

World News Roundup

Immigration

Major policy shift

US govt to ramp up rapid deportations

SAN DIEGO, July 23. (Agencies): The Trump administration announced Monday that it will vastly extend the authority of immigration officers to deport migrants without allowing them to appear before judges, its second major policy shift on immigration in eight days.

Starting Tuesday, fast-track deportations can apply to anyone in the country illegally for less than two years. Previously, those deportations were largely limited to people arrested almost immediately after crossing the Mexican border.

Kevin McAleenan, the acting Homeland Security secretary, portrayed the nationwide extension of "expedited removal" authority as another Trump administration effort to address an "ongoing crisis on the southern border" by freeing up beds in detention facilities and reducing a backlog of more than 900,000 cases in immigration courts.



McAleenan

US authorities do not have space to detain "the vast majority" of people arrested on the Mexican border, leading to the release of hundreds of thousands with notices to appear in court, McAleenan said in the policy directive to be published Tuesday in the Federal Register. He said Homeland Security officials with the new deportation power will deport migrants in the country illegally more quickly than the Justice Department's immigration courts, where cases can take years to resolve.

The agency "expects that the full use of expedited removal statutory authority will strengthen national security, diminish the number of illegal entries, and otherwise ensure the prompt removal of aliens apprehended in the United States," McAleenan said.

The American Civil Liberties Union and American Immigration Council said they would sue to block the policy.

Deported

"Under this unlawful plan, immigrants who have lived here for years would be deported with less due process than people get in traffic court," said Omar Jawdat, director of the ACLU's Immigrants' Rights Project.

"Expedited removal" gives enforcement agencies broad authority to deport people without allowing them to appear before an immigration judge with limited exceptions, including if they express fear of returning home and pass an initial screening interview for asylum.

The powers were created under a 1996 law but went largely unnoticed until 2004, when Homeland Security said it would be enforced for people who are arrested within two weeks of entering the US by land and caught within 100 miles (160 km) of the border.

The fast-track deportations have become a major piece of US immigration enforcement over the last decade. Critics have said it grants too much power to immigration agents and US Customs and Border Protection officials.

The potential impact of the new measure is difficult to predict. McAleenan said 20,570 people arrested in the nation's interior from October 2017 through September 2018 year had been in the US less than two years, which would make them eligible for fast-track deportation under the new rule. Critics said the new measure's impact could be more far-reaching because many in the US for longer than two years may be unable to prove they have been in the country for so long.

"Expanding the fast-track procedure to apply anywhere in the US is a recipe for ripping thousands more families apart and devastating communities," said Grace Meng, Human Rights Watch's US program acting deputy director. "This is a massive and dangerous change."

The administration said the expanded authority will likely mean less time for migrants in detention while cases wind their way through immigration court. The average stay in immigration detention for people in fast-track removal was 11.4 days from October 2017 through September 2018, compared to 51.5 days for people arrested in the nation's interior.

Policy

The announcement was the second major policy shift in eight days following an unprecedented surge of families from Central America's Northern Triangle of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

Last week, the administration said it will deny asylum to anyone who passes through other countries en route to the US without seeking protection in at least one of those countries. Two lawsuits were filed challenging the move. A judge in Washington, DC, heard arguments Monday on whether to block the policy. Judge Timothy Kelly said he would "endeavor to rule on this as quickly as I can."

A judge in San Francisco has set a hearing for Wednesday in a similar lawsuit.

Also Monday, a three-judge panel of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a decision by a federal judge in Seattle that blocked a policy to indefinitely detain asylum seekers without a chance to be released on bond. The policy to deny bond hearings had been set to take effect July 15.

The White House issued a statement Monday night saying, "We strongly disagree with that decision and expect to prevail on the merits of the appeal and to see the law upheld."

Mexico is on tenterhooks as a Monday deadline on a US migration deal that removed tariff threats on Mexican exports arrived, and despite progress made in reducing migrant flows it was unclear what President Donald Trump's next move would be.

The agreement reached in June laid out that if the United States deems that Mexico has not done enough to thwart migrants by the July 22 deadline, the two countries would begin talks over changing rules to make most asylum seekers apply for refuge in Mexico, not the United States.

