

‘Cash in Envelopes’: How the US and UN Are Funding the Border Crisis

The Biden administration gave the UN migration agency nearly \$1.3 billion in 2023, which it uses to help migrants on their journey to enter the US illegally.

↗ 3042

💬 499



(Illustration by The Epoch Times, Getty Images, Shutterstock, Public Domain)

By Darlene McCormick Sanchez | February 13, 2024 Updated: February 14, 2024

The United States is bankrolling its own “invasion” by funding the United Nations and its partners, which, in turn, give hundreds of millions of dollars in cash and aid to migrants who eventually cross the U.S. southern border illegally.

While the U.N. has aided migrants for decades, the scope of its operation has dramatically expanded as the number of illegal

immigrants—from at least 160 countries—into the United States has surged.

That expansion has been fueled by more than \$1 billion in funding from the U.S. government to the U.N. and other agencies assisting migrants, according to a government spending database.

“We’re actually funding our own border crisis,” Todd Bensman, senior national security fellow at the Center for Immigration Studies, a “pro-immigrant, low-immigration” think tank, told The Epoch Times.

“And it’s provided by, ultimately, the United States taxpayer.”

Until President Joe Biden took office, the United States had obligated about a half-billion dollars per year to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the U.N.’s migration arm.

But that funding has skyrocketed under the Biden administration to nearly \$1.3 billion in 2023—more than double what it had been under the Trump administration, [according](#) to USASpending.gov.

The government spending database shows that most of the money comes from the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Two of the largest government [giveaways](#) were voluntary contributions to the U.N.’s IOM from the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration totaling \$547 million over two years ending in 2023.

The bureau’s objective was “to fund processing individuals requesting refugee status and resettlement in the United States and arrange their movement.”

More Articles



Inside the Brewing Fed-State Showdown at the Texas Border



A Small Arizona Town Prepares to Fight State Over Illegal Immigration



‘Aiding and Abetting’

The U.N. is pouring a staggering amount of money—partially stemming from U.S. taxpayers—into the illegal immigration crisis.

The U.N.-orchestrated Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan [update](#) for 2024 calls for distributing \$1.6 billion in 17 Latin American and Caribbean countries with the help of 248 partner agencies, which are also receiving U.S. grants.



Todd Bensman, a senior national security fellow at the Center for Immigration Studies, in Costa Mesa, Calif., on May 24, 2023. (John Fredricks/The Epoch Times)

The plan allocated \$372 million in “cash and vouchers” and “multipurpose cash assistance” during 2024 for 624,300 migrants—the population of Detroit—in Central and South America who are headed for the U.S. border.

Mr. Bensman, who has been at the forefront of investigating the causes of the migrant surge, believes that the U.N. is “aiding and abetting mass migration.”

People who might not have taken the risk to travel to the U.S. border because they were worried about food or safety now have help, he said.

That help comes in the form of prepaid debit cards, food, water, shelter, medical care, and transportation, according to the [U.N.](#)

Migrants can also directly receive cash, what the U.N. emergency [manual](#) calls “cash in envelopes.”

And they know that the U.S. border is wide open.

The U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security [shows](#) 6.2 million encounters at the southern border, in addition to 1.7 million known gotaways since President Biden took office.

“They say, ‘Well, you know, we’re coming now because Biden’s letting us in,’” Mr. Bensman said.

As illegal immigration ramped up in 2021, he went to investigate what was happening firsthand.



A Haitian migrant shows his cash card provided by the United Nations. He said his 3,500 peso payment (about \$175 US) didn't deposit this month, in Tapachula, Mexico, on Jan. 14, 2022. (Todd Bensman/Center for Immigration Studies)

What he found was IOM and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) helping migrants make the dangerous trek from South and Central America.

Workers at an IOM migrant camp in Reynosa, Mexico, in 2021 told him that families of four were receiving about \$800 per month on a debit card. His viral [post on X](#), formerly known as Twitter, noted long lines of migrants waiting to receive the cards.

An IOM Mexico spokesperson quibbled over terminology and the amount of aid but confirmed that the migrants were getting monetary assistance, according to an Agence France-Presse news agency “fact check.”

The spokesman said the maximum amount for a family is about \$395 on an “e-wallet,” noting that the cards could not be exchanged for cash.

He said workers at the migrant station giving them out were from a nonprofit organization that works with the IOM, not the IOM itself.

‘A Force for Good’

Documents show that IOM facilitates global migration and has strong ties to the Biden administration.

IOM Director General Amy Pope served as President Biden’s senior adviser on migration. She also served as deputy Homeland Security adviser to President Barack Obama.



(L-R) Amy Pope, deputy Homeland Security advisor, Vice President Joe Biden, President Barack Obama, and other officials meet in the Oval Office on May 21, 2016. (Brendan Smialowski/AFP via Getty Images)

In January, the IOM [announced](#) its first “annual appeal,” seeking a massive \$7.9 billion to tackle the “migrant crisis” and “[realize]

migration's promise as a force for good throughout the world.”

“The evidence is overwhelming that migration, when well-managed, is a major contributor to global prosperity and progress,” Ms. Pope said in her appeal for money to assist migration.

