Report whitewashes 2021 Border Patrol attack on Haitian migrants at US-Mexico border

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A report released last week by the US Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) Office of Professional Responsibility whitewashes the assault carried out last year against thousands of mostly Haitian migrants in a brutal anti-immigrant campaign involving federal and Texas state forces and overseen by the Biden administration.

The 500-page report reviews the events of September 19, 2021 when roughly 15,000 migrants mostly from Haiti had assembled in a slumlike camp underneath a freeway overpass in Del Rio, Texas, after crossing the border from Mexico. The migrants were greeted by a savage crackdown by Border Patrol agents, as video footage, photographic images, and eye-witness testimony from several news agencies confirmed. Border Patrol thugs mounted on horseback swinging their reins like whips and charging at the defenseless refugees sent shockwaves around the world.

The report noted that the Border Patrol agents on horseback used "unnecessary" force against the migrants and did so in the absence of clear instructions from their supervisors. The agents took commands from the Texas state police and improperly "used force or the threat of force" to drive migrants back into the Rio Grande River from which they had crossed.

Chris Magnus, the commissioner of the CBP, said during a news conference on Friday that the agency has sought to demand that agents should take orders only from their own supervisors instead of Texas local authorities. The horse patrol unit that rushed the migrants was carrying out a request from the Texas Department of Public Safety and not the Border Patrol's senior leadership.

A local Border Patrol supervisor reportedly approved of the request from Texas authorities without securing approval from higher federal authorities. The report noted that the decision to carry out the operation "resulted in unnecessary use of force against migrants who were attempting to re-enter the United States with food."

Magnus recounted a degrading obscenity uttered by one of the fascistic Border Patrol thugs caught in a recorded statement. The agent, who is one of four agents currently facing disciplinary action for charging the migrants on horseback, was recorded telling a Haitian refugee, "This is why your country's shit because you use your women for this." The same agent also reportedly steered his horse dangerously close to a child while pursuing the migrant he had yelled at.

Magnus' comments came only a day after Republican Texas governor Greg Abbott directed state authorities to return migrants they apprehend to the border in flagrant violation of federal authority to enforce immigration laws. In a fascistic tirade delivered on Sunday during a Fox News interview, Abbott provocatively declared there is an "invasion" happening on the southern border driven by "cartels."

The far-right governor is raising the prospect of even more repression at the border by empowering state law enforcement and National Guard troops to bring migrants to the ports of entry. Republican politicians across the country have been demanding state authorities be given the ability to expel migrants from the country once they enter, a procedure only federal authorities can administer.

In a news release last week, Abbott announced an executive order allowing state law enforcement to apprehend "immigrants who cross the border between ports of entry or commit other violations of federal law, and to return" them to ports of entry. This comes as record numbers of immigrants are seeking to cross the border to escape destitution and gang violence in Latin

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America and the Caribbean, an outcome of decades of imperialist oppression and subjugation.

Republican officials are also demanding that Abbott invoke “invasion” powers under the Constitution which contains a federal guarantee of protection against invasion and affirms the power retained of local officials to repel supposed threats on the southern border. The aim is to give states solid legal ground to invoke war powers to allow the state’s National Guard to deport migrants.

White House Press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre denounced the Republican action on Friday as a mere political stunt brought by Abbott, saying, “The immigration enforcement is a federal authority, and states should not be mandating it—meddling in it.”

The September 19, 2021 assault is evidence that culpability for the repression meted out to refugees and immigrants on the southern border falls on both the fascistic Republican lawmakers and the Democratic Party.

Media coverage of the CBP report has presented the violent event as a “challenge” to the Biden administration, recalling Biden’s lukewarm promise last fall that “those people will pay,” for the violent assault. Entirely left out is that the anti-immigrant campaign has fallen in direct line with Biden’s policies, as more than 208,000 migrants had been in detention by August, 2021 and the Democratic administration has overseen record deportations.

As of February of this year more than 20,000 Haitian migrants had been sent back to the Caribbean nation since Biden’s inauguration, according to Witness at the Border. The group found that 161 of the 198 planes carrying the desperate refugees, containing approximately 17,900 people, have flown in just the five months since September 19. This shatters both the absurd claim of the Republican Party that Biden and the Democrats are pursuing an “open border” policy, and discredits the hypocritical claims of the Democrats to be supportive of the rights of refugees.

Moreover, nothing has been done thus far to prosecute the four agents directly responsible for the horse charge. The so-called “disciplinary action” being enforced is a slap-on-the-wrist punishment, with the agents being merely demoted to administrative positions.

The mostly Haitian refugees had been traveling to and from Mexico to get food and other essential products, and resided inside the makeshift camp under the freeway bridge to avoid crossing through lines set up on the US and being arrested by the Border Patrol and Texas state police.

Despite widespread international condemnation of the assault in Del Rio, the Biden Administration began summarily deporting refugees in an airlift back to the Caribbean just days after the incident. Many had not lived in Haiti for years and were forced back to fend off homelessness and starvation in a country long oppressed by American imperialism and dominated by a corrupt Haitian oligarchy.

The pretensions of the Biden administration’s ostensible concern for the plight of migrants have been exposed by the report, which significantly downplays and covers up the inhumane and criminal treatment of migrants by Border Patrol. The investigators concluded that there was no evidence to corroborate allegations from migrants and others that agents used horses’ reins to whip the migrants.

The infamous images and video footage from the incident, which circulated broadly online in subsequent days, clearly showed federal agents corralling migrants in and around the Rio Grande, whipping and herding them as they sought to cross the river.

One of the images was in fact imprinted on an unofficial Border Patrol commemorative coin, known as a “challenge” coin. On the coin, a Border Patrol agent is seen chasing down Haitian migrants. Although it is unclear who produced the coins or how widely they have been distributed, many believe that the coins are connected to Border Patrol agents.

The increasing denial of the right to asylum and the swift deportation of migrants exposes the hypocritical and fraudulent claims of US imperialism and its claim to be fighting for democracy in its predatory US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine. The horrific scenes on the border are testament to both capitalist parties being united in their attacks on the democratic rights of the poorest and most vulnerable.

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