

MSNBC's *The ReidOut*  
September 20, 2021  
7:19 p.m. Eastern

JOY REID: Okay. I want to show you some unbelievable images shot near Del Rio, Texas. This video from over the weekend shows a horse patrol for U.S. Customs and Border Protection trying to corral human beings like cattle, chasing after Haitian migrants trying to cross back into the United States. These horrifying images seem far more reminiscent of the Fugitive Slaves Act of the 1790s and 1850 and not in 2021. Today, the chief of border patrol told reporters that these agents are most likely using a technique to control their horses but would look into the matter. Wow. Okay. Thanks. Over the past few weeks, Del Rio has faced a wave of migrants, about 15,000 people, mostly Haitians, have set up camp in squalid conditions in the hopes that Border Patrol will allow their asylum requests. The local mayor has declared a disaster to get state and federal assistance. According to *The Guardian*, most of these Haitians who fled their homeland after the 2010 earthquake and other natural and political crises have recently arrived at the U.S./Mexico border. Today, DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas made clear that the border is indeed closed.

DHS SECRETARY ALEJANDRO MAYORKAS: We have reiterated our borders are not open and people should not make the dangerous journey. [SCREEN WIPE] If you come to the United States illegally, you will be returned.

REID: Yesterday, the Biden administration began expelling planeloads of refugees back to Haiti, a country plagued by gang violence, political instability — recall that their president was recently assassinated, not to mention catastrophic natural disasters. Give us your tired, your poor, those yearning to breathe free, indeed. Joining me now is Congresswoman Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, author of *This Is What America Looks Like*. And, Congresswoman, you tweeted — as somebody who knows very well, having been a refugee as a child, how it feels to be that afraid, you tweeted: “These are human rights abuses, plain and simple, cruel, inhumane, and a violation of domestic and international law. This needs a course correction and the issuance of clear — a clear directive on how to humanely process asylum seekers at our border.” I want to read to you, Congresswoman, what the Department of Homeland Security released. They just released this statement. And it says the following: “The Department of Homeland Security does not tolerate the abuse of migrants in our custody. And we take these allegations very seriously. U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s Office of Professional Responsibility is investigating the matter and has alerted the DHS Office of Inspector General.” Secretary Mayorkas has also directed that personnel from the OPR be on site full time to ensure that the responsibilities of DHS personnel are executed consistent with applicable policies and training. He also said that he visited the Del Rio area and will have more to say. What do you make of that response and of what we’re seeing?

CONGRESSWOMAN ILHAN OMAR (D-MN): I mean, these kinds of responses that doesn’t actually follow the actions on the ground that is so visible to everyone are not going to cut it. What we have seen was cruel, inhumane, and a violation of domestic laws and international laws. The right to seek asylum is an international right. I know this because I would not be here today

if I wasn't able to seek asylum in the border of neighboring country Kenya. To see this kind of atrocious, disturbing images at our border should really make every single American's skin crawl. We have seen Americans show sympathy and empathy to people who were fleeing Syria and call on the international world to get involved and do something and now that it's happening in our border, the fact that we are not outraged is really shameful. I do hope that this administration does what they said they were going to do, which is to have a humane immigration policy, one that grants the right for people to be able to seek asylum. I have also heard people say, Haitians might — many of the Haitians who are at our border might not have actual grounds to seek asylum. These are people who have experienced a natural disaster, which allows for people who experienced that to seek asylum. They have also experienced political violence, political upheaval, they have experienced crisis after crisis. We have also contributed to that. Generations of Haitians have experienced American policy that has contributed to their starvation, to the criminalization that they are dealing with, and to the inhumane policies that continue to destroy the lives of Haitians. So, not only do we owe Haitians the right thing of allowing them to — to seek asylum here, but we also owe them the kind of policies that would allow for them to dictate the ways in which they want to run their country.

REID: Yeah, I mean, I — there's a lot going on here. So we know that the policy right now is to send people back, including families who are not claiming asylum. There's something called Title 42, which gives the government the power to turn back any migrant caught crossing the border illegally, regardless of their country of origin, to stop the spread specifically of COVID-19 and that's something that the Supreme Court has upheld. They're essentially locking in Trump era policy on Title 42. Is there something that Congress can do to intervene to make sure that what you're talking about actually happens for Haitians? As I have to commend the administration for doing with Afghan refugees, they're bringing people in, how can we get that same kind of energy going for our — really our neighbors, people from Haiti?

