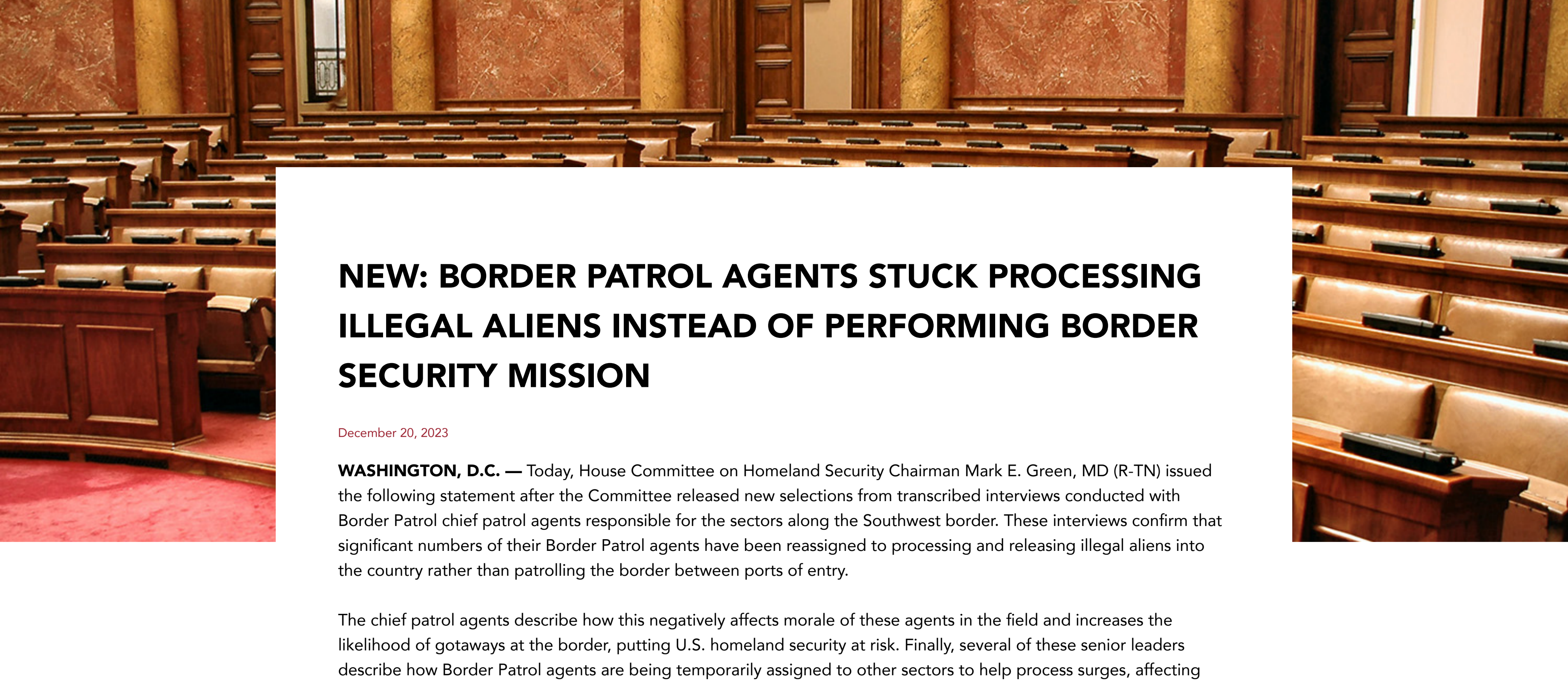




NEWS



NEW: BORDER PATROL AGENTS STUCK PROCESSING ILLEGAL ALIENS INSTEAD OF PERFORMING BORDER SECURITY MISSION

December 20, 2023

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today, House Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Mark E. Green, MD (R-TN) issued the following statement after the Committee released new selections from transcribed interviews conducted with Border Patrol chief patrol agents responsible for the sectors along the Southwest border. These interviews confirm that significant numbers of their Border Patrol agents have been reassigned to processing and releasing illegal aliens into the country rather than patrolling the border between ports of entry.

