



Immigration

# US Adds Sixth City to Controversial 'Remain in Mexico' Program

By Victoria Macchi  
October 29, 2019 07:39 PM



Migrants, most of them asylum-seekers sent back to Mexico from the U.S. under the "Remain in Mexico" program, officially named Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), occupy a makeshift encampment in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico, Oct. 28, 2019.

The U.S. added another city this week to the growing list of locations where asylum-seekers are being returned to Mexico to await their immigration court hearings.

Eagle Pass, Texas, a quiet city on the Rio Grande where border agents have carried out an increased number of migrant apprehensions this year, is the sixth city along the U.S.-Mexico border where the controversial program is under way.

Since January, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials have dropped off more than 55,000 people back to Mexico who crossed into the U.S. without authorization.



FILE - Mexican federal police officers stand on the bank of the Rio Bravo near a bridge connecting Eagle Pass, Texas, with Piedras Negras, in Piedras Negras, Mexico, Feb. 10, 2019.

There, they face the choice of remaining for months until their first court date, or abandoning their asylum case — possibly applying for humanitarian relief in Mexico or returning to their home country.

Migrant Protection Protocol (MPP) was already in place in the California cities of San Diego and Calexico, as well as the Texas cities of El Paso, Laredo and Brownsville.

Returns though Eagle Pass to Piedras Negras, Mexico, began on Oct. 29, according to CBP.

Asylum-seekers will receive notices to appear at the tent court in Laredo, Texas, for hearings two to four months in the future, according to CBP.

The cities are about 200 kilometers apart — a more than two-hour drive.

While the U.S. government lauds the policy as a major factor in reducing the number of unauthorized border crossings in 2019, critics of MPP decry the dangers migrants face in cartel-dominated Mexican border cities like Nuevo Laredo, and other areas where they are vulnerable to kidnapping, rape or assault.



### How US Government's 'Remain in Mexico' Plan Unfurled Into Confusion

US policy forces asylum-seekers back across the border - sometimes to dangerous cities - to await their cases being reviewed

## 'System designed for failure'

In an August report, [Human Rights First](#) skewered the U.S. policy, renaming it the "Migrant Persecution Protocols" and enumerating scores of reports of violent acts committed against individuals sent back to Mexico — largely Central Americans from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

"We are confident in the program's integrity and ability to adjudicate asylum claims quickly and with all due process," said U.S. Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Kevin McAleenan, as the expansion was announced Monday.

But the legal processes around MPP are questioned by lawyers and immigrant advocates.

"This is a system designed for failure," said Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, an immigration policy analyst at the American Immigration Council.



**Aaron Reichlin-Melnick**  
@ReichlinMelnick



MPP has been officially expanded to Eagle Pass/Piedras Negras. People will be given hearing dates in Laredo, two hours away. DHS even admits in the press release that some will have to wait up to 4 months just for a first hearing.

Again, this is a system designed for failure.

**Caitlin Dickson** @CEDickson

A lot of immigration announcements coming out of @DHSgov today, the start of what is supposed to be Kevin McAleenan's last week as acting secretary. Reminder: Trump still has not named his replacement.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Office of Public Affairs

---

## DHS Expands MPP Operations to Eagle Pass

WASHINGTON - As of Oct. 28, the Department of Homeland Security has begun processing migrants for return to Mexico under the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) at the Eagle Pass Port of Entry, in Eagle Pass, Texas. This brings the total number of ports of entry where MPP returns will be made to six. Migrants who attempts to enter the U.S. via the southwest border regardless of location may be returned to Mexico to await their immigration court proceedings. The expansion to Eagle Pass reflects the

9:12 PM - Oct 28, 2019

21 likes 20 people are Tweeting about this

Special tent courts were erected in recent months solely to handle MPP cases, but allow asylum-seekers to speak with a judge over videoconferencing, rather than in the same courtroom.

Media and other observers have not had regular access to the tent courts.

## RELATED STORIES

- 

**Immigration Official Says US-Mexico Border Crisis Not Over**

Over the budget year that ended Sept. 30, there were 859,510 apprehensions by Border Patrol, plus over 110,000 more encounters of people who tried to enter legally but were deemed inadmissible

**AP** By Associated Press  
Tue, 10/29/2019 - 02:48 PM



**Caravan of 2,000 Migrants Detained in Southern Mexico**

Mexican officials broke apart a caravan of about 2,000 migrants that had set out from southern Mexico Saturday in the hopes of reaching the United States

**AP** By Associated Press  
Sun, 10/13/2019 - 12:29 AM



**UN Refugee Chief Asks Mexico to do More for Asylum Seekers**

Filippo Grandi said in a statement the number of people seeking asylum in Mexico is only expected to grow as the United States makes it more difficult to seek asylum there

**AP** By Associated Press  
Wed, 10/02/2019 - 01:37 PM

By **Victoria Macchi**



Search VOA News

### UNITED STATES

- US Politics
- Immigration
- All About America
- Silicon Valley And Technology

### WORLD NEWS

- Africa
- The Americas
- East Asia Pacific
- Europe
- Middle East
- South & Central Asia

### SECTIONS

- Arts & Culture
- Day In Photos
- Economy & Business
- Extremism Watch
- Press Freedom
- Science & Health
- VOA StudentU
- VOA Connect
- Refugees

### VOICE OF AMERICA

- About VOA
- Contact VOA
- Terms Of Use And Privacy Notice
- Accessibility
- Get Our Mobile App
- Usage Requests
- VOA Around The World
- VOA Pronunciation Guide
- Media Relations
- Listen On The Radio
- Satellite Schedule
- Subscribe To Our Newsletters