Mexico said on Sunday it had averted the so-called "safe third country" negotiations with the United States that it desperately wants to avoid after Secretary of State Mike Pompeo praised Mexican efforts in reducing US-bound migrant flows.

But while Pompeo praised the progress made by Mexico in helping cut apprehensions on the US southern border by a almost a third in June to some 100,000, he also said there was still "more work to do" and that he would consult with Trump, who has been uncharacteristically hush on the topic.

"As for the next set of actions, I'll talk with the president and the teams back in Washington and we'll decide exactly which tools and exactly how to proceed," said Pompeo.



US President Donald Trump shakes hands with Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan during a meeting in the Oval Office of the White House on July 22 in Washington. (AP)

Trump wants Pakistan to help 'extricate' US from Afghanistan

US President Donald Trump said Monday that he could win the war in Afghanistan in a week, but that he doesn't want to kill millions of people and wipe Afghanistan "off the face of the earth."

He's trying to persuade Pakistan to help get a deal with the Taliban that would end America's longest war.

"I could win that war in a week" but "I don't want to kill millions of people," Trump said.

Afghanistan is high on Trump's agenda as he meets with Pakistan's prime minister, Imran Khan.

Their testy relationship may be improving. Trump says Pakistan can use its influence with the Taliban to help the US "extricate" from Afghanistan.

Pakistan, which is suffering economically, wants to reset relations with the US in hopes of securing more investment, trade and possibly a restoration of American aid that Trump cut.

Khan said he's never believed that there was a military solution to the war. He said he thinks the US and the Taliban are closer to a peace deal than ever before.

Trump and Khan — a former sports star — are both unpredictable and their relationship has been rocky. Monday's visit was meant to smooth tensions and address complex problems facing both nations.

In recent years relations between the US and Pakistan have resembled a yo-yo. They reached rock bottom under former President Barack Obama when the US carried out the raid on al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden's compound in Pakistan without giving Islamabad a heads-up. The relationship didn't improve when Trump took office. (AP)

Budget

'Compromise necessary in divided government'

Budget deal ensures no shutdown, default

WASHINGTON, July 23. (AP): US President Donald Trump and congressional leaders have announced a critical debt and budget agreement that's an against-the-odds victory for Washington pragmatists seeking to avoid political and economic tumult over the possibility of a government shutdown or first federal default.

The deal, announced Monday by Trump on Twitter and in a statement by Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer, will restore the government's ability to borrow to pay its bills past next year's elections and build upon recent large budget gains for both the Pentagon and domestic agencies.

"I am pleased to announce that a deal has been struck," Trump tweeted, saying there will be no "poison pills" added to follow-up legislation. "This was a real compromise in order to give another big victory to our Great Military and Vets!"

The agreement is on a broad outline for \$1.37 trillion in agency spending next year and slightly more in fiscal 2021. It would mean a win for lawmakers eager to return Washington to a more predictable path amid political turmoil and polarization, defense hawks determined to cement big military increases and Democrats seeking to protect domestic programs.

Nobody notched a big win, but both sides view it as better than a protracted battle this fall.

Pelosi and Schumer said the deal "will enhance our national security and invest in middle class priorities that advance the health, financial security and well-being of the American

people." Top congressional GOP leaders issued more restrained statements stressing that the deal is a flawed but achievable outcome of a government in which Pelosi wields considerable power.

"While this deal is not perfect, compromise is necessary in divided government," said House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif.

Budget

However, it also comes as budget deficits are rising to \$1 trillion levels - requiring the government to borrow a quarter for every dollar the government spends - despite the thriving economy and three rounds of annual Trump budget proposals promising to crack down on the domestic programs that Pelosi is successfully defending now.

It ignores warnings from deficit and debt scolds who say the nation's fiscal future is unsustainable and will eventually drag down the economy.

"This agreement is a total abdication of fiscal responsibility by Congress and the president," said Maya MacGuineas, president of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, a Washington advocacy group. "It may end up being the worst budget agreement in our nation's history, proposed at a time when our fiscal conditions are already precarious."

A push by the White House and House GOP forces for new offsetting spending cuts was largely jettisoned, though Pelosi, D-Calif., gave assurances about not seeking to use the follow-up spending bills as vehicles for aggressively liberal policy initiatives.

The head of a large group of House GOP conservatives swung against the deal.