The chief patrol agents describe how this negatively affects morale of these agents in the field and increases the likelihood of getaways at the border, putting U.S. homeland security at risk. Finally, several of these senior leaders describe how Border Patrol agents are being temporarily assigned to other sectors to help process surges, affecting manpower in their home sectors.

“As some senior Border Patrol leaders told us, Border Patrol agents signed up for this job because they want to be in the field, helping secure the homeland and protect their families and communities. Under Secretary Mayorkas, however, that mission has been largely taken away from them,” Chairman Green said. “Processing and releasing illegal aliens into the interior is not the job they signed up for and it pulls them away from their vital frontline security mission. It goes directly against their law enforcement mandate to enforce consequences against lawbreaking, not reward it. It’s little wonder why agents continue to tell anyone who will listen, including this Committee, the media, and the DHS inspector general, that morale has cratered, and many are questioning why they should continue on the job. This consequence of Secretary Mayorkas’ reckless disregard for the laws of this country will reverberate for as long as his policies remain in place.”

In a notable example, on Sept. 27, 2023, Border Patrol officials in Eagle Pass, Texas, released an [internal memo](#) stating that zero Border Patrol agents were in the field between ports of entry because they had been diverted to help process aliens into the interior amid a surge in encounters. As detailed in the [Phase Three interim report](#) of the Committee’s investigation into the border crisis, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) also released a report in May 2023, documenting the mental toll inflicted on agents from being required to perform duties “that essentially run counter to [the] job description.” The OIG report detailed how overwhelming surges of illegal aliens have driven this change in agents’ mission and, as a result, has negatively impacting the mental health and morale of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) personnel. Low morale and a decreased Border Patrol presence along the Southwest border has clearly affected the security of our nation, as detailed in the transcripts.

The House Committee on Homeland Security and the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability conducted interviews with eight chief patrol agents and one deputy chief patrol agent from April-September 2023 to acquire more information about operations in their sectors and how the crisis has impacted the safety and security of the United States. These interviews were part of the Committees’ ongoing investigation into the causes, costs, and consequences of the unprecedented crisis at America’s borders, and the role of Secretary Mayorkas in facilitating and maintaining this crisis.

Read previous selections of the transcripts in which these senior agents discussed how they see the influx of illegal aliens during the Biden administration as [unprecedented](#), the [lack of consequences enforced](#) by this administration for illegal entry, how these [mass releases function as a pull factor](#) for millions of illegal aliens, how illegal aliens are [now turning themselves in to Border Patrol](#) to be released into the interior, and the expansive [degree of cartel control](#) at the Southwest border.



[Read more in the Washington Examiner.](#)

Read sections of the transcripts below.

AGENTS STUCK PROCESSING ILLEGAL ALIENS INSTEAD OF THEIR NORMAL JOB

Chief Patrol Agent Sean McGoffin, Big Bend Sector

Q: Okay. And just one more question. You said that you’ve got around 17 percent of agents that are processing. Is that accurate?

A: About 16 percent.

Q: Sixteen percent.

You said that most agents would rather be out in the field doing encounters.

A: The majority, not all of them. Some of them like it. But the majority want to be out doing standard Border Patrol work in the field.

Q: Have you heard anything from agents in other sectors that are doing more processing than you guys are in Big Bend complaining about doing processing as opposed to more traditional law enforcement?

A: Well, I mean, I hear stuff from our agents when they come back, that they’ve said that there’s a lot of people that are stuck processing for a long time.

Chief Patrol Agent Jason Owens, Del Rio Sector

Q: Thank you. And then another sector chief informed us that Border Patrol agents really want to be in the field and doing that job. Would you agree with that statement?

A: I would agree with that, yes.

Chief Patrol Agent Gregory Bovino, El Centro Sector

Q: Did that surge have an impact on operations in El Centro?

A: Yes.

