

ICE AIR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – MARCH 2023

- ICE AIR FLIGHTS INCREASE BEFORE POTENTIAL END OF T42. 145 REMOVAL FLIGHTS IN MARCH; 2ND HIGHEST MONTH IN OVER 3 YEARS. TOTAL FLIGHTS OF 767; 3RD HIGHEST IN OVER 3 YEARS. AT THE SAME TIME ENCOUNTERS ARE LOWEST IN A YEAR (SEE PAGE 10 FOR 3+ YEAR TRENDS).
- 20,945 TOTAL ICE AIR FLIGHTS OPERATED IN 2020-MAR 2023. SINCE INAUGURATION: 15,839 TOTAL FLIGHTS.
- 3,829 REMOVAL FLIGHTS OPERATED IN 2020-MAR 2023. SINCE INAUGURATION: 2,762 REMOVAL FLIGHTS.
- 767 TOTAL ICE AIR FLIGHTS OPERATED IN MARCH, UP 82 (12%) FROM THE PRIOR MONTH. MARCH WAS 90 (13%) ABOVE THE PRIOR 6-MONTH AVERAGE OF 677.
- TOTAL ICE AIR FLIGHTS OF 767 WERE UP 139 (22%) FROM MARCH 2022.
- LONGITUDINAL FLIGHTS BEGAN; 3 FROM PLATTSBURGH, NY TO TEXAS. LATERAL FLIGHTS INCREASED BY 4 (8%) TO 53 IN MARCH.
- 145 REMOVAL FLIGHTS IN MARCH, UP 18 (14%) FROM THE PRIOR MONTH AND UP 17 (13%) FROM MARCH 2022, AND UP 46 (46%) FROM THE PRIOR 6-MONTH AVERAGE OF 99.

INCREASE IN ICE AIR RESOURCES were outlined in the proposed asylum ban text in anticipation of the end of Title 42 and what I noted as a possible ramp up in the February ICE Air report is now clearly continuing.

“Already in FY 2022, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) modified its ICE Air Operations’ air charter contract to increase the number of daily-use aircraft from 10 to 12 to meet the increasing air transportation demands, and CBP has executed a new contract that will provide for flight hours equivalent to approximately four to eight additional decompression flights per day.”

There were 145 removal flights in March, the 2nd highest month in over 3 years. Total flights of 767 were the 3rd highest in over 3 years. At the same time encounters were lowest in a year. For comparison, average monthly encounters in Jan-Feb 2022 were 161,000 and in Jan-Feb 2023, 156,000, within 3%. However, removal flights for the same time comparison were up 24 (21%) and total flights up 161 (28%) (page 10).

LAST 12 MONTHS

Over the last 12 months, all under President Biden, there have been a likely **8,218 ICE Air flight legs** as compared to **4,845 in 2020**, a **startling, unexpected, and disappointing increase of 3,373 (70%) over 2020** and up **2,094 (34%) over 2021**.

Of these flights, **1,419 were removal flights**, an increase of **410 (41%) over the 1,009 in 2020**, and **370 (35%) over 2021**.

Shuffle flights, including lateral flights and those just moving people in the US to and between detention/deportation centers were **4,912 over the last 12 months**, a **staggering increase of 2,687 (121%) over the 2,225 in 2020**, and up **1,253 (34%) over 2021**. (pages 19,30,33,36).

March 2023 (note: there were only 28 days in February so to compare on a day weighted basis to March with 31 days, the numbers reported for March would be up by about 11%.)

Total Flights of 767 in March, utilizing **27 different planes operated by 5 different charter carriers** (IAero aka Swift, World Atlantic, GlobalX, OMNI, and Gryphon) **were up by 82 (12%) from February**, and were above the average of the prior 6 months (677) by **90 (13%)**.

The increase of 82 total flights from January can be attributed primarily to the increase in removal flights by 18 and their associated connection and return flights, up 59 (18%) in total, and to an increase in domestic shuffle flights of 23 (6%) (page 19).

Lateral Flights increased 4 in March to 53 from 49 in February and were substantially below the record 134 in December (page 11). However, **removal flights** originating from El Paso increased from 0 in September through December to 22 in February and 24 in March (page 22), indicating perhaps a move to direct removals from El Paso. Of the 24 removal flights from El Paso in March, **20 were to Guatemala and 4 to Honduras**. From December to March removal flights in total to Guatemala increased by 18 and to Honduras by 5, approximating the entire increase in removal departures from El Paso to these two countries.

Average daily trends have remained consistent between February and March with February at 1.8 and March at 1.7 per day. There is no significant change in the trend of average daily flights by 10-day segments of the month at 1.9, 1.5, and 1.7. Mid-month in December laterals averaged 5.1 per day.

Importantly, it is worth noting that following the tragic fire in Juarez and the spike in encounters in El Paso there were 7 lateral flights out of El Paso in the last 3 days of the month, significantly higher than the run rate reflecting the increase in encounters and, most likely, a desire to limit expulsions into Juarez.

