

## ICE AIR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – JULY 2023

- JULY FLIGHTS WERE ABNORMALLY LOW BECAUSE OF A WEEK LULL RESULTING FROM THE 30 JUNE EXPIRATION OF THE ICE AIR CHARTER CONTRACT WITH CLASSIC AIR CHARTER. IN THE FIRST 10 DAYS OF JULY ONLY ABOUT 30% OF TYPICAL TOTAL FLIGHTS AND 20% OF TYPICAL RETURN FLIGHTS OPERATED.
- AFTER CONTRACT RESOLUTION IN THE SECOND WEEK OF JULY FLIGHTS ACCELERATED TO REACH TYPICAL T42 LEVELS.
- ESTIMATED IMPACT OF THE CONTRACT LULL IS ABOUT 100 FEWER TOTAL FLIGHTS AND 25 FEWER RETURN FLIGHTS.
- 23,634 TOTAL ICE AIR FLIGHTS OPERATED IN 2020-JULY 2023. SINCE INAUGURATION: 18,528 TOTAL FLIGHTS.
- 4,273 REMOVAL FLIGHTS OPERATED IN 2020-JULY 2023. SINCE INAUGURATION: 3,206 REMOVAL FLIGHTS.
- 565 TOTAL ICE AIR FLIGHTS OPERATED IN JULY, DOWN 105 (16%) FROM THE PRIOR MONTH. JULY WAS 122 (18%) BELOW THE PRIOR 6-MONTH AVERAGE OF 687.
  - IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT WITHOUT THE CONTRACT INTERRUPTION JULY TOTAL FLIGHTS WOULD HAVE BEEN ABOUT THE SAME AS JUNE.
- TOTAL ICE AIR FLIGHTS OF 565 WERE DOWN 52 (8%) FROM JULY 2022.
- 99 REMOVAL FLIGHTS IN JULY, DOWN 23 (19%) FROM THE PRIOR MONTH AND DOWN 45 (31%) FROM JULY 2022. DOWN 18 (15%) FROM THE PRIOR 6-MONTH AVERAGE OF 117. NOTE THAT WITHOUT THE CONTRACT INTERRUPTION JULY REMOVAL FLIGHTS WOULD HAVE BEEN ABOUT THE SAME AS JUNE.
- LATERAL FLIGHTS WERE LITTLE CHANGED AT 26 IN JULY, ALL ORIGINATING IN TUCSON FOR “DECOMPRESSION.”

### **CONTRACT INTERRUPTION**

ICE Air’s 5 year [contract with Classic Air Charter](#) expired on 30 June, 2023 and resulted in a week interruption in normal flight volume (see weekly trend charts pages 11,13). A [new contract](#) with Classic

Air for a potential of 9 months was a Task Order (TO) just posted with a start date of 3 July, 2023 at a potential expense of \$400 million for just 9 months compared to what seems to my amateur reading \$900 million for 5 ½ years under the old contract. The 4-month contract, with another 5-month option, is to “allow for competition of the active procurement and transition, if necessary. From January to May 2023, the procurement for the contract was completed but the results were contested, and ICE determined corrective action should be undertaken which is the reason for this bridge contract. **There is no way to understand how much of the cost increase is volume and/or how much is rate because no contract details are disclosed as far as I can tell. Or how much is just the result of being desperate with no other alternative to keep planes operating in the face of the contract process failure.**

Moreover, from what I gleaned from public sources this was a mess. The bids for a new contract were contested pushing past the 30 June expiration so ICE scrambled to put together a bridge Task Order which the current carrier, Classic Air, then said they could not sign the TO July 1, so ICE turned to CSI Aviation who provided ICE Air services prior to the Classic contract. CSI indicated they could resume services July 7, but, based on the funding link above for the new contract, Classic is the contractor. That said, I also have reason to believe CSI is the current TO provider, so even that is unclear. There is no visibility to the old contract or one that may be in motion now.

*{I would very much welcome someone with the right skill set to review the hot links to the spending disclosures above and analyze the estimated expense rate increase. It could be an interesting investigation, including the entire convoluted process.}*

### **TRANSITION FROM T42 TO T8**

Both total flights and removal flights have now reached, but not consistently exceeded, the recent T42 levels. That said, the last week of July and first week of August have been at somewhat elevated levels with an average of 1 more removal flight per weekday than the middle of July. Watching. (see weekly trend charts on pages 11,13).

The total flight average before T42 ended in March/April was 35.2 per weekday and the average for July 11 – 31 (after the contract interruption) was 33.2. The removal flight average in March/April was 6.1 per weekday, almost the same as it was for July 11-31 at 6.2.

