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EXPERT INSIGHT | Center for Homeland Security & Immigration

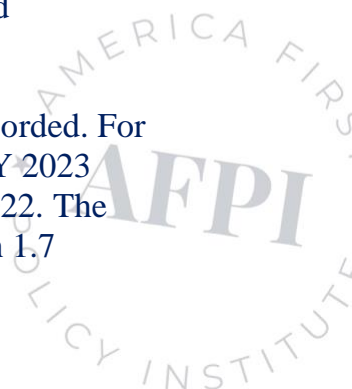
FY 2023: THE WORST YEAR ON RECORD FOR ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

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- ★ A record-setting 3.2 million illegal aliens were “encountered” nationwide by the Department of Homeland Security in fiscal year (FY) 2023, surpassing the previous high of 2.7 million illegal alien encounters nationwide in FY 2022.
- ★ Throughout FY 2023, the Biden Administration repeatedly claimed that the border was secure, but the numbers show that the humanitarian and security crisis continues to worsen each year.
- ★ The data also reveal that the administration’s unlawful parole schemes are failing to deter illegal aliens from attempting to cross the southern border illegally.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) quietly [published](#) the data for illegal alien “encounters” during the month of September on Saturday, October 21, to finally close out fiscal year (FY) 2023. The term “encounters” was created by the Biden Administration to refer to two situations: illegal aliens apprehended by U.S. Border Patrol agents while trying to cross the border unlawfully and aliens found inadmissible by Office of Field Operations officers at ports of entry. The Biden Administration claims it is “lawful” for an alien to show up at a port of entry without a visa, but under U.S. immigration law whether aliens are “encountered” by the Border Patrol or by the Office of Field Operations, they are trying to enter the United States unlawfully.

By every measure, FY 2023 was the worst year of illegal immigration ever recorded. For starters, the 2.45 million illegal aliens encountered at the [southern border](#) in FY 2023 surpassed the previous record of 2.37 million illegal alien encounters in FY 2022. The Biden Administration is also responsible for the third-highest annual total with 1.7



million illegal aliens apprehended at the southern border in FY 2021—a period that includes the final few months of the Trump Administration. By comparison, [2.37 million](#) illegal aliens were apprehended at the southern border over the course of the entire Trump term, which equals an average of fewer than 600,000 apprehensions per fiscal year.

The prolonged delay, and weekend news dump, of the September 2023 data was clearly designed to hide the bad news. Last month also set the all-time individual monthly record of 269,735 illegal alien encounters at the southern border, topping the previous high of 252,315 in December 2022. Seven individual months in FY 2023 exceeded 200,000 illegal alien encounters at the southern border, a threshold that, before the Biden Administration, had previously occurred only in [February and March of 2001](#). The Biden Administration is responsible for the nine highest individual months of illegal alien encounters at the southern border.

However, the full extent of the illegal immigration crisis goes beyond those showing up at the southern border. In January 2023, the Biden Administration [announced](#) that it would use immigration parole authority to allow 30,000 illegal aliens from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela to enter the U.S. This categorical parole program unlawfully abuses the limited authority Congress gave the Homeland Security secretary to temporarily allow an otherwise inadmissible alien into the U.S. on a case-by-case basis for either “urgent humanitarian reasons” or “significant public benefit.”

The CHNV parole, as the program is commonly known, fails to meet any of the statute’s narrow criteria and is designed to [cook the books](#) because these encounters do not show up in the southern border data. Instead, these paroled illegal aliens appear on a separate data page known as [nationwide encounters](#). These encounters include those from the southern border, northern border, and interior ports of entry (e.g., international airports).

There were 3.2 million nationwide encounters of illegal aliens during FY 2023, surpassing the previous record of 2.77 million in FY 2022. Again, by comparison, in FY 2019, during the Trump Administration, [859,501 illegal aliens](#) were apprehended nationwide. The 7.6 million nationwide encounters of illegal aliens thus far during the Biden Administration is a greater number than the population of Arizona, the 14th most populous state in the U.S.

A deeper dive into the September numbers further exposes the Biden Administration’s failed border strategy. Of the 218,763 illegal aliens that Border Patrol agents apprehended trying to unlawfully cross the southern border in September, 57,175 of them came from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. These are the four countries that benefit from the unlawful categorical parole program that the Biden Administration claimed would cause illegal border crossings from those countries’ nationals to plummet. The opposite is



happening, as these illegal aliens have correctly determined that there will not be consequences for crossing the border unlawfully.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection [press release](#) that accompanied the publication of September's data downplayed the severity of the border crisis, claiming that the Biden Administration's request for supplemental funding will solve the problem. That supplemental request for \$13.6 billion, which was released the day before the September data, [claims](#) that "Congressional Republicans need to stop playing political games with border security and provide the resources our law enforcement personnel need to keep the Southwest border secure and stop the flow of fentanyl into the United States."

Actually, it is the Biden Administration that is playing politics with border security through its refusal to secure the border and enforce immigration law. What's happening at the border is a policy failure, not a resource problem. Congress should defund the current America Last border policies and provide funding only for policies that will secure the border, end human trafficking, and defeat the cartels.

