



U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Fact Sheet: Update on DHS Planning for Southwest Border Security Measures as the Title 42 Public Health Order Ends

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The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has been preparing for the end of the Title 42 public health Order for well over a year. In the fall of 2021, DHS began contingency planning efforts that included building an operational plan and conducting ongoing tabletop exercises. In February 2022, DHS formally [stood up](https://www.dhs.gov/news/2022/03/30/fact-sheet-dhs-preparations-potential-increase-migration) the Southwest Border Coordination Center, which leads the planning and coordinating of a whole-of-government response to the anticipated increase in border encounters. In April 2022, U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas issued the [DHS Plan for Southwest Border Security and Preparedness](https://www.dhs.gov/publication/dhs-plan-southwest-border-security-and-preparedness), laying out a six-pillar plan to manage an increase in encounters once the Title 42 public health Order is no longer in effect. DHS [updated the plan](https://www.dhs.gov/news/2022/12/13/statement-secretary-mayorkas-planning-end-title-42#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThe%20Title%2042%20public%20health%20order%20remains%20in,encountered%20at%20the%20southwest%20border%20under%20that%20authority,) and presents the most recent preparedness efforts below. DHS expects that encounters at the Southwest Border will increase as smugglers spread disinformation, which will place a strain on our immigration system, our communities, and our dedicated workforce. Our preparations, underway since the fall of 2021, are important to mitigating the impact of such increases. However, until and unless Congress updates our outdated immigration and asylum statutes, the United States will continue to face challenges at the Southwest Border.

DHS interagency preparedness efforts involve:

Pillar 1: Surging resources, including personnel, transportation, medical support, and facilities to support border operations.

- DHS currently has 24,000 U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents and officers along the Southwest Border, and to get agents back in the field has hired and contracted for over 2,000 additional non-uniformed personnel to assist in processing and facility operations.
- Secured Congressional authorization within the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 enactment to hire an additional 300 U.S. Border Patrol Agents, the first such increase in more than a decade. The President's FY 2024 budget requests 350 more agents, 310 Border Patrol Processing Coordinators, 150 CBP officers, as well as an additional 411 support staff at CBP and 39 law enforcement officer positions to strengthen the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Transportation and Removal Program, and 150 Enforcement and Removal Assistants for ICE to manage both detained and non-detained dockets.
- Enhanced surveillance capacity by adding 81 new autonomous surveillance towers since the start of FY 2022 for a current total of 223. The President's FY 2024 budget also requests more than \$500 million in border technology.
- Increased border holding capacity by over a third since early 2021 through the construction of new facilities. The FY 2024 budget proposes the creation of a third permanent Joint Processing Center.
- Enhanced processing capability through new contracting vehicles that increase CBP's air transportation capacity for the lateral transfer of noncitizens to less crowded Border Patrol Sectors during surges.
- Increased contracted medical personnel by 75 percent since the start of FY 2022.
- Proposed the creation of a Southwest Border Contingency Fund that would provide DHS up to \$4.7 billion to more quickly and efficiently allow agencies to respond to unexpected surges in migration.

Pillar 2: Increasing CBP processing efficiency and moving with deliberate speed to mitigate potential overcrowding at Border Patrol stations and to alleviate the burden on the surrounding border communities.

- Increased resources along the Southwest Border, resulting in more efficient migrant processing and reducing the time noncitizens spend in CBP temporary holding by 30 percent, down from an average of 84 hours in March 2021 to 62 hours in April 2023.

- Launched the CBP One mobile application to reduce processing times at ports of entry. In its first four months, over 83,000 individuals scheduled an appointment at a port of entry through CBP One for assessment of whether they qualify for a Title 42 vulnerability exception. This app cuts out the smugglers, decreases migrant exploitation, and improves safety and security in addition to making the process more efficient. CBP One will expand appointments available in anticipation of the return to Title 8 processing.
- Made CBP One's scheduling functionality available in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole.
- Improved the digitization of noncitizen processing, which has reduced the amount of time our agents and officers spend doing administrative paperwork by 70,000 hours so far.

Pillar 3: Administering consequences for unlawful entry, including removal, detention, and prosecution.

- Returned or removed 225,483 individuals during the first half of FY 2023, up from 170,896 over the same period during the prior year and expelled over 440,000 individuals under the Title 42 public health Order over the same period. Under Title 8, an individual who is removed is subject to at least a five-year bar on admission to the United States and can face criminal prosecution for any subsequent attempt to cross the border illegally. Individuals with final orders of removal will be removed.
- Established processes to ensure that removals are accomplished fairly, efficiently, and quickly. To do this, DHS has digitized processes, surged personnel, and, with the cooperation of partner governments, increased return flights. Eligible migrants will be processed for expedited removal while they are in CBP and ICE facilities within days or a few weeks. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services will conduct credible fear interviews. CBP and ICE have expanded holding capacity and set up equipment and procedures so that individuals have the ability to access counsel.
- Issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that proposes a new condition on asylum eligibility for migrants who fail to use safe, lawful processes for migration and swift returns of migrants who do not have valid protection claims. DHS and the Department of Justice (DOJ) intend to issue a final rule based on the NPRM in conjunction with the termination of the Title 42 public health Order.
- U.S. Border Patrol referred 16,606 individuals to the DOJ for prosecution during the first half of FY 2023, an increase of 29 percent over the prior year.
- Established new parole processes for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans, which provide a lawful pathway for noncitizens to arrive in the United States coupled with consequences for those who do not avail themselves of these pathways and instead cross the Southwest Border without authorization. Since these processes began, over 95,000 individuals from these countries have arrived lawfully at airports, which reduced encounters at the Southwest Border from a seven-day average of 3,453 encounters in mid-December, to a seven-day average of 339 at the end of March, a 90 percent drop.
- Extended ineligibility for the Cuban and Haitian parole processes to those who take to the seas and are interdicted trying to arrive at U.S. maritime borders. The United States Coast Guard has increased its presence to interdict migrants trying to reach the United States by sea, saving countless lives and returning migrants to their home countries.

