

# The bodies of two migrants found in the Rio Grande, one in buoy barrier set up by Texas governor

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Mexican and Texas authorities confirmed an unidentified body was found stuck in the buoy barrier that Governor Greg Abbott installed last month in the Rio Grande, between Eagle Pass, Texas, and the Mexican city of Piedras Negras.

On Wednesday, Mexico's foreign affairs office issued a news release stating Texas troopers alerted the Mexican consulate at about 2:30 p.m. that a body was found on the south side of the buoys.

So far, authorities have been unable to determine the identity or the nationality of the deceased. Mexico's foreign affairs office said the cause of death has also not been determined.

However, Texas Department of Public Safety head Steve McCraw claimed in a statement Thursday, "preliminary information suggests this individual drowned upstream from the marine barrier and floated into the buoys."

Even if true, the state of Texas bears an immense responsibility for the death and misery migrants face along the Texas-Mexico border. In fact, Texas selected the location the barrier is deployed to precisely because it is a relatively shallow stretch of the Rio Grande and is a preferred crossing point for many immigrants. Previous injuries and deaths have already been reported after migrants attempted to circumvent the buoys, including in parts of the river that Texas has deployed barrels wrapped in razor wire as traps.

Soon after the first body was discovered Wednesday, the *Dallas Morning News* reported that another body was found near the buoys. According to the newspaper, the body was identified as a 20-year-old Honduran man after his mother recognized his tattoos. However, authorities reported being unable to confirm the body's

identity due to the advanced state of decay.

The Mexican government has since criticized Texas in a statement, saying that the placement of the buoys is "a violation of our sovereignty."

"We express our concern about the impact on the human rights and personal safety of migrants that these state policies will have, which run counter to the close collaboration between our country and the federal government of the United States," the news release said.

A spokesperson for Governor Abbott said the "Mexican government is flat-out wrong." The first reported body had floated into the buoys and the second body "was found miles upstream from the marine barriers," said Andrew Mahaleris, a spokesperson for Abbott.

"Also, DPS monitors the barriers for anyone attempting to cross and has not observed anyone attempting to cross since they were installed," Mahaleris said.

The area of the Rio Grande between Eagle Pass and Piedras Negras has become a popular crossing point because it is shallow enough to traverse on foot. Still, it is common for migrants to be washed away by the deceiving river, where currents can catch them unawares and upset their footing.

The marine barrier, which extends 1,000 feet along the river, is composed of a series of orange spheres that have a mesh net between them. The barrier was strategically placed and designed so that climbing over it or swimming underneath is impossible.

Last month, the US Department of Justice filed a lawsuit against Texas saying the placement of the buoy and other obstacles in the river was illegal without the

approval of the federal government.

Abbott has defended his policies, claiming Texas has its own constitutional right to protect its borders. In a “Letter to President Joe Biden,” Abbott declared he only took action where the federal government would not.

“If you truly care about human life, you must begin enforcing federal immigration laws,” reads the letter. “By doing so, you can help me stop migrants from wagering their lives in the waters of the Rio Grande River. You can also help me save Texans, and indeed all Americans, from deadly drugs like fentanyl, cartel violence, and the horrors of human trafficking. To end the risk that migrants will be harmed crossing the border illegally, you must fully enforce the laws of the United States that prohibit illegal immigration between ports of entry. In the meantime, Texas will fully utilize its constitutional authority to deal with the crisis you have caused. Texas will see you in court, Mr. President.”

Meanwhile, a federal judge struck down the Biden administration’s temporary restrictions on asylum seekers, ruling that the federal government’s plan to reduce crossings at the border violated federal law.

On July 25, US District Judge Jon S. Tigar ruled against a system the Biden administration imposed over two months ago that penalized migrants who crossed the border “illegally.”

In his ruling, Tigar sided with advocacy groups who had urged him to reject the restrictions on the basis that they endangered migrants and violated federal law, which states that anyone on US soil may request asylum, no matter how they arrived.

Lawyers for the Biden administration had told Tigar in court filings that overturning the restrictions could have a “chaotic impact” on the border, and that they feared migrants would rush the international boundary and overwhelm the Border Patrol.

Tigar granted the government’s request to delay the ruling from taking effect for 14 days to allow time for officials to appeal.

Officials imposed the temporary rules in May as they ended a pandemic policy known as Title 42 that allowed border agents to quickly expel asylum seekers without a hearing.

The rules state that migrants are ineligible for asylum if they crossed the border without seeking asylum in

another country on their way to the US. Asylum seekers can ask to get into the United States legally via an app or if a US resident sponsors them to enter via a system known as “parole.” Migrants can also ask to bypass the restrictions if they face a serious health condition or an imminent safety threat.

Biden administration officials say the rules, in part, contributed to a nearly 42 percent drop in illegal border crossings in June, the first full month the policy was in effect. The Border Patrol made 99,545 arrests last month, the lowest monthly tally since Biden took office.

Tigar’s decision Tuesday echoed his prior rulings on the issue under the Trump administration, which had instituted similar restrictions on asylum seekers.

In 2018, Tigar temporarily blocked the Trump administration from denying asylum to migrants who crossed the southern border illegally. The US Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit and the Supreme Court declined to stay that decision. Tigar also shot down a 2019 rule that forbade migrants to seek asylum if they had failed to ask for refuge in a country they passed through on their way to the US-Mexico border.

The legal battles between the two capitalist parties demonstrates that hostility towards immigrants is a conscious class policy. Both sides are not concerned with the well-being of those fleeing violence and poverty, but instead argue about what is deemed an acceptable level of violence to “secure the border.” Securing the rights and safety of migrant workers can only be achieved through the mobilization of the working class on an international basis, and abolition of capitalism and its nation-state system.



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