Q: In what way?

A: Any time there is a surge of individuals processing care, feeding and care of those individuals takes Border Patrol agents away from their primary job of preventing bad people and bad things from coming across the border.

Q: And is that what you experienced in 2021, that agents were taken away from the border to do processing?

A: Yes.

Chief Patrol Agent John Modlin, Tucson Sector

Q: Thank you.

And then, you know, briefly you’ve talked about processing coordinators in your testimony in February as well as today. About what percentage of your Border Patrol agents are dedicated to processing activities?

A: So most recently when I looked at it, it was about 38 percent of the—Border Patrol staff in Tucson is—is doing processing/detention stuff. I think when I testified in February, it was more about 20 percent or so.

Q: Okay. And just to be clear, Border Patrol staff, do you mean agents?

A: Yes. Agents, yeah.

Chief Patrol Agent John Modlin, Tucson Sector

Q: And I’m guessing that also puts a strain and causes morale issues as well being in that type of situation so frequently. Is that fair?

A: So I think it’s sort of a double-sided thing.

So I believe for the people that are doing the rescues, the majority of the rescues, like BORSTAR, those are all volunteers. I would suspect if you were to talk to BORSTAR agents, they would tell you they live for that. They live to go out and rescue people and potentially risk their lives doing that.

I think that the challenge is when agents are performing duties that they don’t feel are part of the border security mission, that’s where it becomes potentially a morale issue.

I believe most agents would say that the humanitarian part, when it comes to a rescue like that, like an emergency rescue, they absolutely would say they’re patrolling the border, that’s happening on the border, that’s my responsibility to deal with.

It’s the other stuff, the detention stuff, the care and feeding, that sort of thing, that agents generally have the feelings about that is detrimental to morale.

Chief Patrol Agent John Modlin, Tucson Sector

Q: Chief, other chief patrol agents have stated to this committee that, in their respective opinions, their agents prefer operating in the field as opposed to processing individuals. Would you agree with that statement?

A: Yes, I would agree that, you know, that the overwhelming majority of agents want to be out in the field. That’s why they became Border Patrol agents.

Chief Patrol Agent Anthony “Scott” Good, El Paso Sector

Q: How many daily Border Patrol agents are assigned to the processing center?

A: It’s about 12 percent of our Border Patrol agent workforce currently.

Q: Are they assigned per shift or is somebody just assigned to the processing center?

A: There are times when we detail on a daily basis. Currently, we have a detail that’s a longer term detail at the soft-sided facility, hard- and soft-sided facility.

Q: Okay. So generally speaking, at any point in time, it’s about 12 percent of the workforce that’s—

A: Since I’ve been there, yes.

Q: Okay. And so that’s 12 percent of about 2,000?

A: Yes.

Q: And you mentioned that other—

A: Twelve percent of the Border Patrol agents. So that’s about—because when I say 2,029, or whatever that number was, 2,000-plus agents, right, that includes managers and other positions that aren’t a Border Patrol agent, field—

Q: Line agent?

A: —line agent. And so that number is a little over 1,600. So 12 percent of that number.

Q: Of 1,600.

And then you mentioned that other details from other agencies typically help with processing and transportation. So they’re working within those processing centers too?

A: Yes.

Chief Patrol Agent Anthony “Scott” Good, El Paso Sector

Q: Can you speak to or give us a sense of what percentage of the Border Patrol workforce in your sector is dedicated to processing activities currently?

A: Currently, around 12 percent of the Border Patrol field agents.

Q: Okay. And is it fair to say that processing, care and custody, those kinds of activities, have always been a part of a Border Patrol agent’s job to one extent or another, since you’ve been in Border Patrol?

A: Since I’ve been in Border Patrol, not on the scale that we see now, but processing has been a function that Border Patrol agents have performed.

Chief Patrol Agent Gloria Chavez, Rio Grande Valley Sector

Q: Do you know what kind of impact, or was it a similar impact just on logistics that that surge had on RGV?