Pillar 4: Bolstering the capacity of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to receive noncitizens after they have been processed by CBP and are awaiting the results of their immigration removal proceedings. And, the United States is ensuring appropriate coordination with and support for state, local, and community leaders to help mitigate increased impacts to their communities.

- Increased funding to \$800 million, up from \$150 million last FY, for communities to support migrants who have been released from DHS custody pending the outcome of their immigration proceedings.
- Awarded more than \$130 million so far this FY through the Emergency Food and Shelter Program - Humanitarian (EFSP-H), with an additional \$250 million to be awarded in the coming days.
- Worked quickly to stand up the new Shelter and Services Program (SSP), created by Congress in the FY 2023 Omnibus, with plans to disburse the remaining \$363.8 million before the end of this fiscal year.
- Improved coordination and information sharing with NGOs, states, cities, and other stakeholders to provide updates on whole-of-government planning underway and provided briefings on the federal resources available to receiving jurisdictions, including EFSP-H and the new SSP.

- Established a Migrant Information Center at the SBCC to continue to regularly engage with state and local governments, as well as local, regional, and national NGOs and other external partners.

Pillar 5: Targeting and disrupting the transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) and smugglers who take advantage of and profit from vulnerable migrants, and who seek to traffic drugs into our country.

- Led over 100,000 disruption activities in FY 2022, including arrests of nearly 10,000 smugglers, the disruption of thousands of human smuggling operations, such as raiding smuggler stash houses, impounding tractor trailers that are used to smuggle migrants, and confiscating smugglers' information technology. The unprecedented anti-human smuggler campaign DHS is leading includes interagency collaboration through efforts like Joint Task Force Alpha and Operation Sentinel, among others.
- Launched a targeted campaign against fentanyl smugglers, Operation Blue Lotus. Since March 13, the campaign has led to 156 arrests and prevented over 5,600 pounds of fentanyl, over 3,500 pounds of methamphetamines, and nearly 1,000 pounds of cocaine from entering the United States through Thursday, April 13. Last week alone, Operation Blue Lotus saw a 400 percent increase in seizure activity compared to the same week in 2022.
- The U.S. Border Patrol's complementary effort, Operation Four Horsemen, began on March 6, 2023, and has seized another 800 pounds of fentanyl. The two operations led to a total of nearly over 5,000 pounds of fentanyl seized in the span of one month. Currently, CBP's FY 2023 seizures of fentanyl are on track to surpass the FY 2022 seizure total by the end of April 2023.

Pillar 6: Collaborating with international and federal partners to deter irregular migration south of our border to ensure that the United States is sharing responsibility throughout the Western Hemisphere.

- Implemented the U.S. Strategy for Addressing the Root Causes of Migration and the multinational Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection, with nearly \$1 billion in assistance.
- Worked with countries throughout the hemisphere—including Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, and Panama—to expand efforts to counter human smuggling organizations, humanely secure borders, increase labor mobility, and expand protection and lawful pathways for intending migrants.
- Reached an [agreement \(https://www.dhs.gov/news/2023/03/24/united-states-and-canada-announce-efforts-expand-lawful-migration-processes-and\)](https://www.dhs.gov/news/2023/03/24/united-states-and-canada-announce-efforts-expand-lawful-migration-processes-and) with Canada on efforts to reduce irregular migration as part of an Additional Protocol to the 2002 U.S.-Canada Safe Third Country Agreement, including expansion of lawful pathways to Canada and investments in capacity building and programming in the region to support migration management and humanitarian protection.
- Launched a two-month coordinated campaign with Panama and Colombia to deter the illicit movement of people through the Darién region. As part of this campaign, the United States is creating new lawful pathways to the United States and elsewhere for tens of thousands of migrants and refugees who might otherwise pursue irregular migration via the Darien.
- Announced an effort, together with the Department of State, to create Regional Processing Centers in Central and South America, including Guatemala and Colombia, where migrants will receive an interview with immigration specialists, and if eligible, be processed rapidly for lawful pathways to the United States, or other countries, including Canada and Spain, for which they may be eligible.
- Developing family reunification parole processes for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Colombia and streamlining long-established family reunification parole processes for Cuba and Haiti.

Congressional Action is Required

Notwithstanding these efforts, managing irregular migration to the Southwest Border in the days, weeks, and months following the termination of the Title 42 public health Order will be challenging in a moment of historically high migration in the Western Hemisphere and around the world.

There is broad agreement that the United States is operating under a fundamentally outdated and broken immigration system, with the last comprehensive immigration reform enacted in 1986. These problems are only exacerbated by global increases in migration. The United States needs to confront the challenges at our border by addressing our broken immigration system. A long-term solution can only come from legislation.

DHS also needs sufficient resources to manage a potential increase in encounters, which is why the Department's FY 2024 budget requests funds for a Southwest Border Contingency Fund of up to \$4.7 billion to manage fluctuations in migrant encounters in a nimble, flexible, and responsible way. Last week, DHS also initiated the transfer of \$80 million within the Department to ensure funding is available to manage an increase in encounters.

The FY 2024 budget request takes important steps to address these issues, but DHS cannot do everything that we need to do until Congress provides the needed resources and reforms.

Topics

[BORDER SECURITY \(/TOPICS/BORDER-SECURITY\)](#) [SECRETARY OF HOMELAND SECURITY \(/TOPICS/SECRETARY-HOMELAND-SECURITY\)](#)

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