

*CBS Mornings*

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7:21:08 a.m. [TEASE]

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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ahead; Southern Border Update]

VLADIMIR DUTHIERS: Coming up, we will return to the southern border to see why illegal crossings are at a 55-year low.

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7:33:21 a.m.

3 minutes and 58 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Southern Border Crisis Turns Calm; CBS News Revisits Situation in Eagle Pass, TX]

MATT GUTMAN: Let's turn our focus now to immigration. This is a sharp turn, and we all know that immigration is a hot button issue in America. More recently, it's been in the spotlight due to the crackdown by masked ICE agents in unmarked cars in cities across the country. But in previous years, the focus on immigration was at the U.S.-Mexico border, where illegal crossings skyrocketed during the Biden administration. Now they have fallen to a 55-year low. So what's behind it? Camilo Montoya-Galvez is in Eagle Pass, Texas back with us, telling us how life along the border has changed.

CAMILO MONTOYA-GALVEZ: Miles and miles of water divide the U.S. and Mexico here in Texas. While in the Rio Grande with Border Patrol, we did not see a single migrant. Less than three years ago, this section of the border was the epicenter of a dire humanitarian crisis. Last time we were here at the U.S.-Mexico border, near Eagle Pass, we saw hundreds of people, including families with young children, cross the Rio Grande to enter the country illegally. Now, the border is extremely quiet.

DEL RIO SECTOR CHIEF PATROL AGENT ANTHONY GOOD: We're seeing about 32 apprehensions a day from here to —

MONTOYA-GALVEZ [TO GOOD]: So, you went from thousands of people crossing per day in this sector of the border to a few dozen, about 30 people a day.

GOOD: — right.

MONTOYA-GALVEZ: Anthony Good is the head of Border Patrol's Del Rio sector. He says the seismic change mainly stems from President Trump's move to effectively close down the American asylum system.

GOOD: During the previous administration, there was a lot of what we just called releases, but they were being paroled into the country quickly and in mass numbers, right? And so that created the —

MONTOYA-GALVEZ [TO GOOD]: And now people are being detained or deported.

GOOD: — exactly! Exactly. They are being detained or deported.

MONTOYA-GALVEZ: Manuel Mello's family has lived in Eagle Pass since 1916. He has been the city's Fire Chief for roughly a decade. [TO MELLO] Have you ever seen the border this quiet?

EAGLE PASS, TEXAS FIRE CHIEF MANUEL MELLO: No!

MONTOYA-GALVEZ [TO MELLO]: Wow!

MELLO: No.

MONTOYA-GALVEZ [TO MELLO]: People are scared to come now essentially.

MELLO: Essentially, yes, yes. I think that that's basically the message. You know, you come here, you're going to get deported. You know, I truly believe in in the immigration process. Should it be reformed? Yes, of course. Should people be treated with dignity? Yes, of course. Should criminals be deported? Yes, of course. But to get into the politics of it, I'd rather reserve myself on that.

MONTOYA-GALVEZ: Mello says there are now also fewer tragedies.

MELLO: Two, three years ago, we were dealing with about probably between three and six drownings a day.

MONTOYA-GALVEZ [TO MELLO]: Per day?

MELLO: Per day.

MONTOYA-GALVEZ [TO MELLO]: And now?

MELLO: And now, we're looking at maybe one drowning every three months.

MONTOYA-GALVEZ: The politics of President Trump's immigration policies have played out much differently far away from the border, in major cities like Chicago and Minneapolis, where aggressive arrests of non-criminal immigrants and fatal shootings by federal agents have triggered intense backlash. 56 percent of Americans now disapprove of President Trump's handling of immigration. We met rancher, Beyer Junfin to ask him about that backlash. In 2023, his land was filled with migrants and their belongings.

BEYER JUNFIN: The situation here is night and day from two years ago. There was just piles of clothes. We had people crossing on a daily basis.

MONTOYA-GALVEZ [TO JUNFIN]: Some would say the reason that very few people are crossing this river behind us is because the Trump administration has been too harsh on immigration. What do you think about that?

JUNFIN: If harsh is doing things legally, then harsh it is and harsh it must be.

MONTOYA-GALVEZ: The razor wire behind us, guys, symbolizes the Trump administration's aggressive zero tolerance posture on illegal immigration, and without a doubt, it is deterring people from crossing this border behind us illegally. Migrants now tell us that they're scared of coming here to the U.S., but critics of the President are asking, at what cost since his crackdown is also leading to the detention of people like the wife of that U.S. Army Sergeant First Class, Nate.

NATE BURLESON: Camilo, thank you.