

# Thousands of Haitian migrants vanish via White House's math

The Biden administration had to resort to fuzzy math on Thursday in an attempt to claim progress in dealing with the Haitian migrant crisis in Del Rio, Texas.

During her daily news briefing, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said that since Sunday, 12 “repatriation flights” had ferried 1,401 undocumented immigrants back home to Haiti.

Psaki said another 3,206 Haitians “have been moved” from their massive makeshift encampment under the Del Rio International Bridge into the custody of US Customs and Border Protection “or to other sectors of the United States border.”

There, Psaki said, they face immediate expulsion, “if possible,” under a federal public-health law, known as Title 42, or else deportation proceedings in US Immigration Court.

“Therefore, there remain less than 5,000 migrants in the Del Rio sector,” Psaki noted.



A Haitian migrant talks to with a Mexican police officer blocking access to the Rio Grande. Felix Marquez/AP

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But Psaki's calculations— which accounted for no more than 9,606 migrants — appeared to dramatically discount an estimate by The Associated Press that there were 15,000 gathered under and around the bridge on Saturday.

If the AP is accurate, that would mean around 5,400 are now unaccounted for — and may have disappeared into the US without notice.

Psaki was pressed on the discrepancy by a Fox News reporter who asked, "Where's everybody else?"

"I'm happy to get you a more fruitful rundown for you, if helpful, from the Department of Homeland Security," she answered.





Migrants, most from Haiti, cross the Rio Grande towards Del Rio, Texas, from Ciudad Acuña, Mexico. Felix Marquez/AP

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DHS didn't respond to a request from The Post for additional information.

However, in a Thursday evening appearance on CNN, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas again claimed he did not know how many migrants had been released into the US under direct questioning from host Wolf Blitzer.

"We believe it is a very small percentage of the total that assembled in Del Rio, Texas, and that will be removed," Mayorkas said.

"Well, what does that mean?" a befuddled Blitzer asked. "About 15,000, I have, showed up [in Del Rio]. I take it 1,400 have been sent back to Haiti. What about the rest?"

"Wolf, if it's 10 percent or 15 percent, I don't have the precise numbers," Mayorkas admitted. "I assure you it's a minority of the individuals ... and they are placed in immigration enforcement proceedings, where they are able, where they appear before a judge and if, in fact, they make a valid claim to remain in the

United States, and of course, we honor that. And if not, they are removed as well.”

Also Thursday, DHS updated their statistics to note that 1,949 migrants had been flown back to Haiti since Sunday, while 3,901 had been moved to CBP custody or other border sectors. The department estimated that 3,100 migrants remained under the Del Rio bridge, leaving a gap of more than 6,000 between the total number accounted for by DHS and the top-end estimate reported by AP.

On Wednesday, the AP reported that a US official said illegal immigrants nabbed in Del Rio amid the crisis had been released on a “very, very large scale” — possibly reaching into the thousands — and simply told to report to an immigration office within 60 days.

Some were put on buses to El Paso, Laredo and other locations along the Texas border with Mexico, and others were flown to Tucson, Ariz., according to the report.

Meanwhile, Reuters and the Los Angeles Times reported that thousands of the mostly Haitian migrants still in Del Rio had been given color-coded tickets by immigration officials and told to await processing.

Tickets that are blue or yellow — which are issued to families and pregnant women, respectively — will allow holders to enter the United States legally and seek permission to stay, according to the LA Times. But red or green tickets — for single men and single women, respectively — will likely result in a trip back to Haiti.





A boy walks at a migrant camp in Ciudad Acuña. Felix Marquez/AP

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Haitian migrant Pedro Fisime, 24, said he received a blue ticket after spending six days in the squalid encampment with his 10-year-old daughter, Reyna.

“It’s a very difficult process for all of us,” he told the LA Times.

“I had faith and I made it to the US,” he said. “You have to try.”

The tickets are numbered — and Border Patrol agents use the digits to summon migrants to buses and vans that will carry them to the airport for flights back to Haiti or for processing and release into the United States, according to the LA Times.

But some migrants who were handed the prized blue and yellow tickets were apparently unaware of their good fortune and instead thought it meant they faced expulsion.

So they headed for the Rio Grande to try to make the treacherous crossing back into Mexico.



Jen Psaki said there have been over 1,400 undocumented immigrants sent back to Haiti since Sunday. Evan Vucci/AP

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Another Haitian migrant, Fabricio Jean, told the AP that he made his way from Chile to Del Rio by following detailed instructions that his brother sent to him via the encrypted WhatsApp cellphone application.

Jean said that his brother, who recently made the trip and is currently living in New Jersey, warned him to stay away from areas in Mexico with lots of immigration officials and also wired him money for bus fares.

"You will need about 20,000 pesos (about \$1,000 U.S. dollars) for the buses," the brother reportedly wrote him. "You need to take this bus to this location and then take another bus."

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