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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 Monday that the Mexican Interior Repatriation Program (MIRP) - a bilateral, voluntary program that ensures the safe return of Mexican nationals found to be unlawfully in the Sonora Arizona desert region of the United States to their places of residence in the Mexican interior - has resumed for the eighth 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 to break the cycle of organized crime linked to the smuggling, trafficking and exploitation of migrants along the Arizona/Mexico border. 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 Mexican Consulate officials and are offered the opportunity to voluntarily participate in the program.

"MIRP reflects our commitment to effective enforcement of our immigration laws while simultaneously prioritizing the humane treatment of detainees throughout the removal process," said [Thomas D. Homan \(http://www.ice.gov/about/leadership/ero-dad-bio/thomas-homan.htm\)](http://www.ice.gov/about/leadership/ero-dad-bio/thomas-homan.htm), deputy executive associate director of [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's \(ICE\) Enforcement and Removal Operations \(http://www.ice.gov/about/offices/enforcement-removal-operations/\)](#) (ERO [\(http://www.ice.gov/about/offices/enforcement-removal-operations/\)](http://www.ice.gov/about/offices/enforcement-removal-operations/)).

"Indeed, this program is one more example of how cooperation between our countries can lead to solutions to common problems," said Salvador Beltran del Rio, commissioner of Mexico's National Migration Institute.

"The Mexican Interior Repatriation program offers illegal aliens an opportunity to voluntarily return to their homes, away from the dangers of the Sonoran Desert, and demonstrates how the governments of Mexico and the United States are working together to save lives," said Randy Hill, chief patrol agent of the U.S. Border Patrol's Tucson Sector.

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. Aliens who have been convicted of violent crimes are ineligible to participate in MIRP.

Individuals who volunteer to participate in the program are flown from Tucson International Airport to Mexico City via daily flights coordinated by ICE ERO and Mexican authorities. Upon arriving in Mexico City, participants are provided bus transportation to their hometowns in Mexico's interior.

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

More than 102,000 Mexican nationals have been safely returned under MIRP since it started in 2004.

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

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