

ICE AIR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – DECEMBER 2022

- THE REPORT NOW INCLUDES 3 FULL YEARS OF ICE AIR FLIGHT INFORMATION.
- 18,949 TOTAL ICE AIR FLIGHTS OPERATED IN 2020/2021/2022. SINCE INAUGURATION: 13,843 TOTAL FLIGHTS.
- 3,474 REMOVAL FLIGHTS OPERATED IN 2020/2021/2022. SINCE INAUGURATION: 2,407 REMOVAL FLIGHTS.
- 7,980 TOTAL FLIGHTS IN 2022, UP 1,856 (30%) OVER 2021, WITH 1,416 REMOVAL FLIGHTS, UP 367 (35%) OVER 2021.
- 729 TOTAL ICE AIR FLIGHTS OPERATED IN DECEMBER, DOWN 25 (3%) FROM THE PRIOR MONTH. DECEMBER WAS 54 (8%) ABOVE THE PRIOR 6-MONTH AVERAGE OF 675.
- TOTAL ICE AIR FLIGHTS OF 729 WERE UP 46 (7%) FROM DECEMBER 2021.
- 134 LATERAL FLIGHTS IN DECEMBER SET ANOTHER RECORD HIGH OVER 128 IN NOVEMBER AND WERE 1.8X THE PRIOR 6-MONTH AVERAGE OF 74, DRIVING 511 SHUFFLE FLIGHTS, THE SECOND HIGHEST MONTH IN 3 YEARS. SEE DETAIL IN THE LATERAL AND SHUFFLE SECTIONS BELOW.
- 95 REMOVAL FLIGHTS IN DECEMBER, DOWN 6 (6%) FROM THE PRIOR MONTH AND DOWN 26 (21%) FROM DECEMBER 2021, AND DOWN 24 (20%) FROM THE PRIOR 6-MONTH AVERAGE.

LAST 12 MONTHS - FULL YEAR 2022

Over the last 12 months, all under President Biden, there have been a likely **7,980 ICE Air flight legs** as compared to **4,845 in 2020**, a **startling, unexpected, and disappointing increase of 3,135 (65%) over 2020** and up **1,856 (30%) over 2021**.

Of these flights, **1,416 were removal flights**, an **increase of 407 (40%) over the 1,009 in 2020**, and **367 (35%) over 2021**.

Shuffle flights, those just moving people in the US to and between detention/deportation centers were **4,785 over the last 12 months**, a **staggering increase of 2,560 (115%) over the 2,225 in 2020**, and up **1,126 (31%) over 2021**. (page 18).

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Total Flights of 729 in December, utilizing 24 different planes operated by 4 different charter carriers (IAero aka Swift, World Atlantic, GlobalX, and Gryphon) were down 25 (3%) from November, but were above the average of the prior 6 months (675) by 54 (8%).

The decrease of 25 total flights from November can be attributed equally to a small decrease in removal related flights of 13 (6%) and in shuffle flights of 12 (2%). (page 18).

Lateral Flights popped to another record 134 from 128 in November, the highest month recorded since they began in March 2021. Moreover the 134 was 1.8x the prior 6-month average of 74 (page 10). The lateral overall daily average was 4.3 in December, the same as November.

The daily average of lateral flights started out at 4.4 for the first 10 days and then spiked to 5.1 for the next 10 days before dropping meaningfully to 3.6 for the last 11 days, perhaps mirroring encounters, especially in El Paso where 82% of laterals originated. In El Paso the daily averages started at 3.6 for the first 10 days, then spiked to 4.6 for the next 10 days before dropping substantially to 2.6 for the last 11 days.

What is clear is that decompression is still occurring primarily in El Paso, and to a lesser extent, at least by air, in Yuma and Tucson, with destination cities of Laredo, Harlingen and San Diego, although daily flights to San Diego ended on 19 December after 19 flights. We understand decompression is also occurring by bus from Del Rio to Laredo.

In December, 110 (82%) laterals originated in El Paso, 16 (12%) in Yuma, and 8 (6%) in Tucson. In December, the proportion of originations remained almost the same for El Paso (81% to 82%) and tilted a bit more to Yuma (9% to 12%) from Tucson (10% to 6%). It is worth noting that encounters in EL Paso sector were 55,853 in November 2022, 3.4x November 2021 at 16,324, and up 39,529.

