the systematic detaining and expulsion of immigrants and refugees.

Abbott has already deployed thousands of state troopers and National Guard members to the border, installing new border barriers and arresting thousands of migrants on bogus trespassing charges and sending them to prison, many for months, despite the enforcement of the US-Mexico border being legally in the jurisdiction of the federal government. Recently Abbott sent more than 100 National Guard to conduct military exercises in riot gear along the border to prepare for a crackdown on "mass migration."

Underscoring the complicity of the Mexican government in the attack on immigrants, according to Bloomberg, the states of Nuevo Leon and Chihuahua have pledged to enact the same order Abbott is now seeking to end, on the Mexican side of the border, in exchange for a halt to Abbott's inspection program on the Texas side of the border.

At a press conference in Austin with Chihuahua Governor Maria Eugenia Campos Galvan, Abbott said, "The bridge between Chihuahua and Texas will return to normal" with talks reportedly underway with two other Mexico border states, Tamaulipas and Coahuila, seeking to reach similar agreements.



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