A: So, when we have the surges, it’s pretty typical. The logistics, the personnel, the impacts are very similar. The one thing I think that we are doing quite well in RGV right now is that we’re still maintaining a semblance of enforcement assignments for our agents. It’s between 52 to 64 percent that we try to keep our agents on the front line doing patrol work versus the processing and nonenforcement details.

But surges, when they happen, logistically, they absorb—they absorb resources, right? So it’s pretty similar with one to the other.

Q: So more agents that are doing processing, less front line during those surges?

A: For the most part.

Q: What kind of impact does that have on agents’ morale?

A: It has a significant impact. I think agents, for the most part, want to be on patrol. They want to do the mission of border security. To us, it’s a concern everything that happens between those ports of entry.

Deputy Chief Patrol Agent Dustin Caudle, Yuma Sector

Q: What kind of difference did you experience in the Yuma Sector from the El Centro Sector?

A: Yuma Sector had a significantly higher daily encounter rate. Obviously, El Centro did not have a centralized processing center, you know, like the soft-sided facilities.

So Yuma did, and so they had capacity issues almost every day. They were overwhelmed with transportation duties. There were overwhelming with processing duties. There was multiple support requests to get detailed personnel in there to assist with that. A large percentage of the Border Patrol agents were pulled off of their line functions and performing administrative or processing duties rather than performing that frontline law enforcement mission.

Deputy Chief Patrol Agent Dustin Caudle, Yuma Sector

Q: I’m going to move on to some of the encounter details that you see in Yuma.

In January 2021, Yuma was experiencing about 1,624 encounters a month, and just one year later, Yuma had well over 20,000 monthly encounters. Do you know—I know that you didn’t get to Yuma until August 2022, but do you know what kind of impact that had on operations in Yuma? Were you briefed on that?

A: Yes. I was fairly aware of the impact and, again, there’s duties that have to be performed, and when you have that type of volume, which is overwhelming for any law enforcement agency, it has an impact to operations because operations have to be shifted into a humanitarian-type mission in order to protect vulnerable populations, in order to perform transport duties, in order to complete that processing to ensure that overcrowding capacity issues are kept at a minimum.

So operations will suffer. Operation will be impacted. They will be lessened in order to do that other humanitarian mission.

Deputy Chief Patrol Agent Dustin Caudle, Yuma Sector

Q: And about what percentage of the Border Patrol agents in the Yuma Sector are dedicated to processing or are on the front lines?

A: So currently assigned to the CPC, mainly doing the processing duties and other functions that are just required inside the CPC, about 20 percent of my manpower is assigned to the CPC. It’s an absolutely massive facility.

AGENTS DIVERTED FROM OTHER SECTORS TO PROCESS ILLEGAL ALIENS

Chief Patrol Agent Aaron Heitke, San Diego Sector

Q: Did you have to receive people from other sectors to process them?

A: Yes.

Q: Which sectors?

A: Yuma Sector, El Paso Sector, and Rio Grande Valley Sector.

Chief Patrol Agent Jason Owens, Del Rio Sector

Q: Did you get agents detailed into your sector to help with or have you had other agents from other sectors detailed to you to help?

A: Yes. So we had people detailed in, and we call that TDY, temporary duty. So they’re being detailed away from their permanent station. And that, of course, comes at the expense of what they’re supposed to be doing at their station.

Q: Have you gotten anyone from the northern border?

A: We did.

Q: How many do you think you got from the northern border?

A: It varied from month to month. But I think at our highest, maybe 75 at a time.

Chief Patrol Agent John Modlin, Tucson Sector

Q: Does removing agents from other sectors to detail them to Tucson, does that increase the likelihood of getaways in other sectors?

A: So what I can tell you is about 6 months maybe to a year ago we were sending about 50 agents at a time out to I believe Del Rio, between Del Rio and RGV, and certainly that affected our level of border security. So I would assume it would have the same impact to other sectors.

Q: And is that a concern to you?

A: Yes, absolutely.

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