

# **Biden's new border problem: Nations won't take back migrants**

Migrants fleeing countries that refuse to take them back are driving new backlogs in the U.S. immigration system — and White House and Homeland Security officials worry this poses a growing obstacle to balancing humanitarian and national security concerns.

Driving the news: U.S. officials at the southern border have come across an average of nearly 800 Venezuelan migrants each day for the past week— more than any other nationality except those from Mexico, according to internal immigration data obtained by Axios.

—There are now more Venezuelans in border custody than any other nationality, followed closely by Nicaragua. A record 13,400 crossed the border in October.

—More than 5,000 Cubans, Brazilians and Venezuelans crossed the dangerous Darién Gap into Panama last month, on top of more than 17,000 Haitians, according to Panamanian government data.

What they're saying: "The Department of Homeland Security is committed to ensuring safe, orderly and humane immigration processes," said DHS spokesperson Eduardo Silva.

—"DHS, in coordination with the Department of State, has regular discussions with partner countries in the hemisphere on migration-related matters, and continues to engage with foreign governments to improve cooperation with countries that systematically refuse or delay the repatriation of their nationals."

The big picture: Overall, numbers at the border are far lower than they were earlier this year, during the peak of children and families illegally crossing the U.S.-Mexico border.

—But an unprecedented number of migrant adults are coming from countries that make deportation difficult, primarily Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua and Brazil.

—The U.S. government must decide whether to detain long term or release most single adults coming from nations reluctant to accept back their own citizens

when the U.S. turns them away.

Between the lines: Cuba and Venezuela are some of the least cooperative countries when it comes to U.S. efforts to return migrants who don't qualify for asylum or other protections.

—Brazil and Nicaragua accept a limited number of deportation flights but require extensive notice, and otherwise make it more difficult than other parts of the world.

—Mexico also refuses migrants from these countries under the controversial pandemic-related policy called Title 42.

—Migrants are further complicating the situation by heading toward smaller, understaffed border sectors such as Del Rio, Texas, and Yuma, Arizona, one DHS official told Axios.

Haitians held in a migrant camp under a bridge in Del Rio drew national attention in September.

—Of the roughly 25,000 migrants who surged the sector during the month, only about a third were from Haiti, according to other internal data viewed by Axios.

—Another third were Venezuelan, but their home country was not as willing as Haiti to accept multiple deportation flights a day.

However, 69% of the 21,000 people who arrived Sept. 9-24 were Haitian, a DHS official told Axios.

—Over the past week, border crossers from farther-away countries outpaced those from Mexico or the Northern Triangle nations of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

—On Sunday alone, nearly 800 of these migrants from South America, Africa and other distant regions were released into the U.S.

What to watch: The administration is trying to address the issue, first by asking Mexico to ramp up enforcement. Mexico is already considering stricter requirements for entry for Venezuelans, as Reuters reported.

—There also are plans to be more aggressive in detaining migrants from

recalcitrant countries in the hope of deterring future migration.

—And the U.S. is in discussions with Central American nations to find ways to send some migrants to them, according to two government immigration officials.

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Source:

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