I do not believe REMOVALS (expulsions + deportations) of people encountered are higher for the period May 12 through July 27, 2023 compared to the same period in 2022 as word parsed and promoted by DHS. [DHS states](#) that about 85,000 migrants have been “repatriated” during this time in 2023 compared to 52,246 during the same time in 2022, for an increase of 63%.

By my count, there were 381 ICE Air removal flights during this time period in 2022 (page xx) compared to only 278 during the same time in 2023 (page 24,35), down 103 flights. At an estimated 110 per plane that would be about 11,300 fewer people returned by air in 2023 during the same period.

During this time in 2022 there were a total of around 232,000 T42 (page 19) expulsions and assuming 65% represent unique people, net of recidivism, that would be 150,000 people subject to expulsion, far eclipsing the 85,000 reported “repatriations” in 2023, not even considering the deportations in 2022 not included in the expulsion number, including those by land to Mexico. **Although removal flights may be accelerating somewhat as mentioned above, there would be a very long way to go to dent the**

gap. To be sure, encounters were down significantly so lower removal levels would reflect that over time, but that is not part of what DHS is promoting.

I have a **hypothesis of the composition of the 85,000**, which I wish DHS would disaggregate for transparency and accuracy. **My guess (yes, guess) is that the 264 ICE return flights contribute around 31,000**, Mexico reported land repatriations to Mexico of around 47,000, and [4,000 deportations](#) of the CHNV population as stated by Blas Nuñez-Neto, the total of which approaches 85,000 with room for small commercial flight deportations. I do not believe the CHNV deportations include voluntary returns, but do not know.

### **LAST 12 MONTHS**

**Over the last 12 months**, all under President Biden, there have been a likely **8,203 ICE Air flight legs** as compared to 4,845 in 2020, a **startling, unexpected, and disappointing increase of 3,358 (69%) over 2020 and up 2,079 (34%) over 2021.**

Of these flights, **1,325 were removal flights**, an increase of **316 (31%) over the 1,009 in 2020, and 276 (26%) over 2021.**

**Shuffle flights**, including lateral flights and those just moving people in the US to and between detention/deportation centers were **5,001 over the last 12 months, a staggering increase of 2,776 (125%) over the 2,225 in 2020, and up 1,342 (37%) over 2021.** (pages 24,35,38,41).

**Total Flights** of 565 in July, utilizing 24 different planes operated by 4 different charter carriers (IAero aka Swift, World Atlantic, GlobalX, and Gryphon) **were down 105 (16%) from June, and were below the average of the prior 6 months (687) by 122 (18%)** (pages. 12,24).

*Important to note that without the contract interruption in July total flights would have been about the same as June.*

**The decrease of 105 total flights from June can be attributed to the decrease in removal related flights (removals, connections and returns) down 66 and shuffle flights moving people to and between detention/deportation locations and removal flights, down 39** (page 24).

In June, Border Patrol encounters (between ports) at the southern border were down significantly from 171,387 in May to 99,545 in June. However, it has been [reported by the Washington Post](#) that they will rebound to around 130,000 in July.

**Removal Flights** decreased by **23 (19%) from 122 to 99** which was **45 (31%) below July 2022, and down 18 (15%) from the prior 6-month average** (pages 24-26). *It is Important to note that without the contract interruption July total flights would have been about the same as June.*

**In terms of the outlook for the future, the average removal flights per weekday progression for each 1/3 period of July was 1.2 (contract interruption impacted), 5.1 and 7.4 respectively. For the 2 months before the lifting of T42, March and April, removals per weekday were 6.3 and 5.9, respectively. Watching closely to see if the July exit rate of 7.2 is signaling an elevated level of removal flights.**

**The Northern Triangle countries of Honduras (38), Guatemala (28), and El Salvador (8) continue to increase their proportion of removal flights with 75% of all removal flights in July compared to 70% in**

**June and only 57% in May.** Conversely, the proportion of removal flights to South America remained low post-T42 at 16%, half of May at 32%.

We don't know July encounters, but based on June, **encounters of people from Northern Triangle countries were 1.9x those of people from South America**, while **removal flights to Northern Triangle Countries were 4.6x of those from South America.**

**Of the 23 removal flight decrease**, Guatemala accounted for a reduction of 6 (34 to 28), El Salvador down 5 (13 to 8), Ecuador down 2 (6 to 4), Peru down 2 (5 to 3), Colombia down 2 (11 to 9), and Africa (small 15 passenger jets) down 4 (6 to 2). All other removal flight decreases were by 1, and the only increase was a small jet route to Vietnam and Cambodia.

**All removal flights to South America continue to touch Alexandria, LA which those to Northern Triangle Countries are significantly weighted to Texas originations** (page 14).