OMAR: Yeah, I mean, we do need to have the same energy that we are dealing with Afghans to deal with — with Haitians. I don't, obviously, agree with this policy. We all spoke up against it, including the President and the Vice President, when it was the policy under Trump. And I think it's really important, while Congress might not be able to come together, unfortunately, to do the right thing in this case, for the President and the Vice President and this administration to do right by Haitians who are at our border. I — I can't, for the life of me, understand why people would think deporting Haitians who have come a long way in seeking asylum at our border makes sense —

REID: Yeah.

OMAR: — or why that would be the humane thing to do. So I want this President and this administration to grant them pardon, because it is something that they can do and so many other people are calling on them to do that as well.

REID: And I — very quickly, you know, I — I know that, you know, funding for the government begins in the House. Should we be looking at the budget of Department of Homeland Security? Because I was not aware that whips which come from the slave era, slavery era, were part of the

package that we issue to any sort of law enforcement or government-sanctioned personnel. Were you aware that was being issued to people, that people had that kind of equipment on them that they could use on humans?

OMAR: I — I — I was not. And I am quite appalled. You know, when it comes to our immigration policy, for so many years, cruelty has been very much embedded in it. There is obviously systematic racism at play here. We have seen many people come to our — our border and the fact that we are dealing with mainly black migrants and black immigrants and asylum seekers at our border in this kind of way really speaks to the kind of racism — systematic racism that is embedded in that department and all of the departments that deal with our immigration policy.

REID: Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, thank you very much. Really appreciate you being here this evening.

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MSNBC's *The ReidOut*  
September 21, 2021  
7:14 p.m. Eastern [TEASE]

JOY REID: Plus —

VICE PRESIDENT KAMALA HARRIS: What I saw depicted about those individuals treating human beings the way they were is horrible.

REID: — the awful treatment of Haitian migrants at the southern border, who they are and how we reached this point. The Secretary of Homeland Security, Alejandro Mayorkas, will join me.

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7:42 p.m. Eastern

REID: Today, Vice President Kamala Harris denounced the images of border horse patrol agents corralling human beings like animals in an aggressive show of force.

HARRIS: Human beings should never be treated that way and I'm deeply troubled about it and I'll also be talking to Secretary Mayorkas today.

REID: DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas told members of Congress that he would be sending representatives from the Office of Professional Responsibility to the border to ensure that it doesn't happen again. So, how did we get here? Why are thousands of Haitian migrants coming to the southern border of the U.S.? Large numbers of these refugees had been living for years in South America having fled their country after it was hit by a devastating earthquake ten years

ago, but recent economic instability caused by the pandemic and misinformation about the Biden administration's immigration policies triggered the mass exodus you see today. Yesterday, the United States and Mexico began deporting many of these migrants back to Haiti, a country some have not seen in years. This while Haiti is a country on the brink of collapse weeks after the president was assassinated. Gangs control roughly a third of the capital Port-au-Prince and jobs are sparse. If they're lucky enough to find a job, 60 percent of the people earn less than \$2 a day. Today, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters that the administration is considering giving temporary perspective status to some Haitians on the boarder but expulsions continue under a policy known as Title 42, which grants the government the power to turn back any migrant caught crossing the border, regardless of their country of origin to stop the spread of covid-19. While in New York today to address the U.N., President Biden told reporters that the administration will get the situation under control. Joining me is U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas. Thank you so much, Secretary Mayorkas, for being here. And I guess the obvious first question is: Who, to your knowledge, were these agents on horseback? Why were they permitted to operate in this way and is this some sort of standard procedure to corral people using horseback maneuvers that really look like you're herding cattle?

DHS SECRETARY ALEJANDRO MAYORKAS: Joy, thank you very much for having me on the show. The matter is under investigation, as I mentioned to the Vice President today, when we spoke earlier. Let me be very, very clear. I, too, was horrified by the images captured by photographers with respect to the activities of Border Patrol agents of horseback. We do not condone, we do not tolerate any mistreatment of any migrant. What we did is we directed an immediate investigation of the events that were captured in the photographs and on video. We — I have ensured that the top leadership of the Office of Professional Responsibility lead that investigation and that it be conducted thoroughly and swiftly. We need this resolved swiftly and in fact, I anticipate that the results of the investigation will be available by the end of next week and I have committed to making the results public.