The U.N. agency stated that it needs money for humanitarian reasons to “save lives” and provide “regular pathways for migration.”

It also wants to use the money to deal with the “displacement” of people because of the “impacts of climate change.”

U.N. [documents](#) linked to Ms. Pope’s announcement show that in 2024, the U.N. wants to spend \$70 million in Panama, Costa Rica, and Mexico—all countries on the most common migration route to the United States.

Documents state that in 2023 a record 500,000 migrants had traveled through the dense jungle known as the Darien Gap from Colombia into Panama.

Michael Yon, a war correspondent appearing on Epoch TV’s American Thought Leaders in 2021, told The Epoch Times’ Jan Jekielek that he had taken other journalists and congressmen to the Darien Gap to see the mass migration firsthand.

He estimated that some 10 percent of migrants traveling through the Darien Gap are murdered or die because of the harsh environment, but even that’s not enough of a deterrent to stop the flow.



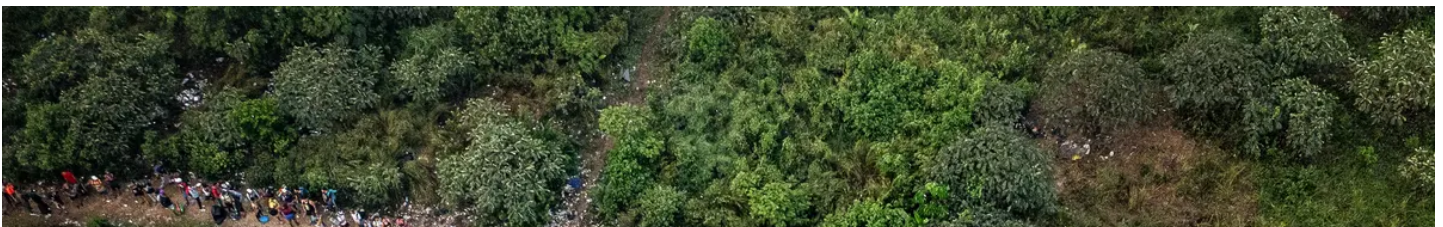
**As long as those incentives are
there to come to the United States,
they’re going to come.**

Michael Yon, former war correspondent

(Tal Atzmon/The Epoch Times)

Migrants from around the world are flying into South and Central America to start their journey because countries such as Suriname and Ecuador don’t require a visa to enter, Mr. Yon said.

Many then travel by foot through the Darien Gap, through Central America, and into Mexico, where they wait for the Mexican government to clear them to travel north, where they eventually cross illegally into the United States.





their programs.

Ian Mehlman, spokesman, Federation for American Immigration Reform

Ian Mehlman is a spokesman for the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), an immigration reform nonprofit group that has been studying U.S. immigration since 1979.

Like Mr. Bensman, he believes that the U.N. is instrumental in the surge at U.S. borders.

“This is a way for the U.N. to get money from the donor countries to carry out their programs,” Mr. Mehlman told The Epoch Times.

Researchers at [FAIR](#) noted in a recent article that “cash-based intervention” programs at the U.N. increased by 77 percent between 2019 and 2020, although some of that was attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Mehlman said migration is big business under the Biden administration.

“There’s no question that we saw a vast increase in migration to the United States, starting from the day that Joe Biden took office,” he said.

President Biden rescinded former President Donald Trump’s “Remain in Mexico” policy, under which would-be asylum seekers stayed in Mexico while awaiting adjudication on their immigration court case. The vast majority of illegal immigrants don’t qualify for asylum because they’re entering the United States for economic reasons and not fleeing political persecution.





to move to any country that they desire, which is problematic, not only to countries such as the United States but also to the countries migrants are fleeing, according to Mr. Mehlman.

“If the incentive is to leave rather than to reform and change things where you are, then those failed societies continue,” he said.

Migration Nation

Some on the left favor immigration as a way for the United States to bolster declining birth rates with noncitizens and provide cheap labor.



**[Vegetables] would rot in the ground
if they weren't being picked by
immigrants, illegal immigrants.**

Rep. Jerry Nadler

“We need immigrants in this country,” Rep. Jerry Nadler (D-N.Y.) said in January during a House Judiciary Subcommittee hearing on immigration.

He said vegetables “would rot in the ground if they weren’t being picked by immigrants, illegal immigrants.”

“The fact is the birth rate in this country is way below replacement level,” Mr. Nadler said.

But some conservative pundits say mass immigration is part of the Great Replacement Theory, which speculates that immigrants are replacing citizens of countries with mainly white European ancestry.

Others believe that Democrats want open borders because if illegal immigrants become citizens, they would likely vote to keep Democrats in power for generations.



Members of CHIRLA Action Fund, an immigrant advocacy organization, gather near the entrance to the Ronald Reagan Library prior to a GOP presidential debate in Simi Valley, Calif., on Sept. 27, 2023. (Valerie Macon/AFP via Getty Images)

But Mr. Bensman has a more straightforward explanation for what’s fueling the border crisis: a cash bonanza.

Migrant advocates from the left are now becoming political appointees, leading him to believe that the migrant crisis is “engineered.”