Destination cities included Laredo receiving 65 (49%) flights, Harlingen, TX receiving 50 (37%), and San Diego receiving 19 (14%). In December compared to November, the proportion of flights tilted to Laredo (33% to 49%) from Harlingen (48% to 37%) and San Diego (19% to 14%) where laterals ended 19 December. It's not known why laterals ended in San Diego but there was rumor the city would not accept more, but it was not substantiated to my knowledge.

In addition to these lateral flights there are lateral buses as well into which there is no visibility, including for expulsions of Venezuelans. My understanding is that there are buses now to at least San Diego, Laredo, and to a lesser extent Tucson and the Rio Grande Valley for decompression and expulsions.

Removal Flights in December of 95 were down 6 (6%) from November, and down 24 (20%) from the prior 6-month average. Moreover, removal flights were down 26 (21%) from December 2021. As mentioned above, I am not sure how to estimate the number of lateral flights which were "lateral for expulsion" and therefore effectively removal flights. However, if expulsions of Venezuelans in December were similar to November, as were lateral flights during the expulsion period, then it could be in the range of 12-17 lateral flights that are essentially removal flights (pages 18- 20).

Moreover, it should be noted that encounters of people from Northern Triangle countries, which generally comprise 55% - 65% of flights, absent unusual events like Haiti, have been falling on an absolute and relative basis. They fell 25,000 from June to November (28% of total encounters to 14%), while total encounters of Cubans, Nicaraguans, and Mexicans who are not amenable to air removals increased by 33,600 (45% of total encounters to 55%).

Of the removal flight decrease of 6 from November, flights to Guatemala were down 4 (26 to 22), Peru down 3 (4 to 1), Colombia down 2 (17 to 15), and Honduras (23 to 22), El Salvador (11 to 10), and Brazil (2 to 1) each falling by 1. Peru flights paused in December until the 29th, most likely because of the unrest in Peru. Conversely, Ecuador continued to ramp up flights from 2 in October to 8 in November and 13 in December. Haiti saw the first deportation flight (of 26 people we understand) since 6 September.

Of the removal flight decrease of 26 from December 2021, the major changes were decreases in flights to Haiti of 28 (29 to 1), to Mexico of 14 (14 to 0), to Honduras of 8 (30 to 22), and Guatemala by 4 (26 to 22). These decreases were offset by increases to Colombia of 14 (1 to 15) and Ecuador of 9 (4 to 13). (pages 19,30).

Removal flights were below the prior 6-month average (119) by 24 (20%).

It should be noted that 4 of the removal flights relate to one route with a small jet (generally 10-12 passengers maximum) that included Bulgaria, Togo, Nepal, and Ghana.

Flights to the Northern Triangle Countries of Guatemala (22), Honduras (22), and El Salvador (10) comprised 57% of all removal flights, a bit lower than November, and with Colombia (15) they comprised 73% of removal flights. (pages 19,20).

Direct T42 flight influence. Based on a court declaration on 10 November by Blas Nuñez-Neto, countries now accepting T42 flights are: Guatemala (22), Honduras (22), Colombia (15), Ecuador (13), Peru (1), Brazil (1), and Haiti (1), and they totaled 75 flights and made up 79% of all removal flights in December (page 19,20).

This is not to say all the people returned on these flights were returned under T42. It is unknown how many were under T8, especially under the new asylum rule and expedited removal. The percentage of removal flights originating in Alexandria, LA, typically T8 flights, increased in September and October. **From March through August, the percentage of removal flights originating in Alexandria ranged between 12% and 15%. Between September and December, it ranged between 20% and 24%.**

Underscoring the intent to deter is that, as dramatic as these flights are, people returned by air to Guatemala and Honduras only represented an estimated 18% of the [November encounters](#), and were 36% of people processed under T42 from these countries in November (December encounters are not available).

A specific example is Ecuador, with an increase in removal flights from 2 in October to 13 in December (8 coupled to other countries). This increase is most likely related to the consistent **increase in encounters from 2,948 in July to 11,831 in November**. The number subjected to T42 increased from 210 in October to 1,361 in November.

Please see Country Detail Section below for more details

Shuffle flights decreased slightly by 12 (2%) and was still the second highest month in 3 years second only to 523 in November 2022. The elevated level of shuffle flights is clearly driven by the elevated level of lateral flights described above. Moreover, shuffle flights were a massive 96 (23%) over the prior 6-month average (page 18).

To put the 511 into even greater relief, the monthly average domestic shuffle flights in 2020 and 2021 were 185 and 305, respectively (pages 29,32).