"No new controls are put in place to constrain runaway spending, and a two-year suspension on the debt limit simply adds fuel to the fire," said Republican Study Committee Chairman Mike Johnson, R-La. "With more than \$22 trillion in debt, we simply cannot afford deals like this one."

Fights over Trump's US-Mexico border wall, other immigration-related issues and spending priorities will be rejoined on spending bills this fall that are likely to produce much the same result as current law. The House has passed most of its bills, using far higher levels for domestic spending. Senate measures will follow this fall, with levels reflecting the accord.

At issue are two separate but pressing items on Washington's must-do agenda: increasing the debt limit to avert a first-ever default on US payments and acting to set overall spending limits and prevent \$125 billion in automatic spending cuts from hitting the Pentagon and domestic agencies with 10 percent cuts starting in January.

The threat of the automatic cuts represents the last gasp of a failed 2011 budget and debt pact between former President Barack Obama and then-Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, that promised future spending and deficit cuts to cover a \$2 trillion increase in the debt. But a bipartisan deficit "supercommittee" failed to deliver, and lawmakers were unwilling to live with the follow-up cuts to defense and domestic accounts. This is the fourth deal since 2013 to reverse those cuts.



US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump stop to look at a painting of the late Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens as he lies in repose in the Great Hall of the Supreme Court in Washington on July 22. (AP)



Biden



Mueller

America

Bid to reform justice system:

Former Vice President **Joe Biden** unveiled a plan on Tuesday to reform the US criminal justice system by lowering incarceration rates, ending the federal death penalty and eliminating racial disparities in how people are sentenced.

Biden, the Democratic front-runner in the party's nominating contest to take on Republican President Donald Trump in next year's election, has faced criticism over his support for a 1994 crime bill that some say contributed to mass incarceration, especially of black men.

That bill, signed into law by former Democratic President Bill Clinton when Biden was a US senator, greatly increased funding for the construction of new federal prisons and included a "three strikes" provision, which required a mandatory life sentence for a person guilty of committing a severe, violent felony after two previous convictions.

On the campaign trail, Biden has said the 1994 law did not contribute to mass incarceration.

Studies show that incarceration rates steadily increased in the United States from the early 1970s to around 2010, and the 1994 bill was just part of the "tough on crime" movement of that era which led to more prison sentences. (RTRS)

Mueller told to limit testimony:

The US Justice Department told former Special Counsel **Robert Mueller** on Monday he should limit his testimony before Congress this week to discussing his public report on the Russia probe.

In a letter to Mueller, Associate Deputy Attorney General Bradley Weinsheimer said his testimony set for Wednesday "must remain within the boundaries of your public report because matters within the scope of your investigation were covered by executive privilege."

The letter said "these privileges would

include discussion about investigative steps or decisions made during your investigation not otherwise described in the public version of your report."

Mueller completed in March his nearly two-year-long probe into Russian med-

dling in the 2016 election and possible obstruction of justice by President Donald Trump.

The Justice Department released a redacted copy of his 448-page report in April.



In this frame grab from video provided by WLBT, law enforcement vehicles converge on a Copiah County road near Wesson, Miss on July 22. Shawan Allen, one of the four suspects wanted in a deadly shooting in Brookhaven, was killed late Monday in a shootout with Copiah County deputies. (AP)

A spokesman for Mueller, Jim Popkin, said no one at the Justice Department, Congress or the White House would review Mueller's statement before he delivers it on Wednesday.

In back-to-back hearings before the House of Representatives Judiciary and Intelligence committees, Democrats are expected to try to get Mueller to focus his testimony on specific examples of Trump's misconduct. (RTRS)

Stevens 'brilliant man': Retired Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens was remembered as a "brilliant man" with a "deep devotion to the rule of law" during a ceremony Monday at the court where he served for nearly 35 years.

The 99-year-old Stevens died last week after suffering a stroke. Justice Elena Kagan, who replaced Stevens on the court after he retired in 2010, spoke during a brief ceremony before the public was invited to view Stevens' casket at the court and pay their respects.

"He was a brilliant man with extraordinary legal gifts and talents, which he combined with a deep devotion to the rule of law and a deep commitment to equal justice," said Kagan, who called Stevens modest and humble. (AP)