

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

News Releases

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United States, Mexico resume voluntary interior repatriation program

TUCSON, Ariz. - The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Mexican Ministry of the Interior announced Thursday that the Mexican Interior Repatriation Program (MIRP) - a bilaterally beneficial voluntary program that ensures the safe and swift return of Mexican nationals found to be in the Sonora Arizona desert region of the United States unlawfully to their places of origin in the Mexican interior - has resumed for the seventh consecutive summer.

First initiated in 2004, MIRP was designed as a bilateral effort between the United States and Mexico to reduce the loss of human life and combat organized crime linked to the smuggling, trafficking and exploitation of aliens along the Arizona/Mexico border.

"MIRP reflects our mutual commitment to strong and effective enforcement of both nations' immigration laws, and this program is proof that we can do so in a humanitarian way," said Alonzo Pena, deputy assistant secretary for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). "This program prioritizes the humane treatment of detainees throughout the removal process."

Under MIRP, Mexican nationals apprehended by the U.S. Border Patrol in the Yuma and Tucson sectors are taken to DHS facilities in Nogales and Yuma, Ariz., where candidates are medically screened, meet with officials from the Mexican Consulate, and are offered the opportunity to voluntarily participate in the program.

As a humanitarian program, candidates for MIRP also include those who are identified as "at risk" due to criteria like age, physical condition or distance from their hometowns, as these populations are particularly vulnerable to heat or risk of victimization by criminals operating in border regions. Criminal aliens convicted of violent crimes are ineligible to participate in MIRP.

Individuals who volunteer to participate in the program are flown to Mexico City via daily flights coordinated by ICE Detention and Removal Operations from Tucson International Airport and provided bus transportation to their hometowns in the interior of Mexico.

This year's first repatriation flight departed Tucson International Airport June 1, and flights are scheduled to continue this year through Sept. 28.

More than 93,000 Mexican nationals have been safely returned under MIRP over the program's previous six summers.

-- ICE --

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

ICE comprises four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities. For more information, visit www.ICE.gov. To report suspicious activity, call 1-866-347-2423.

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