Although the total number of people ICE returned by air in July to Guatemala and Honduras was down 1,322, or 16%, (8,049 to 6,727), returns represented 26% of June encounters compared to 22% in June (pages 19, 25). However, if overall encounters in July are up by 30% as reported then June and July may be more comparable, with July possibly even less than June.

*Please see Country Detail Section below for more details*

**Lateral Flights** increased modestly from 21 in June to 26 in July. All laterals in July originated in Tucson to “decompress” southern Arizona where, [according to the Washington Post](#), encounters reached 40,000, the highest in 15 years. By comparison, June encounters in the Tucson sector were 27,294 after falling from 32,872 in May.

Following the contract interruption there was generally a flight each day from Tucson, however several days in the last week there were 2 flights a day. San Diego was the destination for 15 laterals, Laredo for 6, Harlingen, TX for 3, and El Paso received 2 laterals.

In addition to these lateral flights there are lateral buses as well into which there is no visibility, however we understand many buses were used for “decompression” as well.

**Shuffle flights** of 315 fell 39 (11%) from June (page 24). It was a little surprising to me that they did not fall more with the contract interruption, however that impact may have been counterbalanced by the reported 30% (30,000) increase in encounters as these flights move people to and between detention/deportation centers.

## **Country Detail**

**Honduras** flights remained unchanged at 38 in July, significantly over the prior 6-month average of 24 (58%), but only slightly higher than July 2022 at 36 (page 25). Encounters of Hondurans dropped

significantly in June by 5,948 (28%) to 15,091 from an unusually high level in May, however, the expectation is for a reversal when we have reporting for July.

**In July, ICE Air returned 3,496 Hondurans, down from 4,351 on the same number of planes in June, with an average of 115 people returned per plane in June falling to 92 in July. In May, 2,808 Hondurans were returned by ICE Air.**

Unusually, for the fourth month in a row, there were no removal flights from Mexico (page 20), and land returns from El Carmen, Mexico remained very low at 374, little changed from June, but down from 1,389 in March, and down massively by 3,537 from July 2022 at 3,911.

**From April through July 30, 2022 Mexico returned 19,743 Hondurans compared to only 3,171 in the same period in 2023.**

**Guatemala flights dropped by 6 (18%) to 28 in July from June which was 4 (13%) below the prior 6-week average and 18 (39%) below July of 2022. The agreement on repatriation flights with Guatemala is not known so it is not clear if ICE could not make up the flights lost during the contract interruption.**

Encounters of Guatemalans did drop significantly in June by 30% from 14,817 in May to 10,361 in June. However, we do not know if they increased in July with national numbers. ICE Air returned 3,231 Guatemalans in July and these returns represented 31% of June encounters, higher than June at 25%, again with the caveat that if encounters increased in July the months may be more comparable.

**Unusually, for the second month in a row there were no returns from deportation flights from Mexico to Guatemala (page 20) which compares to 521 last July. Mexico did return 2,057 Guatemalans by land at Tecún Úman, up 706 (52%) from June, but substantially down by 1,933 (49%) from the 3,996 returned there in July 2022.**

**Combined with the ICE Air returns, total returns by the US and Mexico in July were 5,288, up slightly from June at 5,049, but down significantly by 4,035 (43%) from July 2022 at 9,323.**

**El Salvador flights decreased from the relatively high 13 in June by 5 (38%) to 8 in July which is 1 over the prior 6-month average. Encounters of Salvadorans decreased in June to 3,185, down 2,165 (40%) from May so returns are estimated to be 25% of June encounters, consistent with Guatemala and Honduras (page 25).**

**Ecuador flights decreased meaningfully for the 4<sup>th</sup> straight month from 31 to 20, to 10, to 6, to 4 over the months of March – July. July was 15 below the prior 6-month average of 19 and 3 over July 2022. All this was over a time when encounters of Ecuadorans were in a relatively tight range of 5,103 to 7,142.**

**Perhaps ICE decided the incremental cost of the large number of flights was not creating the desired deterrence impact. The 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2022 averaged 2 flights per month. In December encounters of Ecuadorans spiked from 7,030 in October to 16,206 in December at which time flights moved from 2 in October to 13 in December and 31 in March, before falling to 4 in July (page 25).**

**Colombia flights also dropped for the 4<sup>th</sup> straight month from 24 to 21, to 17, to 11, to 9 for the months of March – July (page 25). The monthly average of flights for the last 6 months of 2023 was 17**

at a time when encounters ranged between 9,471 and 18,131, before plummeting dramatically in June by 13,426 (74%) from 18,131 in May to 4,705 in June, the lowest level in at least a year.

It is estimated that returns in July represent about 19% of June encounters, up significantly from June at around 6% and May at 9%.

