



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Border Security & Enforcement Subcommittee Ranking Member Lou Correa (D-CA)

Hearing on Title 42 and Republicans Wanting More Chaos

June 6, 2023

It's important to start by looking back over the last few years to see where we've been. And we need to look at where we are and look forward to see what we need to prepare for.

Chairman, we've dealt with COVID-19. America spent trillions in fighting COVID. And as a nation, we have done pretty well in the aftermath.

In fact, our economy is doing so well that we have a record low unemployment rate and worker shortages. This is happening while the rest of the world's economies are stumbling. Even China, the second largest economy in the world, is stumbling. I'd like to submit for the record one article talking about China and its post COVID-19 pandemic woes.

What we have now is a worldwide refugee crisis, like the world has never seen. There are more displaced individuals than there were in World War II - about 60 million then. Today, the number is much greater number.

This chart from UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, shows the number of displaced persons, those in need of international protection and asylum seekers in the Americas. You can see countries across the region are experiencing unprecedented numbers.

This is not America's problem, it's the world's challenge.

Mexico is dealing with refugees within its borders. Canada has issues as well. Guatemala is feeling the stress of refugees. Europe is also feeling the stress. Further south, Columbia is hosting about 2.5 million Venezuelan refugees. Refugees are braving terrible conditions to find safety and opportunity.

I'd like to show this picture of a little girl struggling to continue on in the Darien Gap to show just some of the conditions refugees are willing to overcome to find safety.

If they are willing to endure this, we can only imagine what home must be like. So, when we look at the post-COVID world, let's look at challenges ahead of us as a nation.

Let me start by saying that Title 42 was a pandemic policy supposedly intended to protect the public from COVID-19. The party in charge of House of Representatives voted to end the COVID-19 pandemic health emergency. Thus, my Republican colleagues voted to lift Title 42. And let me say, I agree with them. Title 42 should not be used as an immigration or border management tool.

I'm looking forward to hearing from our witnesses about recent encounter numbers. I ask that as you talk about the numbers, you keep in mind the current challenge of worldwide migration. This is not going away and this issue will require a long term perspective.

While we heard a lot of fear about what might happen post Title 42, the numbers of migrants we are seeing at the border actually dropped. We were told just last week that there is now significant capacity available in Border Patrol facilities. It's clear this Administration has taken extensive steps to prepare for the end of Title 42.

I visited CBP facilities across the southern border in the months leading up to end of Title 42. And I visited the border in San Diego just days after it ended.

On every trip I made I would ask the officers and agents "Are we prepared for May 11th? Are we prepared for when Title 42 ends?"

They would say "Yes we are prepared. But there is the great unknown and we continue to prepare for all possible scenarios."

They did the best they could, and they were ready.

It wasn't just CBP. It was DHS, the State Department, and this Administration more broadly. And it looks like they did a pretty good job.

In those first few days after Title 42 ended, encounter numbers dropped by more than half. In fact, if you look at this chart, these are the numbers reported publicly by Border Patrol Chief Raul Ortiz showing more than a 50% drop in encounters since the ending of Title 42. That significant drop in the chart is when Title 42 ended.

Numbers remain significantly lower than what they were seeing earlier this Spring, despite the fact that numbers normally increase at this time of year. Yet this hearing is entitled "Examining DHS' Failure to Prepare for the Termination of Title 42." It's an interesting title. I'd like to recap some of the actions this Administration took to prepare.

The Administration is opening Regional Processing Centers, which CBP agents have told me will be incredibly helpful in managing the capacity and processing individuals at the ports of entry.

The Administration created legal pathways for Venezuelans, Cubans, Haitians, and Nicaraguans to enter the United States legally.

The Administration sent active duty military personnel to help with logistics and surged additional resources from DHS to manage increased encounters.

The Administration expanded access to the CBP One app and increased efforts to combat misinformation and stop transnational criminal organizations and smugglers from taking advantage of vulnerable migrants and those who seek to traffic drugs into the U.S. While I disagree with some of the consequences put in place, our border was not overwhelmed following the end of Title 42. Again, we've seen a significant decrease in encounters at the border.

There is still more we can do to improve our border security and reform our immigration system. We need to be prepared if numbers do increase in the future. Because this isn't a short-term challenge. We need to come up with more incentives for refugees to apply for admission to the United States before approaching our borders. We have to refocus on the economies of the world that have been devastated, with particular attention to our North American continent, and our neighbors to the south. And of course, we have to address immigration reform, and the demand for workers by an economically vibrant American economy.

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