In Mr. Bensman’s 2023 book “Overrun: How Joe Biden Unleashed the Greatest Border Crisis in U.S. History,” he contended that mass migration has become a cottage industry, with many migrant-centered NGOs getting fat off taxpayer dollars.

He pointed to one group called HIAS, a migration assistance group initially founded to help Jews fleeing Eastern Europe. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas once served on the group’s board.

It’s one of several groups that has received millions of dollars in federal grants, according to Mr. Bensman.

Republican lawmakers argue President Biden already has the power to stop the border crisis he created.

HIAS has received most of the \$11 million from two recent grants awarded by the U.S. government and earmarked for Latin American migrants, according to [USASpending.gov](https://www.usaspending.gov).

The group, working in concert with the U.N., has pledged \$17 million to help immigrants in 2024, according to Refugee and Migrant Response Plan [documents](#).

“Their organizations are the ones that are just getting filthy rich, building their endowment, and paying their executives and just getting federal contracts,” Mr. Bensman said.



The United Nations office in Geneva, Switzerland, in this file photo. The Biden administration gave the U.N.'s migration agency nearly \$1.3 billion in 2023. (Johannes Simon/Getty Images)

Defunding the UN

With the border crisis becoming the No. 1 issue in the 2024 presidential race, Republicans on Capitol Hill have already blocked a bipartisan border bill that many see as doing more harm than good in stopping illegal immigration.

They argue that President Biden already has the power to stop the border crisis that he created.

With attention squarely on the border, House Republicans used the opportunity to reintroduce a bill that would eliminate U.N. migrant funding.

H.R. 6166, the Tax Dollars for the U.N.'s Immigration Invasion Act, would prohibit contributions to the IOM and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

The bill also requires the Government Accountability Office to conduct an audit of all federal funding previously appropriated to U.N. agencies that have financed the migrant crisis to force repayment of that funding to the U.S. Treasury.

U.N. agencies are “financing the ongoing U.S. border crisis,” Rep. Lance Gooden (R-Texas) said in a Jan. 26 statement.

“The United Nations is using our own tax dollars against us, and U.S. policymakers can no longer stand by while elites in the U.N. and Davos actively finance an invasion of our sovereign territory.

“It’s time to say enough and cut off funding to these corrupt globalist institutions until respect for our territorial integrity and appreciation

for our generosity is restored.”

The IOM didn’t respond to an email seeking comment from The Epoch Times.

💬 500 Comments

[Policies and Regulations](#)

Sort by Best ▼

W woolleyalpha | 12 hours ago

This is an excellent article — no overt criticism intended, but WAAAAAY off on the costs: if one tracks all the federal revenues to NGOs, foreign advertisements, transportation costs private AND C-17 military transport and bus transport and train transport and money cards and health clinics and ER costs in America: at least \$500 billion in 2023 went to, for and with the WEAPONIZED MIGRATION OF ILLEGAL INVADERS!

SHARE 👍 +21 🗨

J Jeff Borgardt | 3 hours ago

“President Biden also halted border wall construction on his first day, halted deportations for 100 days, and rescinded the travel ban on terror-prone countries.” Sounds like treason to me!! He has ONE job and it is the exact opposite of what he has done and is doing.

SHARE 👍 +20 🗨

Show 3 Replies

K Kat | 15 hours ago

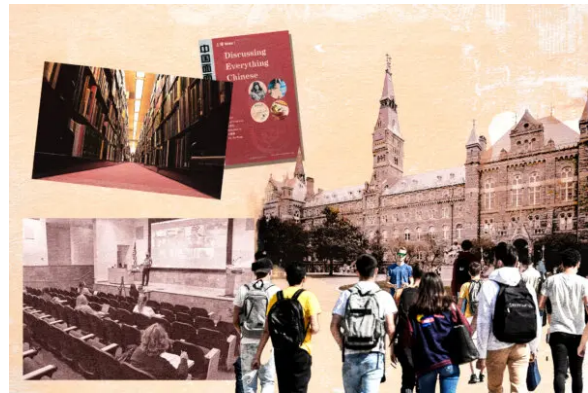
“We’re actually funding our own border crisis,” Todd Bensman, senior national security fellow at the Center for Immigration Studies, a “pro-immigrant, low-immigration” think tank, told The Epoch Times.

More Special Reports

[See More](#)



How Secretary of State Races Became Key Focus in Election Integrity Battle



‘You Cannot Escape Its Claws’: How Beijing’s Long Arm Targets Students in US



Impact of Illegal Immigration Gets Tested in New York Special Election



John Fetterman Is Not the Progressive Politician Everyone Thought He Was



A Small Arizona Town Prepares to Fight State Over Illegal Immigration



'Never Trump' Billionaires Lead Nikki Haley's 2023 Fundraising



Critics Blast UN for Ignoring Longstanding Ties Between UNRWA and Hamas



As WHO Pandemic Treaty Nears Completion, Critics Raise Red Flags for US Freedoms



The 4 Directions Supreme Court Could Go in Trump Ballot Case



After Court Victory for Freedom Convoy, Canadians Ready to Sue