**Peru flights dropped by 2 (40%) in July to 3, the lowest level since January but only 1.5 below the prior 6-week average** (page 25). There were no flights to Peru in July 2022. Recently, there was generally a flight per week but in July all the flights were between July 24 -26 (and there have been 3 in just the first 4 days of August). Unclear why the lumpiness is occurring, perhaps the timing of expedited removals, the repatriation agreement with Peru, or perhaps related to a significant drop in encounters. However, we do not know July encounters. **Encounters of Peruvians were in the 8,400 range March – May, but then dropped significantly from 8,265 in May to 2,623 in June.**

Estimated returns in July represent about 11% of June encounters, similar to May.

**Dominican Republic flights dropped by 1 (33%) from 3 in June to 2 in July, 1.5 below the prior 6-month average** (page 25). **Prior to April, there were basically 2 flights per month. It is not clear why flights escalated in April and May because there is no public reporting of encounters from the DR.**

It is possible there was an attempt to reduce the detainee population in April and May in anticipation of the end of T42. It is not clear if this is a temporary reversion which is something to watch.

**Brazil flights fell to 0 from 1. In 4 of the 5 prior months there was 1 flight** (page 25). **Encounters of Brazilians have been relatively consistent over the last 6 months ranging from 1,093 – 3,816, ending in June at 2,961.**

**Cuba on April 24, 2023, experienced the first return flights since December 2020, followed by 1 in each of the following 3 months including July** (page 25). It seems that the pattern now is for 1 flight per month, although there seems to be no pattern to the day or date of the month.

The Government of Cuba announced that only 33 people were returned in July.

**Haiti received no flights in July, although one was scheduled for 26 July but was cancelled, breaking the pattern of 1 flight per month for the prior 7 months. However, the issuance of a no travel warning, the return of US staff, and the announcement that the US would participate in a Kenya-led multi-national force to combat the gangs did not deter ICE from [returning 55 people to Haiti August 2.](#)**

Over the last 9 months, [only 1,079 Haitians have been encountered between southern ports.](#) The vast majority (estimating around 85%+) of encounters at ports of Haitians of 51,083 over the last 9 months have been related to T42 exemptions or CBP One appointments.

Meanwhile, [interdiction of Haitians at sea continues](#) with 5,089 interdicted in the first 9 1/2 months of the fiscal year (Oct) for an annual pace of 6,428, below the prior year of 7,175 by 747 (10%).

Since inauguration 284 flights have removed 27,013 Haitians, 1 in every 425 people in Haiti. Since the mass return beginning 19 September 2021, 24,914 Haitians have been returned on 247 flights (page 21).

**Small Jet Removals** observed included 2 flights with 4 country stops operated by Gryphon Air Gulfstreams that carry 12-15 passengers as a maximum with destinations of Mauritania (1), Senegal (1), Cambodia (1), and Vietnam (1) (pages 25,26).

**Other Removal Destinations** were Nicaragua (1), and Jamaica (1), both within generally normal patterns (pages 25,26).

**Mexico Operated Removal** flights surprisingly stopped altogether in June and now July following just 1 flight in each of April and May to Guatemala (page 20). I do not think I am wrong because the Governments of Guatemala and Honduras support this reporting. There has been no explanation given for the lower returns from Mexico of Hondurans and Guatemalans, however the change was concurrent with the tragic fire in Juarez.

The 6-month average prior to April was 24, and there were 37 deportations in May 2022.

Importantly, returns of Guatemalans and Hondurans by Mexico fell by 7,365 (85%) from July 2022 (8,617) to June 2023 (1,252).

### **JULY FLIGHT SUMMARY**

In July, there were 565 likely ICE Air flights, down 105 (16%) from June, and down 52 (8%) from the same month of 2022. Removal flights of 99 were down 23 (19%) from June while domestic shuffle flights decreased by 39 (11%).

- - 99 removal flights, with 98 return flights, to 14 different countries in Latin America, Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean.
- - 53 domestic flights connecting directly to removal flights.
- - 315 domestic shuffle flights between deportation locations.
- - 368 domestic flights (connections and shuffle flights).
- - **Since President Biden's inauguration there have been 18,528 likely ICE Air flights** including 3,206 removal flights. Including just the 264 lateral flights before October 2021 and 50 for October - December 2022 as expulsion flights would yield 3,520 removal flights.

### **Last 12 Months – 8,302 likely total flights**

- - 1,325 removal flights, with 1,251 return flights, to at least 29 countries in Latin America, Europe, the Caribbean, Africa, and Southeast Asia.
- - 626 domestic flights connecting directly to removal flights.
- - 5,001 domestic shuffle flights between removal locations.
- - 5,627 domestic flights (connections and shuffle flights).
- - 40% of flights were return related (removal, return and connections) and 60% were domestic shuffle flights.