Country Detail

Guatemala flights decreased from 26 to 22 (15%) in December, close to the prior 3-month average, and below 29 and 46 flights in August and July, respectively. This reasonably consistent recent pace is in line with a consistent pace of encounters the last few months between 15,681 and 14,433, after reaching a 15-month high of 24,648 in July. (page 18).

Since June, encounters of Guatemalans fell from 24,648 to 14,433 in November (down 41%), as flights decreased by 22 (50 %) from 44 in June to 22 in December.

Although we do not know encounters for December, these returns by air represented an estimated 18% of November encounters of Guatemalans, and 33% of those processed under T42, within the typical range. In December of 2021 there were 26 flights to Guatemala, 4 (15%) above December 2022.

Based on reports by Guatemala Migration through 19 December of per plane returns, the US returned 555 (18%) fewer people by air in December at 2,575, and December returns by air were down dramatically from June at 5,350 (down by 2,775 or 52%). Encounters of Guatemalans were down similarly at 41% from June to November (last data point).

With the 8 Mexican Government deportation flights to Guatemala added to the ICE flights (pages 14,18), Guatemala received 30 flights returning an estimated 3,600 citizens by air from the US and Mexico. Combined with the estimated [2,200 Guatemalans returned by land by Mexico](#) at Tecún Únam an estimated 5,800 Guatemalans returned by the US and Mexico, 1,548 less than in November, and far below the 10,863 that were returned in June 2022, by 5,063 (47%), and reasonably consistent with the 40% decline in US encounters of Guatemalans from June to November. Please see the section on Mexico's deportation flights below.

Honduras flights decreased by 1 in December from 23 to 22 (4%), with the last 3 months stable at 22 or 23. In December, estimated returns by ICE to Honduras of 2,106 represented 16% of November encounters and 33% of those subjected to T42.

Since June, encounters of Hondurans fell from 24,177 to 12,996 (down 46%) in November as flights decreased by 17 (44%) from 39 in June to 22 in December. We do not know December encounters (pages 18,11-13). In December 2021 there were 30 flights to Honduras, 8 (27%) more than December 2022.

Combined with the 8 Mexican Government deportation flights (pages 14,18), and Mexico section below), Honduras received 30 return flights in October, up 1 from 29 in September, returning an estimated 2,900 citizens by air.

Colombia flights decreased by 2 from 17 to 15, the 4th consecutive month of decrease from 23 flights in August, which is interesting because encounters increased from 13,497 in August to 15,572 in November (page 18). However, none of these flights were coupled with flights to other countries which was the case with all 23 flights in August. Encounters of Colombians did fall from October (17,197) to November (15,572), as did those subjected to T42 (from 2,177 to 1,249), leading to expulsion rates of 13% and 8%, in October and November respectively. I'm curious to see if the downward trend will continue in both flights and T42 expulsion rates.

Ecuador flights increased significantly again from 2 in October to 8 in November to 13 in December. Of the 13 flights in November, 8 were coupled with flights to other countries (7 to El Salvador and 1 to Honduras) with 5 unique flights. In October, 3 of the 8 were unique flights. The increase is no doubt related to encounters increasing for 4 consecutive months from 2,948 in July (1 flight) to 11,831 in November. During that same time those subjected to T42 increased from 114 in July to 1,361 in November, leading to expulsion rates of 4% and 12%, for July and November, respectively (pages 18, 11-13).

El Salvador flights decreased slightly by 1 from 11 to 10 (10%). In December, 5 flights were coupled with flights to Ecuador so there were 5 unique flights to El Salvador, which is relatively consistent with the 7 unique flights in November (page 18).

Special Note: There has always been uncertainty as to whether El Salvador accepted returns of those subject to T42. According to a court declaration in November, El Salvador DOES NOT accept T42 flights, which means these are all T8 returns, some of which could be expedited.

Although we don't know December encounters, the estimate of 700 returns in December would represent 13% of November encounters, lower than other Northern Triangle countries (18%-20%) that do accept T42 returns.

Peru flights dropped from 4, basically 1 every Friday since mid-August, to 1 as they seemed to be paused through the month because of the unrest in Peru, only to restart on 29 December (page 18).

Peru does accept T42 flights based on a 10 November court declaration. No doubt the flights started in August as encounters increased from June at 5,853 to August at 7,782. However, the flights don't seem to be having the intended deterrence impact as encounters were 9,079 in October and decreased to only 8,529 in November. It is curious that T42 expulsions seemed to match flights in August and September at 246 and 357, respectively, but only 26 and 37 T42 expulsions were recorded for October and November, respectively. Perhaps these are now removals under T8 expedited removal proceedings.