REID: But just —

MAYORKAS: I also alerted, we, the department alerted the department's Office of Inspector General. Third, I directed that the Office of Professional Responsibility be on site in Del Rio 24/7 to make sure that the conduct of our employees is consistent with the policies, the training, and the values of this department. Lastly, if I may, the individuals who are the subject of the investigation are on administrative duties, currently. They are not executing duties and they are not to be interacting with other migrants at this time during the pendency of this investigation. The actions we're taking are swift and strong and we will take further action as the facts adduced in the investigation compel.

REID: Well, that answered what was going to be my second question, whether or not those were indeed DHS employees. You did answer that question. Thank you for that information. Let's talk about where we go from here in terms of why people are being sent back. We know that Haiti is completely unstable. The political climate there is desultory as well as the health climate and physical climate. Why would anyone at this stage, particularly a child or, you know, a mother, a family, why would anyone be deported back to Haiti at this point? Why would the U.S. do that?

MAYORKAS: We make — we make a determination that departments of Homeland Security and State make a determination whether the conditions in the country are such that the country can receive its nationals in it and what we did is evaluated those country conditions and made a determination several months ago that Temporary Protective Status was justified based on the conditions in the country at that time for individuals already resident in the United States, and we said that those individuals, those Haitian nationals resident in the United States on or before July 29th could actually remain in the United States and would not be returned to Haiti. We have made a determination that the country is capable of receiving its nationals subsequent to that date and that is why they're being returned there.

REID: Let me let you listen to Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer because he's calling to an end to the policy called Title 42 that allows the deportation of migrants based on trying to mitigate Covid-19 spread. Take a listen.

[SCHUMER CLIP]

REID: We know some 20,000 Haitians right now are gathered in Colombia for possible migration to the U.S. We know that your agency, the Department of Homeland Security, is tracking 1,500 in Panama, another 3,000 in Peru. We also know that it is not illegal to seek asylum in the United States. U.S. established many of the protocols that we think of worldwide in terms of asylum. It is not illegal to seek asylum. Will the Department of Homeland Security end this Title 42 policy, stop deporting people, and allow them to apply for asylum?

MAYORKAS: Joy, let me be clear about what Title 42 is and what it is not. It is not an immigration policy. It is an authority that the Centers for Disease Control has in light of public health imperatives. Title 42 is a public health policy that is directed by the CDC and it has been employed as a result of the trajectory of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is a pandemic, of course, that has not only gripped our nation and led to the loss of more than 600,000 lives but it is a pandemic that has gripped the entire world. This is a public health imperative as determined by the CDC. This is not a matter of immigration policy.

REID: But it is also a humanitarian issue, because one has to suspect that given what's going on in Haiti, people would be at much more risk of getting Covid-19, of getting sick if they're sent back to Haiti. So, regardless of that, there are quarantining policies that the United States could use. So, I guess I just come back to that same question: Does DHS plan to listen to what senator Schumer has said and to stop deporting people and deal with the pandemic issues on the ground in the United States?

MAYORKAS: It is currently our government's intention to continue to exercise our Title 42 authority in light of the public health imperative as determined by the Centers for Disease Control. Title 42 is the subject of ongoing litigation in the courts for some of the reasons, Joy, that you have expressed. We believe the law permits the exercise of that authority, and that is why we are pursuing that authority in court. But it is a public health imperative.

REID: Then how would — let's say you have a family that is right now in Mexico or in another

Central American country that wants to pursue an asylum claim in the United States who's come from Haiti. How do they do that?

MAYORKAS: This is precisely why we are focused on a multi-part strategy to address irregular migration, which has been a phenomenon for so many years. In fact, a number of decades. We are addressing the root causes of irregular migration, why people feel so desperate to leave the countries of origin, their homes. Number two, building safe, legal, orderly pathways for migration so people do not have to take the perilous journey north. And third, we are addressing and rebuilding our asylum laws here in the United States that were so fundamentally dismantled by the prior administration.

REID: But just to be clear —

MAYORKAS: That's precisely why we have a three-part strategy.

REID: — but — but —

MAYORKAS: And if I may, because you alluded to this earlier, and it's very important, your point is very well taken. People are receiving incorrect information from smugglers who are exploiting individuals' vulnerabilities for profit. And we are very focused on ensuring that these individuals, these families, these single adults receive accurate information that this is not the way to come to the United States. Do not take the dangerous journey. It will not work. That is why we are so focused on it and why I communicated to Haitian journalists this past Sunday so that the critical message could be broadcast through my voice on social media and through other trusted voices throughout the region.

REID: Well, thank you very much for being here. We are out of time. Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, thank you for sharing this with us. But I want to reiterate to our audience: it is not illegal to seek asylum in the United States. It is not, so we need to talk about this in that language.