

Mexico refuses U.S. military flight deporting migrants



Mexico City, January 26 (RHC)-- Mexico has refused a request from President Donald Trump's administration to allow a U.S. military aircraft deporting migrants to land in the country, a U.S. official and a Mexican official told Reuters.

U.S. military aircraft carried out two similar flights, each with about 80 migrants, to Guatemala on Friday. The government was not able to move ahead with a plan to have a C-17 transport aircraft land in Mexico, however, after the country denied permission.

A U.S. official and a Mexican official confirmed the decision, which was first reported by NBC News. Mexico's foreign ministry, in a statement issued in Mexico City, said the country had a "very great relationship" with the U.S. and cooperated on issues such as immigration.

"When it comes to repatriations, we will always accept the arrival of Mexicans to our territory with open arms," the ministry said.

The Mexican official did not give a reason for the denial of permission to land, while the foreign ministry did not mention the incident.

Trump's administration earlier this week announced it was re-launching the program known as "Remain in Mexico," which forced non-Mexican asylum seekers to wait in Mexico until their cases in the United States were resolved.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said on Wednesday such a move would require the country receiving the asylum-seekers to agree, and that Mexico had not done so.

The U.S. State Department and the Pentagon did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

U.S.-Mexico relations have come into sharp focus since Trump started his second term on Monday with the declaration of a national emergency along the two nations' shared border. He has ordered 1,500 additional U.S. troops there so far, and officials have said thousands more could deploy soon.

The president has declared Mexican drug cartels terrorist organizations, renamed the Gulf of Mexico to Gulf of America and threatened an across-the-board 25% duty on Mexican goods beginning in February.

Sheinbaum has sought to avoid escalating the situation and expressed openness toward accommodating Mexican nationals who are returned. But the Mexican leader has also said she does not agree with mass deportations and that Mexican immigrants are vital to the U.S. economy.

The use of U.S. military aircraft to carry out deportation flights is part of the Pentagon's response to Trump's national emergency declaration on Monday.

In the past, U.S. military aircraft have been used to relocate individuals from one country to another, like during the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.

This was the first time in recent memory that U.S. military aircraft were used to fly migrants out of the country, one U.S. official said.

The Pentagon has said that the U.S. military would provide flights to deport more than 5,000 immigrants held by U.S. authorities in El Paso, Texas, and San Diego, California.

Guatemala also on Friday received a third flight of about 80 deported migrants on a chartered commercial aircraft, Guatemalan authorities told Reuters.

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