

# Yet Another Caravan Forming to Test American Border Resolve



Yet another migrant caravan is forming in Honduras, the latest driven by hope that an incoming Joe Biden presidency will open gates closed by the outgoing Trump administration.

According to fresh media reports, this caravan hopes to leave San Pedro Sula, Honduras, on January 15, which in the unlikely event it can get past Guatemala and Mexican pandemic-related border closures, seems timed to reach the U.S. southern border by Biden's January 20 inauguration. Reuters reports that the caravan is being organized on social media, including one Facebook group that boasts more than 5,500 members who exchange tips and advice on how to reach "paradise" in their journeys north.

Caravan formations — and dispersals — have increased as the incoming Biden administration promises to undo Trump's deterrence-focused illegal immigration policies and to immediately propose an immigration reform bill to the new Democratic Congress that likely would provide amnesty for millions of illegally present immigrants. Such talk has energized the universe of aspiring illegal immigrants, such as up to 400 Cubans who stormed the international bridge between Juarez and El Paso on December 29, chanting "Biden! Biden! Biden!" while demanding to be let in.

# Probably Not in Time for Biden to Open the Gates

However, like those Cubans already in the U.S.-Mexico border vicinity and a failed caravan that Honduran police broke up in December, this new-forming one may also still have picked a premature departure date, as it will still face pandemic-related border closures in Central America and Mexico, and a U.S. border that will still be under the sway of President Trump's tough policies for some weeks or months.

As I have often noted, at issue with the caravans is that when a first one finally succeeds in crossing the American border, many more will no doubt follow through the breach and quickly lead to another mass surge and humanitarian crisis there.

The mass-migration caravans that first came into vogue in late 2018 are favored because for a time (long before any hurricanes) they successfully delivered thousands of Central Americans over the U.S. border by overwhelming authorities, detention facilities, and normal asylum system processes.

In addition to their successful human deliveries onto the U.S. side of the border, the caravans were far cheaper and safer for the migrants than hiring smugglers. Eventually, though, a variety of Trump's policies forced Central American governments and Mexico to break up at least five large caravans in late 2019 through December 2020 and posed a credible threat that any who reached the southern border would be promptly pushed back into Mexico.

One of the most effective Trump arrangements was his push to force Mexico's President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador to station 6,000 Mexican national guard troops on that country's southern border with Guatemala. The deployment has broken up several major caravans and deported their participants back home on buses.

But President-elect Biden and Obrador in December discussed a new more "humane strategy" to address regional migration. Little in the reporting of this meeting suggests what may become of this key troop deployment.

# Blaming Hurricanes Now?

But while many American news outlets now ascribe migrant motivations to recent hurricanes that struck Central America, the truth is that, long before those fall 2020 weather events, aspiring border-crossers like the Cubans have often cited as their main motivation an acute awareness that U.S. Democrats under a Biden White House would undo Trump's deterrence policies and swing wide open the gates to them.

Furthermore, untold thousands of aspiring "extra-continental" U.S. border-crossers are coming from countries further south and from around the world that those hurricanes did not strike, but who have found themselves slowed by pandemic border closures.

For instance, the Havana Times newspaper quoted a Cuban migrant couple in the "Por la Libertad" caravan temporarily stopped in Suriname as saying it formed as a result of Biden's November 3 election win.

Media coverage of any predicted mass-migration crisis at the southern border will no doubt choose the hurricane narrative, rather than the fact that Biden's campaign promises on immigration have excited and animated the vast world of aspiring migrants to charge the border in caravans or from Mexico. But that explanation is disingenuous in the face of chants like "Biden! Biden! Biden!"

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