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Texas drops another bus full of migrants at Vice President Kamala Harris' house

TODD J. GILMAN Dallas Morning News

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WASHINGTON — A bus from Texas dropped about 30 Nicaraguan migrants outside Vice President Kamala Harris' official residence early Wednesday — at least the fifth time Gov. Greg Abbott has used the Naval Observatory as a bus depot.

Texas began sending migrants from border cities to the nation's capital in April, hoping to pressure the Biden administration by drawing attention to record levels of migration in the past year.

State and local officials say border communities have been overburdened and overwhelmed by the surge.

Footage from NBC News showed dozens of migrants coming off the bus in the dark before 7 a.m., including toddlers.

The League of United Latin American Citizens has called the busing program “un-American.” Migrant advocates and some Democratic officials have called for criminal investigations, asserting that the busing amounted to human trafficking.

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The first buses in April arrived near the U.S. Capitol, without notice to federal or city authorities.

Local social welfare groups scrambled to assist. Texas has since sent more than 8,400 migrants to the nation's capital.

“Our supposed Border Czar, Vice President Kamala Harris, has yet to even visit the border to see firsthand the impact of the open border policies she has helped implement, even going so far as to claim the border is ‘secure,’” Abbott said in a statement in mid-September after buses dropped about 100 migrants outside the vice president's residence. “Texas will continue sending migrants to sanctuary cities like Washington, D.C. until President Biden and Border Czar Harris step up and do their jobs to secure the border.”

Most of the migrants bused to Washington have continued on to other cities. Few arrived with a change of clothes or even a jacket.

Many expressed gratitude for the free ride toward family or friends. Many others arrived bewildered, thousands of miles from their intended destinations.

After a few weeks, a routine developed. Tipsters in Texas border communities would give a heads-up to volunteer groups in the District of Columbia.

Texas expanded the program to New York and Chicago.

In mid-September, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis arranged for two planes to fly 49 migrants from San Antonio to Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, an upscale resort island.

On Nov. 15, Abbott announced the first Texas bus to Philadelphia.

"They don't want to come to Washington, D.C. They don't want to be dumped in front of the vice president's house," LULAC President Domingo Garcia, a former Dallas state legislator, said outside the Naval Observatory during a protest in September. "That's un-Christian, un-Texan, un-American and something that should not be allowed."

By law, migrants from Mexico can be returned immediately to Mexico. But those from countries that don't about the United States are allowed to remain awaiting asylum hearings, typically months away.

The city of El Paso, a Democratic enclave, sent scores of buses carrying more than 10,000 migrants to New York City and at least 3,200 to Chicago between August and October to ease overcrowding in local shelters.

New York Mayor Eric Adams declared a state of emergency as the city scrounged for space at homeless shelters and hotels, and opened a tent encampment.

El Paso halted its buses after the Biden administration changed its policies to allow for quick deportation of migrants from Venezuela.

"Since April, Texas' busing strategy has successfully provided much-needed relief to our border communities overwhelmed by the historic influx of migrants caused by President Biden's reckless open border policies," Abbott said last month as he announced the first bus to Philadelphia. "Until the Biden Administration does its job and provides Texans and the American people with sustainable border security, Texas will continue doing more than any other state in the nation's history to defend against an invasion along the border, including adding more sanctuary cities like Philadelphia as drop-off locations for our busing strategy."

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