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# MailOnline

## Arizona orders 2,000 mattresses in rush to provide for swarm of unaccompanied migrant children housed in crumbling air base

- **Mattresses, portable toilets and showers were brought in for 700 minors who spent Friday night on plastic cots inside an Arizona warehouse**
- **Governor Jan Brewer called the situation dire and federal authorities have asked the state to immediately ship medical supplies to the Nogales site**
- **The Joint Base San Antonio Lackland has become a temporary shelter for children and youths caught crossing the border illegally and alone**
- **The government expects as many as 60,000 child immigrants to illegally enter the U.S. alone this year**
- **Measures a tenfold jump in just three years**
- **More than 33,000 have been picked up in Texas since October**
- **Most are fleeing poverty in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala**
- **President Obama said it was an 'urgent humanitarian situation'**

By [Ap Reporter](#) and [Reuters](#) and [Joel Christie](#)

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Mattresses, portable toilets and showers were brought in Saturday for 700 unaccompanied minors who spent the night sleeping on plastic cots inside an Arizona warehouse, a federal official said.

A Homeland Security official told The Associated Press that about 2,000 mattresses have been ordered to the makeshift holding center — a warehouse that has not been used to house people in years.

Gov. Jan Brewer's spokesman, Andrew Wilder, said Friday that conditions at the center are so dire that federal officials have asked the state to immediately ship medical supplies to the center in Nogales.



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**Overflowing: Immigration authorities have opened a shelter at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas to house a rising number of unaccompanied minors who have been crossing the U.S.-Mexico border illegally**

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The U.S. Department of Homeland Security started flying immigrants to Arizona from the Rio Grande Valley in Texas last month after the number of immigrants — including more than 48,000 children traveling on their own — overwhelmed the Border Patrol there.

Immigrant families were flown from Texas, released in Arizona, and told to report to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office near where they were traveling within 15 days. ICE has said the immigrants were mostly families from Central America fleeing extreme poverty and violence.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because there was no authorization to discuss the matter publicly, said the holding center opened for unaccompanied children because the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services had nowhere to turn.

'They became so overwhelmed and haven't kept up with planning,' the official said.

At the holding center, vendors are being contracted to provide nutritional meals, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials. The Federal Emergency Management Agency, meanwhile, will provide counseling

services and recreational activities.



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**Hundreds of immigrants believed to be in the country illegally from Central America and Mexico being held in crowded concrete rooms similar to a jail cell**

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The Homeland Security official said the number of children at the warehouse was expected to double to around 1,400. The warehouse has a capacity of about 1,500.

The warehouse began housing children flown from South Texas last Saturday. About 400 were scheduled to arrive Friday but, because of mechanical issues with the planes, only about 60 came, the Homeland Security official said. Saturday's flights were canceled, also because of mechanical problems. There are flights scheduled through mid-June.

Federal authorities plan to use the Nogales facility as a way station, where the children will be vaccinated and checked medically. They will then be sent to facilities being set up in Ventura, California; San Antonio, Texas; and Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

Wilder said reports from consulates that the Department of Homeland Security was stopping the program to fly migrant families to Arizona and then bus them to Phoenix were incorrect. Instead, the program that has shipped

unknown thousands of adult migrants and their children to Arizona since last month shows no sign of stopping, he said.

'The adults, the adults with children, families — that continues unfettered and we have no idea where they are going,' Wilder said.

In a statement Friday, Homeland Security officials said "appropriate custody determinations will be made on a case by case basis" for migrants apprehended in South Texas.



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Many of the children appear to be teenagers but some clearly are younger

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**Lackland has become a temporary shelter for youths caught crossing the border illegally and alone**

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Brewer sent an angry letter to President Barack Obama on Monday demanding that the program of dropping off families at bus stations in Phoenix stop immediately. She called the program dangerous and unconscionable, asked for details and demanded to know why state authorities weren't consulted or even informed.

The governor said she hadn't received a response to her letter by Friday.

'I have reached out to Federal Homeland Security Director Jeh Johnson for answers. Meanwhile, I reiterate my call on President Obama to secure our southern border and terminate this operation immediately,' Brewer said in a statement.

Brewer's staff spent Friday in a series of calls with officials from FEMA, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Homeland Security.

Wilder said FEMA's Region 9 administrator was being sent to the holding center in Nogales on Saturday to oversee efforts to deal with the hundreds of arriving children.

The federal emergency supplies are held in Arizona warehouses, and Wilder said the state is working to send them to the holding center.



