



## ICE releases crowds of undocumented immigrants downtown

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TUCSON, AZ (Tucson News Now) - Hundreds of undocumented immigrants detained as far away as Texas are being released under supervision in Tucson. But getting to their next destination leaves them on their own.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, has said that it does not want to put children in detention centers and it does not want to split up families. ICE releases those families with the condition that they contact ICE for their next court date once they reach their destination in this country.

But last weekend ICE dropped more people at the downtown Greyhound station than there were seats on the buses.

Wednesday afternoon a government van dropped a group of people at the bus station. ICE said that last weekend as many as 400 were left there over the past few days, and that many of them had been stopped in south Texas.

"We've heard through the grapevine that the ICE substations and the Border Patrol substations are absolutely over full and that there's no place for them to put these people. And we've talked to people who were going to Texas, that were trying to make it someplace in Texas, and so they get picked up and driven back to Arizona, and now their family members have to buy them a ticket back to Texas," said Daniel Wilson, a volunteer at Casa Mariposa, which has given some of the stranded families a place to stay for the night.

ICE released this joint statement Wednesday:

"U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Tucson Sector is assisting with the processing of illegal immigrants, many of whom are family units, apprehended in South Texas. Upon completion of processing, CBP is transferring the individuals to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO), where appropriate custody determinations will be made in accordance with ICE enforcement priorities."

The families, which are from Mexico and Central America, after they are released, contact those who were waiting for them in this country. But sometimes the time is too late to get help from those contacts for a bus ticket. Casa Mariposa has been flooded with people needing a place to stay.

"Releasing people without tickets is endangerment to them and it's a public health and safety crisis that Tucson needs to deal with," Wilson said.

ICE said that it is adjusting the rate at which it drops people at the station, and Greyhound is bringing more buses and staying open later. CBP did not have a formal explanation as to why south Texas detainees are being transferred to Tucson. One could be available later this week.

The Greyhound bus station in downtown Tucson was much quieter Thursday than earlier in the week, according to one of the volunteers who helped the people who were dropped off there by Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The families that have been left there are from Central America and were picked up by U.S. Border Patrol in south Texas, then flown to Tucson for processing by the U.S. Border Patrol in Arizona.

Wednesday about 50 people total were dropped at the downtown Greyhound bus station by ICE, according to the volunteer who was there to help the people get bus tickets or to find a place to stay. A few families were taken in by volunteers Wednesday night. The families are not considered a threat to the country, and instead of putting children in detention centers or splitting up their families, ICE has been releasing them under supervision. Such a release requires that they get to their reported destination and contact ICE within fifteen days. They will have a court date to determine their future in the country, or if they are to return to their country of origin.

A U.S. Border Patrol spokesman said that Texas facilities have been full from a large amount of people from Central America. Three planes carried about 400 people from Texas to Tucson over the weekend. They were already verified to not have criminal records here. But they still needed to be processed further. Because Arizona has seen a continued drop in illegal immigration, its Border Patrol office has the capacity to aid Texas.

Once Border Patrol has collected the individuals' information, they are then handed over to ICE, which then determines whether to put them in a detention center or to release them under supervision.

"As is, what was the case this weekend, they sent us about 400 unprocessed, undocumented central Americans. What we did here, we received them here at the Tucson airport, we shipped them over to our detention facilities, and we processed them. We processed them, and we turned them over to ICE," said U.S. Border Patrol agent Andy Adame.

Last weekend, so many were dropped off that greyhound didn't have enough buses, or it was too late for families to get help from the people they were planning to meet originally in other parts of the country. Those people were stranded in Tucson for the night. The Greyhound office stayed open overnight Wednesday, according to the volunteer who was helping those who might be stranded.

ICE says it's working to change the pace of releases to avoid that problem in the future.

If and when more detainees could be sent to Tucson is unknown.

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