

US Homeland Security chief visits southern border to threaten migrants with expedited removal

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US Homeland Security Director Alejandro Mayorkas arrived in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas on Thursday to reinforce the Biden administration's plans to expand the assault on immigrant rights at the US Southern border before the lifting of Title 42 on May 11.

The Title 42 immigration rules that end May 11 were originally instituted by the Trump administration in March 2020. The fascistic president brazenly sought to exploit the coronavirus pandemic to declare migrants seeking asylum in the US ineligible to enter because they posed a public health risk. Under Title 42, all asylum seekers were subject to summary expulsion. Trump did this while telling the American public that the pandemic posed no threat and would go away on its own.

On Wednesday, Mayorkas' office released a statement saying the purpose of his trip was "to review CBP [Customs and Border Protection] and ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] planning and response operations ahead of the lifting of the Title 42 public health order."

The fact that Mayorkas set as his top priority strengthening the two Homeland Security agencies that are notorious for their brutal treatment of immigrants is an indication of what is being prepared at the border with Mexico. Mayorkas' message was clear, and he repeated it time and again during his trip: "The border is not open. It has not been open, and it will not be open subsequent to May 11th."

The administration also announced on Wednesday a new immigration agreement with Mexico aimed at deterring border crossings as Title 42 ends. A central element of the new agreement is that Mexico will continue to accept migrants from Venezuela, Haiti,

Cuba and Nicaragua who are turned away at the US border.

Another part of the deal is that up to 100,000 individuals from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador who are denied entry to the US but have family there will be eligible to live and work in Mexico.

Under the Title 42 rules, mass expulsions of migrants have been carried out over the last three years with President Biden outstripping former President Trump in the number of people returned to their country of origin or back to Mexico. There have been a total of 2.5 million Title 42 deportations carried out by both administrations over the past 38 months.

The anti-immigrant rules were declared unconstitutional by a federal judge last November, and after numerous legal challenges and attempts to keep them in place, including by the Biden White House, they are now being lifted. The expectation of the Biden administration is that this will result in a surge of migrants seeking to enter the US, and new and more effective measures must be put in place as a substitute for Title 42.

Mayorkas's two-day trip to the border was, in part, aimed at communicating just what these more effective anti-immigrant policies are. On Thursday, he visited McAllen, Texas, where he met with and rode with Border Patrol agents and encountered migrants with makeshift ladders made to climb the border wall. He also visited a processing center, where migrants are being detained, and held meetings with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) staff and local law enforcement.

In the Rio Grande Valley region of southeast Texas that Mayorkas visited, there are more than 2,000

migrants apprehended each day, according to CPB officials. News reports of conditions on both sides of the US-Mexico border reveal an extreme and dire humanitarian crisis. In El Paso, for example, local officials say that more than 1,000 migrants are sleeping on the streets because they have no place to go and have no food.

It is not to this social disaster that the Biden administration is turning its attention, but instead it is focusing on its border control and enforcement operations. On Tuesday, the White House announced plans to send 1,500 active duty troops to the border to back up the border patrol and law enforcement, including what the Department of Defense called “ground-based detection and monitoring duties.”

On Friday afternoon, Mayorkas traveled to Brownsville, Texas, where he gave a press conference. The DHS director elaborated on another prong of the border enforcement strategy, the implementation of regional processing centers. He said that these centers were being set up in Central and South America, adding, “A regional challenge requires a regional solution.”

He continued to emphasize so-called “lawful pathways” that will provide a way for individuals “who qualify for relief under United States law to reach the United States safely.” In other words, immigration authorities will be qualifying who will get into the US and who will not.

He went on, “At the same time, we will deliver consequences for individuals who arrive at our southern border irregularly.” Then Mayorkas attempted to cover the anti-asylum policy with phony sympathy for migrants and claims that the US government is committed to “cutting the smuggler out.”

Mayorkas then explained how the DHS is going to use US laws to continue with mass expulsions. “In a post-Title 42 environment,” he said, “we will be using our expedited removal authorities under Title 8 of the United States code. That allows us to remove individuals very quickly. We will by May 11 finalize the rule that we published in a proposed format that provides that individuals who do not access our lawful pathways will be presumed to be ineligible for asylum and will have a higher burden of proof to overcome that ineligibility.”

When asked how the administration is going to deal

with the surge of migrants, Mayorkas boasted of how the administration has continued to expel Cubans, Nicaraguans, Venezuelans and Haitians, adding that “in a post-Title 42 environment, those expulsions will continue.”

The developments of the past week show that President Biden’s border policy is as ruthless as that of the Trump administration in 2017-2020. Instead of building an iron border wall, Biden’s program is to use advanced technologies for finding, detaining and processing migrants. Since 2022, the Biden administration has added 81 autonomous surveillance towers that use artificial intelligence technology to track individuals and know the difference between a person and a deer crossing through the brush.

During meetings with Biden last July, Mexican President Andres Manuel López Obrador agreed to purchase \$1.5 billion in “smart border” technology. This is a more sophisticated approach to the same policy pursued by Trump in his effort to build a wall and force Mexico to pay for it. Among the technologies being implemented are tower cameras that can see for seven miles at night and ground-sweeping radar that operates in a 13-mile radius, deemed to be more effective than dozens of border agents.



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