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**Photos leaked to U.S. and Mexican media outlets on Thursday show unaccompanied children crammed into Border Patrol holding cells elsewhere, sleeping on concrete floors**

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**About 850 that were being housed at the facility have been released to a vetted family member or a sponsor**

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On Friday night, the U.S. Department of Justice announced that young lawyers and paralegals are being sought for the community service program AmeriCorps to provide legal assistance in

immigration proceedings to children who come to the U.S. illegally. Officials say about 100 lawyers and paralegals will be enrolled as members of AmeriCorps in a new division called 'justice AmeriCorps.'

Immigration officials can immediately return Mexican immigrants to the border, but they are much more hard-pressed to deal with Central American migrants who illegally cross into the U.S. In recent months, waves of migrants from nations south of Mexico have arrived in Texas.

The Homeland Security official said that legally, only their parents or guardians can take custody if the government makes the children eligible for release.

Officials in Central America and Mexico have noticed a recent increase in women and children crossing the border. Father Heyman Vazquez, the director of a migrant shelter in Huixtla in the southern Mexico state of Chiapas, said he and others advise children that it's too dangerous.

Yet Vazquez is seeing more and more youths heading north.

'I remember a little boy of 9 years old and I asked if he was going to go meet someone and he told me "No, I'm just going hand myself over because I hear they help kids," Vazquez said.

The perception that some immigrants could be getting a free pass into the U.S. could lead to more attempts to cross the border.



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**President Barack Obama said the sharp influx of unaccompanied children from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala was an 'urgent humanitarian situation'**

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**More than 33,000 minors were apprehended in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas since October last year, it has been reported**

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Illegal immigration increased heavily under a 'catch-and-release' strategy during the George W. Bush administration. Under that policy the government issued notices to appear in immigration court to migrants from countries other than Mexico until Bush stopped the practice.

Federal officials then established a 210-mile stretch of the Texas-Mexico border as a zero-tolerance zone for illegal immigration. Instead of merely getting sent back home, migrants were arrested, prosecuted and sometimes sentenced to prison before being formally kicked out of the country.

By August 2006, border agents in the Del Rio, Texas, sector said daily arrests had dropped from 500 to fewer than 100.

The half-century-old section of a U.S. Air Force base in Texas has been transformed into a holding and processing center for thousands of children illegally crossing the border from Central and South America without adults.

Leaked photos from the base obtained by Breitbart show hundreds of children holed up in crowded concrete rooms, many of them sleeping on the bare floor without blankets or pillows.

Among those children are Jose Maquez Soto, 12, who came from Honduras to the United States and now rests on a bunk at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio under a hand-drawn flag of his native country and a message cheering the Honduran squad in the upcoming soccer World Cup.

Jose is one of the 60,000 'unaccompanied minors' - children under 18 - that the Obama administration estimates will enter the United States illegally this year.

It projects that number to grow to nearly 130,000 next year, creating what the White House describes as an 'urgent humanitarian situation'.



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**At the base, children are provided with three hot meals and two snacks a day. They can call home twice a week. They have access to mental health clinicians and on-site medical care**

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**The minors flooding over the border are often teenagers leaving behind poverty or violence in Mexico and other parts of Central America such as Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala**

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Nearly 1,000 of the minors at a time are being sheltered at a facility built about 50 years ago to house new recruits for basic training.

The boys and girls will pass along corridors with faded Air Force pictures and new signs written in Spanish that point the way to the dining hall and bathrooms.

Since the facility opened three weeks ago, 1,820 children have passed through the center.

About 850 have been released to a vetted family member or a sponsor, said U.S. Department of Health and Human Services spokesman Jesus Garcia.

The person who takes the child, Garcia says, has to agree to bring the child to an immigration hearing.

The minors flooding over the border are often teenagers leaving behind poverty or violence in Mexico and other parts of Central America such as Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala.

They are sometimes seeking to reunite with a parent who is already in the United States, also without documentation.

Another facility for minors will open at Naval Base Ventura County in Southern California that will hold a maximum of 600 children.

At Lackland, the children between the ages of 12 and 17 are handed several sheets and towels when they arrive and checked for lice and scabies.



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Republicans blame President Obama for the situation, pointing to his 2012 policy that sent a message of hope to kids yearning to stay in the U.S.

