

White House Is Dispatching Blinken to Mexico Amid Migrant Surge at Border

Planned meetings follow U.S. closure of bridges and ports aimed at slowing a record influx that is overwhelming border agents

By Ken Thomas
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WASHINGTON—President Biden will send Secretary of State Antony Blinken and top Homeland Security officials to Mexico in the coming days to meet with Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador “to discuss further actions that can be taken together to address current border challenges,” the White House said.

The planned meetings follow decisions by U.S. immigration authorities [to close several bridges and ports of entry](#) along the U.S. border with Mexico, aimed at containing [a surge in illegal migration](#) that has affected border communities in Texas, Arizona and California.

John Kirby, a spokesman for the White House National Security Council, said Biden and Lopez Obrador spoke earlier Thursday and “agreed that additional enforcement actions are urgently needed so that key ports of entry can be reopened across our shared border.”

Kirby said in addition to Blinken, the Biden administration will also send Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas and White House Homeland Security adviser Liz Sherwood-Randall to Mexico to meet with Lopez Obrador and other Mexican officials.

“Their visit will really be about getting at the migratory flows and talking to President Lopez Obrador and his team about what more we can do together,” Kirby said.

U.S. officials have reported more than 7,000 arrests a day recently along the Southwest border, overwhelming border agents and prompting the unusual move of closing bridges and ports. Some of the largest surges are now appearing in remote locations in Arizona and California, as smugglers sneaking migrants to the U.S. border have moved away from major crossings.

Troy Miller, Customs and Border Protection acting commissioner, said earlier this week that border officials are so overwhelmed by the number of migrants that they don’t have the capacity to enforce consequences, including swift deportation, helping to fuel the latest surge.

Miller said a combination of weaker enforcement in Mexico and a lack of resources to carry out swift deportation or other measures for those who are caught crossing illegally is likely contributing to a record number of crossings.

House Speaker Mike Johnson (R., La.) sent a letter to the White House Thursday urging Biden to take executive action to stem the border crossings. Among other proposals, Johnson said the president should “begin to negotiate with Mexico to reinstitute [the Remain in Mexico program](#).”

Talks aimed at tightening U.S. border policy have picked up speed in recent weeks, but no vote of changes is possible until next year, when the House and Senate return from their holiday break. Senate negotiators are discussing possible changes to asylum and other border rules, demanded by Republicans as a condition for supporting Democrats’ \$110.5 billion foreign aid package that includes assistance for Ukraine.

On Monday, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott [signed into law](#) a measure giving state and local police authority to arrest and deport migrants caught crossing the border illegally. Lopez Obrador criticized Abbott’s measures on the grounds that Texas has no jurisdiction in U.S. federal matters.

Alicia A. Caldwell contributed to this article.