BRAZIL flights decreased significantly from 10 in August to 2 in the following 3 months, and now 1 in December. The decrease is no doubt related to encounters of Brazilians dropping significantly from 5,747 in August to only 714 in November after the large air lift in August (page xx).

Although Brazil does accept T42 it appears the recent flights may be T8 deportation flights, perhaps under expedited removal, as CBP is reporting that none of the 329 non-OFO encounters of Brazilians in November were subjected to T42 in November and only 1 in October.

Haiti experienced the first removal flight since 6 September in December. It appeared to be a deportation flight and it was reported to carry 26 people back to Haiti (pages 15,18).

For the 6th month in a row, in November, CBP encounters of Haitians between southern ports was **below 500 at only 35, with 5,436 at ports of entry**, many through exceptions to T42.

For the 6th month in a row, it has been shown that if people are given a chance to make a case for asylum at a port of entries, they will choose to do that rather than to enter without documentation between ports. In November only 2 Haitians were subjected to T42 after encounters at the southern border.

We are now 14 months past Del Rio and since 19 September 2021 there have been 241 flights to Haiti removing about 24,648 Haitians, and since inauguration 278 flights removing 26,747 Haitians, 1 in every 425 people in Haiti (pages 18).

Small Jet Removals observed included 2 flights on a Gryphon Air Gulfstream that carries 10-12 passengers as a maximum. The jets appear to have deported people on 2 separate routes. One to Bulgaria and Nepal, and another to Ghana and Togo. (pages 18,19).

Other Removal Destinations were The Dominican Republic (2), Nicaragua (3), and Jamaica (1), all within generally normal patterns (page 18).

Mexico Operated Removal flights are all operated by a new company, Viva Aerobus, which operates many more commercial routes than Mexico's old contractor, Magnicharter, operated. The complete changeover was made around 22 October. In October, Magnicharter operated a flight on 4 October and then there was a pause with Viva Aerobus beginning deportations on 22 October. According to an [article in Milenio](#), the Magnicharter contract was 2020 to 2022 and it apparently expired at the end of September.

Mexico deportations increased from 22 in November to 32 in December, 6 higher than the prior 6-month average. Flights to all countries increased with Guatemala up 2 (9 to 11), Honduras up 2 (6 to 8), Ecuador up 2 (1 to 3), El Salvador up 2 (0 to 2), Nicaragua up 1 (3 to 4) and Cuba up 1 (3 to 4) (page 14).

Departure cities in Mexico include Mexico City (10), Monterrey (11), Villahermosa (4), Hermosillo (3), Tapachula (3), and Tuxtla (1).

Additionally, I observed 2 likely [INAMI \(Mexico Migration\) "voluntary" return flights to Venezuela](#) from Mexico City, for a total of 9 of these flights, the last of which I observed on 13 Dec following the first observed on 7 November. Because these are supposed to be voluntary flights, I have **not included** them in the totals.

Cuba deportation flights were [widely reported](#) to be approved by Cuba now, although there was little specific information. However, it does seem, based on the November court declaration and

comments from others that T42 flights are not approved. **To date I have not observed any likely deportation flights to Cuba.** It was reported there were not enough people to fill a plane yet, and I wonder if expedited removal after T42 will move things ahead.

DECEMBER FLIGHT SUMMARY

In December, there were 729 likely ICE Air flights, down 25 (3%) from November, and up 46 (7%) from the same month of 2021. Removal flights of 95 were down 6 (6%) from November, while domestic shuffle flights decreased by 12 (2%).

- - 95 removal flights, with 86 return flights, to 15 different countries in Latin America, Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean.
- - 37 domestic flights connecting directly to removal flights.
- - 511 domestic shuffle flights between deportation locations.
- - 548 domestic flights (connections and shuffle flights).
- - **Since President Biden's inauguration there have been 13,843 likely ICE Air flights** including 2,407 removal flights. Including just the 264 lateral flights before October 2021 and 50 for October - December 2022 as expulsion flights would yield 2,721 removal flights.

Last 12 Months – 7,980 likely total flights

- - 1,416 removal flights, with 1,301 return flights, to at least 27 countries in Latin America, Europe, the Caribbean, Africa, and Southeast Asia.
- - 478 domestic flights connecting directly to removal flights.
- - 4,785 domestic shuffle flights between removal locations.
- - 5,263 domestic flights (connections and shuffle flights).
- - 40% of flights were return related (removal, return and connections) and 60% were domestic shuffle flights.