

US troops arrive at southern border to prepare for post-Title 42 mass deportations

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Hundreds of active-duty US troops began arriving at the southern border on Tuesday as the Biden administration pressed forward with plans to carry out mass expulsions of migrants entering the country when Title 42 policies terminate at 11:59 p.m. on Thursday evening.

On Tuesday evening, the *Army Times* reported US defense officials as saying, “About 550 US active-duty troops have begun arriving along the US-Mexico border in the first group of military support ahead of an expected increase of migrants.”

Brigadier General Pat Ryder, Pentagon press secretary, said the Army forces and Marines will mainly be used to help monitor and watch the border and perform data entry and support, and are “not there in any way to be interacting with migrants.”

At the same time, General Ryder said the goal of the troop presence was to free up US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) personnel to carry out law enforcement measures. Although he did not go into details, the enforcement operations of CBP will include the mass apprehension and expulsion of tens of thousands of migrants who are expected to begin arriving at the border daily.

Ryder said at least some of the active-duty troops will be used near El Paso, Texas. According to Oscar Leeser, mayor of El Paso, there are currently 2,500 migrants in the city, many of whom are living on the street in makeshift encampments.

Leeser told *PBS News Hour* on Monday that he had traveled across the border to Juarez, Mexico. “There’s probably 10,000 to 12,000 people waiting to come in,” he said. The mayor said he had been told there was a caravan of another 3,500 people coming to Juarez prior to the expiration of Title 42.

Under the terms of Title 42 emergency public health rules, which were implemented by the Trump administration at the beginning of the coronavirus

pandemic, 2.4 million migrants seeking to enter the US, many of them asylum seekers, were deported back to their country of origin or to Mexico in violation of their fundamental immigration rights.

Over the past 28 months, the Biden administration has stepped up the expulsions and used Title 42 aggressively, while claiming to be opposed to its repressive rules. Now Biden is replacing the expiring procedure with a no less draconian regime of migrant apprehension and removal.

On Monday, Texas Governor Greg Abbott announced that he was deploying an elite unit of the National Guard called the Texas Tactical Border Force to El Paso and other locations along the Rio Grande in advance of the expected surge.

In a press conference, Governor Abbott spoke while standing in front of four idling Air Force C-130 cargo jets as the elite guardsmen boarded the planes, carrying M-16 rifles and tactical gear. He said, “They will be deployed to hot spots along the border to intercept, repel and to turn back” migrants who cross into Texas without authorization.

The media spectacle followed a previous announcement by Abbott of Operation Lone Star, including National Guard soldiers and troopers from the Texas Department of Public Safety, to lay “miles of concertina wire” along the Texas side of the Rio Grande.

The hysteria being whipped by Abbott is no doubt connected to the recent instances of mass violence in Texas. On Sunday, in Brownsville, a man drove his SUV into a crowd of immigrants, killing eight people, including children. On Saturday, neo-Nazi Mauricio Garcia massacred eight people with an assault rifle at an outlet mall in Allen, Texas.

In response, in part, to the fascistic actions of Governor Abbott, who has attacked Biden for being insufficiently brutal in his anti-migrant policy, accusing him of laying down “a welcome mat to the entire world,” the

Democratic administration has sought to demonstrate that it is just as ruthless toward migrants as Trump and the Republican Party.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Director Alejandro Mayorkas has been on a non-stop campaign over the past two weeks to make it clear the border is not “open” and will not be open after Title 42 is lifted.

A week ago, Mayorkas toured several communities in the Rio Grande Valley and spoke at a press conference in Brownsville, where he said that in a post-Title 42 environment, “we will be using our expedited removal authorities under Title 8 of the United States code.” All those removed under Title 8 will be banned from entering the US for five years, and if they attempt to enter before then, will be subject to criminal prosecution.

At a DHS press conference on Wednesday, Mayorkas justified the crackdown on immigrants as a necessary response to the inaction of Congress, referring to a “broken immigration system.” He said, “After two years of preparation we expect to see large numbers of encounters at our southern border in the days and weeks after May 11.”

Mayorkas went on: “As you can see by the images before us of removal flights and encounters with our border patrol agents, we are making it very clear that our border is not open, backcrossing irregularly is against the law, and that those who are not eligible for release will be quickly returned.”

While referring to “safe and lawful pathways” for migrants to enter to the US, Mayorkas spent little time explaining what those are and concentrated on the removal procedures. He emphasized the new rules that “presume that those who do not use lawful pathways to enter the United States are ineligible for asylum,” adding that the new rules allow the US “to remove individuals who do not establish a reasonable fear of persecution in the country of removal.”



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