

As Title 42 expires, US and Mexico deploy tens of thousands of police and military against immigrants

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With the midnight expiration of pandemic-era Title 42 immigration policies, used by both the Trump and Biden administration to expel millions of immigrants without a hearing, thousands of US and Mexican immigration police and military personnel have been deployed along the border.

The Biden administration, the Texas state government and the Mexican government are transforming the already highly militarized border into a virtual police state.

On the US side of the border, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has deployed 24,000 agents. On Tuesday, White House officials acknowledge that “thousands” of other law enforcement officials and contractors with the Department of Homeland Security had also been deployed alongside CBP agents.

Joining border police and Department of Homeland Security contractors are thousands of US military personnel armed with drones, Humvees and automatic machine guns. So far, President Joe Biden has authorized 1,500 troops to be deployed to south Texas. This is on top of the 2,500 Texas National Guard troops already deployed as part of Governor Greg Abbott’s “Operation Lone Star,” for a total of 4,000 military personnel in Texas.

The US government’s militarized crackdown on immigrants is being joined on the other side of the border by Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador. As of this writing the Mexican government has 25,000 soldiers deployed along the border, bringing the total number of armed US and Mexican border agents and military adjuncts to well over 50,000.

While the capitalist governments of Mexico and the United States have found unlimited resources to deploy agents and tools of repression, including thousands of miles of barbed-wire fencing, scant aid has been made available for the

immigrants making the dangerous journey through jungles, mountains and deserts to the US.

Images and video from the border show immigrant families with children, young people, adults of working age and the elderly, all braving the blazing sun and dust storms as they wait in lines for days on end to be “processed” under the watchful eye of heavily armed border guards.

The surge in immigration along the border is being driven by several interconnected factors. Millions of people across Latin America, a region historically oppressed by US imperialism, have been forced out of their homes by poverty, natural disasters and gang violence; fleeing conditions that have only been exacerbated by over three years of the pandemic and the accompanying inflation that has followed.

Importantly, many thousands of migrants currently massed along the US-Mexico border are fleeing from countries that have long been in the cross-hairs of US economic sanctions, such as Venezuela and Cuba. With the expiration of Title 42 enforcement, they are trying to get into the United States prior to the enforcement of Title 8 of the immigration laws, which is set to become the new legal basis for persecuting and expelling migrants.

While Biden campaigned on a more “humane” border regime compared to the fascistic Trump, as with virtually all of his promises Biden has not reversed but rather continued and expanded his predecessor’s policies. Prior to its expiration Thursday night, the Biden administration used Title 42 over 2 million times to expel migrants.

Unlike Title 42, which did not impose a penalty for immigrants who repeatedly tried to cross the border, under Title 8, immigrants who are rejected will not be allowed to apply for asylum for five years.

Jovanna Gomez, a 40-year-old immigrant from Columbia, told Reuters, “In my country, you hear that immigration will only be allowed until May 11, so we came racing against the clock.” “It wasn’t easy,” she added.

In the last three days, CBP has announced that the agency has averaged more than 10,000 arrests per day, more than double the 4,000-5,000 average daily arrests this past winter. Once in the custody of CBP, immigrants arrested are forced into overcrowded facilities before either being deported, or given an appointment to schedule a future meeting with immigration authorities.

On Wednesday, CBP officials acknowledged a severe overcrowding problem at their facilities. While the agency currently has capacity for 10,000 immigrants, CBP said that there were currently over 28,000 immigrants in their custody. Arguing in court on Wednesday for expedited procedures to transfer immigrants out of CBP facilities, Biden administration lawyers said that if nothing was done, over “45,000 individuals” would be “in custody by the end of the month.”

Without a court order, the Biden administration argued that forcing immigrants to remain in the facilities would “exacerbate already very seriously concerning holding conditions, likely force operational conditions that causes CBP to violate [other] court orders... and have extremely dire and catastrophic consequences.”

Less than two months ago a deadly fire broke out in an overcrowded detention center in the Mexican border city of Ciudad Juarez, killing over 40 people. All along the US-Mexico border, the conditions are being prepared for similar catastrophes.

Border Patrol union president Brandon Judd told Reuters the busiest facilities were in the lower Rio Grande Valley and El Paso, Texas and along the Arizona-Mexico border. Judd claimed that “on average” immigrants were spending three days in CBP custody before being released with a notice to appear in immigration court.

Desperate families seeking asylum will be subject to strict monitoring by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* on Wednesday, an unnamed ICE official told the paper the agency was implementing a new plan called the “Family Expedited Removal Management.”

Under the “FERM” plan, “heads” of immigrant families,

such as mothers and fathers, will be forced to wear a GPS ankle monitor and adhere to a strict 11 p.m.-5 a.m. curfew, restricting travel and work. They will also have to appear for an initial asylum screening, or “credible fear” interview. If they “fail” the interview, the entire family will be deported.

“There are consequences for family units,” the ICE official told the *Times*. “If they are not eligible to remain in the US, we are going to be moving them toward removal.”

Both parties of big business fully support the attack on immigrants. On Thursday, House Republicans passed the “Secure the Border Act” which would provide millions of dollars to hire thousands of more border patrol agents and add to the southern border wall.

While Biden has vowed to veto the bill should it come to his desk, this is not because the Democrats don’t support increasing the size of the border police. On Twitter, California Governor Gavin Newsom, a potential future presidential candidate, attacked House Speaker Kevin McCarthy’s proposed budget for not providing enough money to CBP.

“Here’s the truth,” Newsom wrote on Thursday, “Speaker McCarthy’s budget cuts \$4 billion from Customs and Border Protection and will result in the loss of 2,400+ officers.”

In opposition to the parties of capital, the Socialist Equality Party unconditionally defends the democratic rights of workers to live and work in the country of their choice. While both the Republicans and Democrats oppose open borders and call for protectionist economic-nationalist policies, the SEP fights for the social ownership of the productive forces, the elimination of national borders, and the creation of planned, rationally integrated global economy, operating for the benefit of all instead of a tiny few.



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