

# *U.S. seeing unprecedented migration at border with Mexico*

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**US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas attends a news conference along with US Border Patrol Chief Raul Ortiz [Go Nakamura/Reuters]**

Brownsville, August 12 (RHC)-- The United States is encountering “unprecedented” numbers of people trying to illegally cross the US-Mexico border, according to Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

“The situation at the border is one of the toughest challenges we face. It is complicated, changing and involves vulnerable people at a time of a global pandemic,” Mayorkas told reporters in Brownsville, Texas

on Thursday. “We are encountering an unprecedented number of migrants in between the ports of entry at our southern border,” Mayorkas said.

Since taking office in January, the Biden administration has struggled to deal with an increase in border arrests, which have reached 20-year highs in recent months.

U.S. border agents made nearly 200,000 arrests for undocumented entry at the southern border in July, the highest monthly total in more than 20 years, since March 2000. Border arrests typically taper off in the hotter summer months, but the July tally represents a 13 percent increase over June, Mayorkas said.

A group of elected officials in south Texas who met Mayorkas on Thursday criticised Biden’s handling of the border, saying incoming migrants are straining their communities during the pandemic. “Whatever system they’re using is broken,” Pete Saenz, the mayor of Laredo, Texas, said of Biden’s approach. “It needs fixing.”

Mayorkas announced the administration is expanding an online asylum registration system that asylum seekers can use to apply remotely. The online system allows people to register to apply for asylum from phones or computers, an option that could reduce the number of asylum seekers trekking across Mexico to the US border but has yet to be tested broadly.

“There are several reasons for the rise in migrant encounters at the southern border. Worsening conditions, of course, in the countries of origin, including poverty, a rise in violence and corruption,” Mayorkas said.

“And the challenges, of course, made more acute and more difficult because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has also been made more difficult because of the, of the fact that the prior administration dismantled our asylum system.”

President Joe Biden, a Democrat who took office about seven months ago, has promised to reverse many of the restrictive immigration policies put in place by his Republican predecessor, former President Donald Trump.

Mayorkas and White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan had met senior Mexican government officials in Mexico on Wednesday for conversations about working jointly to slow crossings along the U.S. southern border.

Mexico’s foreign affairs ministry said in a statement after the meetings that the two sides had analysed recent migration flows and agreed to expand cooperation aimed at achieving orderly and safe migration.

Vice President Kamala Harris, who was named by Biden to lead the administration’s efforts to stem the “root causes” of migration from Central America, spoke with Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador on Tuesday to emphasise the issue is a “top priority” for the Biden administration.

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