In March the origination of lateral flights tilted from Tucson to El Paso where 36 lateral flights originated, up 15 (71%), from 21 in February. Flights originating in Yuma were down from 16 to 14 (13%), and Tucson originations were down from 12 to 3 (75%).

In March the destination of lateral flights tilted from Laredo to Harlingen with Harlingen receiving 35 flights, up 17 (94%) and Laredo receiving 18, down 13 (42%).

Longitudinal Flights began between Plattsburgh, NY and Texas in March with 3 weekly flights. It was **reported by Reuters** that the first two flights included about 100 people in total and the third

possibly 30 and that they included primarily Mexican Nationals. The first flight landed in Harlingen and the next two in [El Paso \(covered by KVIA TV\)](#) on March 13, 21, and 28, respectively. These are not included in lateral flight totals at this time, but I may add to the totals if they become routine. The flights are also **getting attention** [in Canada](#). I'll be watching to see if they will continue.

In addition to these lateral flights there are lateral buses as well into which there is no visibility, however in the proposed asylum ban rule it was indicated that in October 2022 the number of lateral flights and buses were very close in number.

Removal Flights in March increased from 127 in February to 145 in March, up 18 (14%), the 2nd highest month in over 3 years, second only to the mass removal of Haitians in September 2021. May through August 2022 removals flights ranged between 139 and 142, but average encounters during that period were 213,000 per month, 57,000 (37%) higher than the Jan-Feb average of 156,000 (pages 12-14).

Of the removal flight increase of 18 from February, Honduras was up 5 (22 to 27), Guatemala was up 4 (36 to 40), Ecuador was up 3 (28 to 31), El Salvador was up 3 (4 to 7), Brazil was up 3 (0 to 3), and Colombia was up 2 (22 to 24).

In addition to the removal flights above there were also flights to Peru (4), Dominican Republic (3), and 1 flight to each Haiti, Nicaragua, and Jamaica. There were also 2 small jet (15 passenger) flights stopping in Liberia, Angola, and DR Congo.

Flights to the Northern Triangle Countries of Guatemala (40), Honduras (27), and El Salvador (7) comprised 51% of all removal flights, a bit higher than February at 49%. **With Colombia (24) and Ecuador (31) they comprised 89% of removal flights, about the same as February.**

In March, flights to South America (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil) totaled 62, or 43% of all removal flights. That compared to March 2022 at 14 flights representing 11% of all removal flights. (pages 20,21).

The number of people returned in March by air in total to Guatemala and Honduras is estimated at 7,900, or 32% of February encounters from those countries. The number of people returned in March to South America is estimated at 6,850, or 26% of February encounters from those countries.

Importantly, to the point of the ramp up, 2 months prior the percent returned by air in total for Guatemala and Honduras was estimated at 18% compared to 32% in March and for South America it was estimated at 8% compared to 26% in March (on a one-month lag for encounters to be consistent).

Please see Country Detail Section below for more details

Shuffle flights of 389 increased by 23 (6%) as a result of the small increase of 4 in lateral flights and other domestic flights that move people to and around the interior (page 19).

Country Detail

Guatemala flights increased for the 2nd consecutive month from 22 in January to 36 in February and 40 in March, up 4 (11%) (page 20). March was the highest month since July 2022 at 46, even though encounters in February were lower than July by 6,066 (30%). However, encounters of

Guatemalans did increase from January to February by 2,180 (18%) which may have spurred the increase in flights in March. The 40 removal flights in March were 16 (40%) above the prior 6-month average of 25. The 40 removal flights were almost the same as in March 2021 which were at 41.

Although we do not know encounters for March, these returns by air represented an estimated 33% of February encounters of Guatemalans, and 55% of those processed under T42, approximately the same as February but up about 2x from the last quarter of 2021.

Based on reports by Guatemala Migration the US is estimated to have returned 280 (6%) more people by air in March (4,720) than February and 423 (10%) more than March 2022.

With the 15 Mexican Government deportation flights to Guatemala added to the ICE flights (pages 15,20), Guatemala received 55 flights returning 6,715 citizens by air from the US and Mexico. Combined with the [3,445 Guatemalans returned by land by Mexico](#) at Tecún Únam, 10,160 Guatemalans were returned by the US and Mexico, 692 (7%) more than in February. Please see the section on Mexico's deportation flights below.

Honduras flights increased for the 2nd consecutive month from 16 in January to 22 in February to 27 in March, up 5 (23%) (page 20). March was the highest month since September 2022 at 28 even though encounters in February were down 3,682 (26%) from September, and encounters were relatively unchanged from January to February. The 27 removal flights in March are up 5 (23%) over the prior 6-month average of 22.

Since June, encounters of Hondurans fell from 24,177 to 10,789 in March (down 55%) as flights decreased by 12 (31%) from 39 in June to 27 in March. We do not know March encounters (page 12).

