

U.S. suspends asylum appointments in Texas border city after extortion reports

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A child's hand reaches out, as migrants wait for food and water to be handed out, after gathering between the primary and secondary border fences, between the United States and Mexico, after the lifting of COVID-19 era Title 42 restrictions that have blocked migrants at the border from seeking asylum since 2020, near San Diego, California, U.S., May 12, 2023. REUTERS/Mike Blake

MEXICO CITY, June 12 (Reuters) - U.S. asylum appointments at a dangerous Texas-Mexico border crossing can no longer be scheduled via an online app following reports that migrants face extortion in Mexico.

Advocates for migrants in the Mexican city of Nuevo Laredo, just across the border from Laredo, were informed of the suspension by a U.S. consular official, a June 2 message reviewed by Reuters showed. No reason for the change was stated.

A [website for the app](#), called CBP One, no longer lists Laredo as a city where asylum seekers can schedule appointments. Nuevo Laredo has long been notorious for widespread [kidnapping](#) and extortion of migrants.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) did not respond to requests for comment.

The appointments are a key part of a border system put in place by U.S. President Joe Biden last month when COVID-era restrictions known as Title 42 expired.

Biden's administration opened up legal pathways, including via the app, while also implementing a strict new regulation that could deny asylum to many migrants crossing the border illegally.

Advocates and some Democrats argue that migrants should not be forced to wait in dangerous conditions in northern Mexico, particularly as demand outstrips the 1,250 CBP One appointments available per day.

The suspension was first reported by the Associated Press.

Lately, criminal groups in Nuevo Laredo have allegedly demanded payment from migrants headed to the port of entry, including those with CBP One appointments, according to a May report from the Strauss Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

An advocate in Nuevo Laredo, who requested anonymity due to safety fears, said criminals have demanded as much as \$500 per person.

Human Rights First recorded over 13,000 reports of violent attacks against migrants in Mexico in 2021 and 2022.

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