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Photos leaked Thursday from a U.S. Border Patrol facility in the Rio Grande Valley show overflowing holding facilities of immigrants, many of whom are children

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**Children between the ages of 12 and 17 are handed several sheets and towels when they arrive and checked for lice and scabies**

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They then undergo physical and mental health evaluations, and are assigned a metal bunk from among the rows that line the walls of large barracks-style rooms.

There is little need for storage because, as social workers put it, few of these children arrived with anything other than the clothes they wore on their journey north.

The administration estimates it costs taxpayers \$252 per child per day.

'The reasons, as we understand them, that contribute to this dramatic increase have to do with economic conditions in those countries, sustained violence in these countries, and the desire of these children to be reunited with family members in the United States,' Celia Munoz, the White House Domestic Policy Adviser said.



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[Joe](#), Nirvana, United States, 1 day ago

WHY is it WRONG for American CITIZENS to DEMAND respect for US LAWS and US BORDERS ? ? ? RESPECT NOT only from the illegal alien BUT especially from the ones who were elected and took an OATH to uphold THE LAWS..

1  
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[Joe](#), Nirvana, United States, 1 day ago

Why IS there NOTHING being DONE with the MORE THAN 13 million ILLEGAL aliens LIVING in the US today??? AMNESTY did NOT WORK in 1986!!! ... And THEY want to allow more ILLEGAL aliens in "for the sake of the children" ...

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[Joe](#), Nirvana, United States, 1 day ago

REALLY... USING children LIKE this is ACCEPTABLE and should be REWARDED ? ? ? Should use the energy and resources to better THEMSELVES and their OWN HOMELAND.

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[Joe](#), Nirvana, United States, 1 day ago

WHERE IS the BORDER SECURITY REQUIRED by LAW in "THE AMNESTY OF 1986" ???

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2 of 3 replies [See all replies](#)



[Joe](#), Nirvana, United States, 1 day ago

HALF the state of CALIFORNIA today speaks SPANISH (the other half is learning to)

1

2

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[Tom Penn](#), Knoxville, United States, 1 day ago

Joe, I'd bet you all the money in my pocket the real number is closer to 30 million.

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[Tyler Durden](#), Paper Street, 1 day ago

Ship them home to their parents.

3  
14

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[Raylcc](#), Denver, United States, 1 day ago

They came across the border illegally FROM Mexico. It doesn't matter from what country they came from before entering our country FROM Mexico. Return them TO Mexico and let Mexico figure out what to do with them.

6  
19

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[BayouBoy](#), Lafayette\_Louisiana, United States, 1 day ago

If Gov. Brewer had any guts at all, she'd send them to 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., instead of enabling this out-of-control president. She's all bark and no bite.

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[userpete86](#), IrvineCA, United States, 1 day ago

I have absolutely no problem shipping them to either their home countries, or directly to Washington D.C.

5  
26

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[Patrick](#), Belfast, 1 day ago

More fencing would be a more reasonable action

10  
51

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[BayouBoy](#), Lafayette\_Louisiana, United States, 1 day ago

Patrick, the border fence was approved in 2006 and signed off on by Bush. Since then, each successive congress has refused to budget money for it. This is the same way that Obamacare could be killed off, but Congress doesn't have the guts.

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[Tom Penn](#), Knoxville, United States, 1 day ago

Have we had a budget since Obama has been in office?



2  
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[Donna Fuller](#), Gulf Breeze, United States, 1 day ago

Just another 'Gee thanks, Obama' moment - since he encouraged this. What next?

11  
48

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[andalusianlover](#), ga, United States, 2 days ago

Sooo?! I have read the usual negative "blame" comments, but not ONE intelligent solution to the issue. "Close the border" (THAT has really worked, right?), "shoot them", "dump them over the border" (Which Border?), etc.....really?! That's all you can come up with? Typical...always ranting about "illegals" but NOT ONE reasonable and viable SOLUTION to the problem. Irony> Congress was approached for a huge chunk of \$\$\$ to train/hire many more border cops and surprise surprise...request denied. Same response when H.Clinton requested heavier security (\$\$\$\$) for American posts in "hot zones" in the Middle East. Denied. Then the Benghazi blame game.....predictable B. S.

35  
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[Tom Penn](#), Knoxville, United States, 1 day ago

When did we try closing the border? Build a fence a mile high, or dig a new Panama canal a mile deep and mile wide. Make getting across the border by land impossible. No vehicle traffic period. If they're going to enter the US, make them fly. Or, I don't care don't even let them fly here. SHUT THE BORDER DOWN.

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