

Biden sending 1,500 active-duty troops to Mexican border

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The Biden administration confirmed Tuesday that it is sending 1,500 active-duty soldiers to the southern border in advance of an expected surge of migrants entering the US through Mexico after COVID rules that permit mass expulsions are lifted on May 11.

Responding to questions at a press briefing in the afternoon, White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre downplayed the significance of the policy by claiming such action “is a common practice.” She also claimed the troops “will not be performing law enforcement functions or interacting with immigrants, or migrants.”

Jean-Pierre also said that the military deployment “will free up Border Patrol agents to perform their critical law enforcement duties.” In other words, the end result of the troop deployment will be a crackdown on immigrants attempting to exercise their right to come into the US.

In a subsequent Department of Defense (DoD) press conference, Pentagon spokesman Air Force Brigadier General Pat Ryder said the deployment would be for 90 days and the troops will be pulled from the Army and Marine Corps. General Ryder added, “This deployment to the border is consistent with other forms of military support to DHS over many years.”

There are currently 2,500 National Guard soldiers at the US border with Mexico. The number of troops sent by Biden is approaching the 5,200 troops at the border during Donald Trump’s presidency.

The claim by the White House that the troops will not be involved in border enforcement is undermined by a published DoD statement, attributed to General Ryder, which says that the duties of the 1,500 soldiers will include “ground-based detection and monitoring” until Customs and Border Protection can “address these needs through contracted support.”

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has been warning that lifting the Title 42 rules less than two weeks from now will result in a surge of asylum seekers coming

into the US. Enacted by the Trump administration during the first months of the coronavirus pandemic to initiate the mass expulsion of immigrants, the Title 42 rules have been used by Biden to carry out the same policy for the past two years and four months.

A federal court struck down Title 42 last November, ruling in favor of a lawsuit brought by a coalition of civil liberties and immigrant rights groups, and declared the rules were based on an unprecedented and unlawful invocation of the Public Health Service Act. Title 42 authorized US immigration authorities to prohibit the entry of asylum seekers on the grounds that they posed a public health risk by coming into the country.

As American Civil Liberties Union Attorney Lee Grant said at the time of the judicial decision, “Title 42 was never about public health, and this ruling finally ends the charade of using Title 42 to bar desperate asylum seekers from even getting a hearing.” While the Biden administration claimed it was in favor of lifting the Title 42 restrictions, it used the rules to carry out more expulsions of migrants than Trump did.

Now, the decision to send troops to the border by President Biden further exposes that the hysteria over migrants entering the US and policy of repression at the border are completely bipartisan and central to both the domestic and foreign policy strategy of the entire ruling establishment.

The troop deployment is also combined with the announcement last Thursday by DHS Director Alejandro Mayorkas and Secretary of State Antony Blinken that new immigration rules were being put in place that would effectively continue the ban on asylum seekers.

These changes will take the form of regional processing centers in several countries of Latin America where asylum seekers must make an appointment. Once the evaluators, who will be contracted by the US State Department, determine that an individual or an entire

family is ineligible for asylum, they will be identified and, if they attempt to cross the southern border anyway, they will be banned from entering for five years and could be prosecuted criminally.

Others who attempt to enter the US without first visiting a processing center will be deported immediately back to their country of origin. As Secretary Mayorkas said in a State Department press conference last Thursday, “Beginning on May 12th, we will be—we will place eligible individuals who arrive at our southern border in expedited removal proceedings.”

When Biden ran for president, he contrasted himself to the fascist Donald Trump and claimed during his campaign he would establish “orderly” and “compassionate” procedures for asylum seekers. This has proven to be a pack of lies and, if anything, the Biden immigration program is emerging as a more comprehensive and organized system of attacks on the democratic rights of migrants.

The fact is that Biden is working feverishly to prove his tough border policy credentials to the extreme nationalist and xenophobic Republicans in Congress—many of whom do not even recognize him as a legitimately elected president—so he can work with them to implement a program of austerity at home combined with war against Russia and China abroad.

The return of asylum seekers to the countries of Latin America—where US imperialism has for more than a century plundered natural resources and established military dictatorships to enforce brutal exploitation and the domination of the region by American multinational corporations—is central to the strategy of both the Democrats and Republicans to stoke up nationalist and anti-foreigner sentiments, seeking to block and divide the growing movement of the working class against the capitalist system internationally.



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