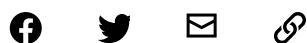


Biden admin outlines response to surge of Haitian migrants at border

Over 12,900 migrants have attempted to cross into the small Texas border town.

By Quinn Owen

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U.S. Customs and Border Protection closes Del Rio Port of Entry

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The Biden administration over the weekend outlined steps it plans to take in response to a surge of migrants along the southern border attempting to gain entry into the small town of Del Rio, Texas.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection sent more than 400 personnel to the area to assist with processing and the Department of Homeland Security said on Saturday it plans to increase removal flights to Haiti as a result. Other countries will be considered for resettlement, the department said, particularly those where migrants last resided.

The Biden administration is going beyond the border with its response. One of the prongs in its swift reaction to the migration surge is to work with the Haitian government, and other regional governments, on resettlement.

Border Patrol Chief Raul Ortiz said at a press conference Sunday that the administration was moving quickly to increase removal flights of Haitians from the border and said he hoped to have all of the migrants processed in less than a week.

"They will be removed and they will be sent back to their country of origin," Ortiz said of migrants without a legitimate claim to stay.

They expect to have 3,000 migrants transferred away from the bridge within the next 24 hours, the chief said.

Ortiz outlined steps currently being taken by immigration authorities in response. Officials continue to provide water, toilets, towels, medical care and within the next 24 hours, CBP will have sent 600 personnel to the area.

The chief compared the influx to levels seen in 2019, but acknowledged the rate of crossings has been greater this time. Haitians have moved through Del Rio in the past, the chief said, and word of mouth could be a driving factor for those crossing now.

CBP decided to close the Del Rio Port of Entry late Friday in an effort to gain control of the influx. Instead, traffic is being redirected nearly 60 miles south to the Eagle Pass Port of Entry.

"This temporary closure and shift is necessary in order for CBP to respond to urgent safety and security needs presented by an influx of migrants into Del Rio and is effective immediately," CBP said in a statement. "It will advance and protect national interests and help ensure the safety of the traveling public, commercial traffic, and CBP employees and facilities."

The number of migrants camped out under the bridge in Del Rio, Texas, has grown to about 13,000, according to Val Verde Country Sheriff Joe Frank Martinez, who is receiving regular updates from Border Patrol and has personally observed the encampment.

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Border Patrol leadership traveled to Del Rio area and Ortiz planned to meet with stakeholders and community leaders Sunday afternoon.

"People in D.C. need to get off the bench and get in the game," Martinez told ABC News. "This is a serious situation here."

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CBP did not say how long the border crossing would be closed. The agency is also making efforts to transport migrants elsewhere to ensure timely processing. About 2,000 have been moved so far. Some are already being sent back on flights directly to Haiti, where most of the migrants are reportedly from.

The influx has strained local resources and prompted the Department of Homeland Security to order up basic resources, including water, towels and portable toilets. Del Rio is a small town of about 30,000 more than two hours outside of San Antonio and has consistently struggled to handle the repeated influx of migrants coming across the border over the past year.

The Biden administration continues to warn migrants about the dangers of attempting to cross without authorization.

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"Irregular migration poses a significant threat to the health and welfare of border communities and to the lives of migrants themselves, and should not be attempted," the Department of Homeland Security said in a statement.

U.S. authorities remain under strain following the Biden administration's decisions to roll back some of the hard-line measures rolled out by the Trump administration. Under orders from a federal judge,

Biden officials have been forced to reinstate the "Remain in Mexico" policy while it challenges the orders in court.

Last month, immigration authorities stopped migrants from illegally crossing the border more than 200,000 times. The numbers represent a nearly 20-year high, although many of the arrests involve repeat offenders.

