

Guidelines target Spanish speakers at border

By ELLIOT SPAGAT
Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Border agents have been told to explicitly target Spanish speakers and migrants from Latin America in carrying out a Trump administration program requiring asylum seekers wait in Mexico, according to memos that reveal some inner workings of a top government priority to address the burgeoning number of Central Americans arriving in the country.

The Trump administration launched the program in late January in what marks a potentially seismic shift on how the U.S. handles the cases of immigrants seeking asylum and fleeing persecution in their homeland.

The program initially applied only to those who

turned themselves in at official border crossings. But a memo from a division chief of the Border Patrol's San Diego sector says it expanded Friday to include people who cross the border illegally.

The guidance includes instruction about various groups of immigrants who are not to be sent back to Mexico and instead go through the traditional asylum process in the U.S. immigration court system. They include pregnant women, LGBT migrants and people suffering medical issues. Authorities said previously that Mexican asylum seekers are excluded, as are children traveling alone.

U.S. officials must check if the asylum seeker has any felony convictions and notify Mexico at least 12 hours before they are returned. Those who cross illegally



AP Photo/Christian Torres

Migrants awaiting their chance to request asylum in the U.S. pass the time inside a shelter in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

must have come as single adults, though the administration is in talks with the Mexican government to include families.

The program is being implemented as border arrests soared in February to

a 12-year-high and more than half of those stopped arrived as families, many of them asylum seekers who generally turn themselves in instead of trying to elude capture. Guatemala and Honduras have replaced Mexico as the top

countries, a remarkable shift from only a few years ago.

The instructions say Mexican officials insist that no more than 20 asylum seekers are returned each day from San Diego to Tijuana, Mexico, on Monday through Saturday, underscoring challenges that the U.S. faces in trying to quickly ramp up one of its top border enforcement priorities and most significant changes to the U.S. immigration system of Donald Trump's presidency. Authorities said Tuesday that more than 76,000 were stopped or apprehended at the Mexican border in February, more than double the same period last year.

A memo on Tuesday to top Border Patrol officials in San Diego said the agency is under "pressures to utilize this program as much as we can."

Asylum-seeking families are typically released from U.S. custody immediately and allowed to settle with family or friends while their cases wind through immigration courts, which often takes years. Critics say that amounts to "catch-and-release," which administration officials want to limit with the new Mexico program.

In a statement, the Department of Homeland Security described the program as "another tool available in the law" to respond to the record numbers of Central American migrants arriving at the border in recent months. The agency said the program is being carried out in a "thoughtful and deliberate manner" that protects vulnerable migrants and is done in collaboration with the Mexican government.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

McSally says in Senate hearing she was raped in Air Force

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Martha McSally, the first female Air Force fighter pilot to fly in combat, said she was sexually assaulted by a superior officer and later, when she tried to talk about it to military officials, she "felt like the system was raping me all over again."

The Arizona Republican, a 26-year military veteran, made the disclosure at a Senate hearing on the military's efforts to prevent sexual assaults and improve the response when they occur. Lawmakers also heard from other service members who spoke of being sexually assaulted and humiliated while serving their country.

McSally said she did not report being raped because she did not trust the system and was ashamed and confused. She said she was impressed and grateful to the survivors who came forward to help change the system. She was in the ninth class at the Air Force Academy to allow women, and sexual harassment and assault were prevalent. Victims mostly suffered in silence.

McSally served in the Air Force from 1988 until 2010 and rose to the rank of col-

onel before entering politics. She deployed six times to the Middle East and Afghanistan, flying 325 combat hours and earning a Bronze Star and six air medals. She was the first woman to command a fighter squadron.

Fired Florida officer guilty of slaying black motorist

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — A fired Florida police officer was found guilty of manslaughter and attempted murder today for fatally shooting a stranded black motorist, becoming the first officer in the state to be convicted of an on-duty shooting in 30 years.

Nouman Raja, 41, now faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years, and could spend his life in prison for the death of Corey Jones, 31.

Prosecutors said Raja, one of very few police officers across the nation to be convicted of an on-duty shooting, escalated what should have been a routine interaction into a deadly confrontation.

Prosecutors charged Raja with manslaughter because they believed his actions created the confrontation and showed "culpable negligence," meaning a "reckless disregard" or "conscious indifference" for

Jones' life. They also charged him with attempted first-degree murder because they believed that while they couldn't prove beyond a reasonable doubt which of the six shots killed him, the second volley was a conscious effort to kill Jones as he ran away.

China's Huawei sues to challenge US security law

SHENZHEN, China — Chinese tech giant Huawei is challenging a U.S. law that would limit its American sales of telecom equipment on security grounds as the company steps up efforts to preserve its access to global markets for next-generation communications.

Huawei Technologies Ltd.'s lawsuit, announced today, asks a federal court to reject as unconstitutional a portion of this year's U.S. military appropriations act that bars the government and its contractors from using Huawei equipment.

It comes as the biggest global maker of network equipment fights a U.S. campaign to persuade allies to shun Huawei. That threatens to block access to major markets as phone carriers prepare to invest billions of dollars in fifth-generation, or 5G, networks.

Huawei, China's first global tech brand,

is at the center of U.S.-Chinese tensions over technology competition and cyberspying. The company has spent years trying to put to rest accusations it facilitates Chinese spying or is controlled by the ruling Communist Party.

'Jeopardy!' host Trebek says he has pancreatic cancer

LOS ANGELES — "Jeopardy!" host Alex Trebek said he has been diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer but intends to fight the disease and keep on working.

In a video posted online Wednesday, the 78-year-old said he was announcing his illness directly to "Jeopardy!" fans in keeping with his long-time policy of being "open and transparent."

He's among 50,000 other American who receive such a diagnosis each year, Trebek said. Normally, the "prognosis for this is not very encouraging, but I'm going to fight this, and I'm going to keep working."

Trebek, a native of Canada, has been host of the syndicated quiz show since 1984. Although he had publicly toyed with the idea of retiring, he instead renewed his deal in 2018 with Sony Pictures Television for three more years, through the 2021-22 season.





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