In March, estimated returns by ICE Air to Honduras of 3,186 represented 30% of February encounters and 48% of those subjected to T42, up from 24% and 39%, respectively, in February and somewhat lower than return ratios of Guatemala.

Combined with the 11 Mexican Government deportation flights (pages 15,20 and Mexico section below) Honduras received 38 return flights in March, up slightly from 34 in January. Air returns from Mexico and the US totaled an estimated 3,186 and combined with land returns from Mexico of about 1,300 there were **total returns to Honduras from Mexico and the US of 5,946, up 378 (7%) from about 5,571 in February.**

Ecuador flights increased again from 28 to 31 (11%). This is the 5th month in a row of increases (monthly progression: 2,8,13,20,28,31) from only 1-3 flights per month from February 2022 to October 2022 (page 20).

The increase in flights no doubt reflects the steady increase in encounters from February 2022 of 683 to 16,205 in December 2022, before falling to 9,047 in January and to 7,033 in February as the ramp up in flights most likely provided their deterrence intent. An estimated 44% of encounters were returned by air in February, compared to about 8% in December 2022 (encounters on 1-month lag).

The vast majority of removal flights to Ecuador originate in Laredo indicating an aggregation of Ecuadorians by lateral flight there to enable full removal flights since only 1% of encounters of Ecuadorians were in the Laredo sector.

Colombia flights increased slightly by 2 (9%), following a dramatic increase in February of 13 (144%) as encounters in February jumped from their 12-month low in January of 9,339 to 12,702 (36%) in February (page 20).

Estimated returns of encounters increased from 6% in January to 24% in February and 19% in March (encounters on 1-month lag), only about ½ the current rate of Guatemala, Honduras, and Ecuador.

Half of removal flights to Colombia originate in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) indicating an aggregation of Colombians by lateral flight there to enable full removal flights since only 4% of encounters of Colombians occurred in the RGV, the other half originate in Arizona and Alexandria for the most part.

El Salvador flights increased by 3 (75%) from 4 to 7 (page 20).

Although we don't know March returns from IOM statistics, an estimated 700 returns in March would represent only 15% of February encounters, 1/2 of other Northern Triangle countries that do accept T42 returns.

Special Note: There has always been uncertainty as to whether El Salvador accepted returns of those subject to T42. According to a court declaration in November, El Salvador DOES NOT accept T42 flights, which means these are all T8 returns, some of which could be expedited.

Peru flights returned to 4 per month in February and remained there in March: 1 flight per week. The decreased levels to 1 in December and January seem related to the recent unrest in Peru. From September through November there were weekly flights before the pause, and they have again resumed at that pace (page 20).

The initiation of flights no doubt started with discussions after encounters steadily increased from 860 in January 2022 to 9,744 in May, and ultimately the high of 11,366 in December, before falling precipitously to 3,931 in January, before increasing to 5,067 in February. Peru does accept T42 flights based on a 10 November court declaration, and estimated returns in March of 460 represent only 9% of February encounters.

Brazil flights increased to 3 from 0 in February following 2 months at 1 flight per month. Flights to Brazil seem to come in bunches at times so watching closely for April activity. It appeared a 4th flight was aborted on the way for what may have been a mechanical issue as the plane remained in San Juan (typical refueling spot) for around a week and another plane looked like it may have made a round trip to take passengers back to Alexandria.

Based on a court declaration in November 2022, Brazil does accept T42 flights. However, based on CBP encounter data only 11 Brazilians that crossed the southern border have been subjected to T42 in the last 5 months, so perhaps these are expedited removals or other deportations. Based on estimated returns of 360 people that would represent about 23% of February encounters of 1,569, but if the 4th flight that was aborted was added in it would be around 30%, in line with Guatemala, Honduras and Ecuador.

Haiti experienced 1 flight in what now seems to be a monthly flight pattern. There were flights on 13 December, 31 January, 28 February and 29 March with reportedly 42 people deported (pages 16,20).

The last 4 flights have reportedly deported between 22 to 43 people on each flight. Conditions in Haiti seems to be stunningly dangerous and [spiraling down by the day into deeper gang warfare](#).

Over the last 5 months, [only 259 Haitians have been encountered between ports](#). The vast majority (estimating around 80%+) of encounters at ports are related to T42 exemptions. The last 3 months are interesting relative to Haitians and CBP One. Before CBP One, in December, Haitian encounters at ports were 5,107. In January, after CBP was rolled out without Kreyol that number dropped to 3,127, but once the Kreyol version was rolled out and after Haitian Bridge Alliance produced their own training videos and materials that number jumped to 7,409 in February.

Meanwhile, [interdiction of Haitians at sea continues](#) with 3,367 interdicted in the first 5 months of the fiscal year (Oct) for an annual pace of 8,080, slightly above the prior year of 7,175

We are now 18 months past Del Rio and since 19 September 2021 there have been 244 flights to Haiti removing about 24,743 Haitians, and since inauguration 281 flights removing 26,843 Haitians, 1 in every 425 people in Haiti (pages 16).

Small Jet Removals observed included 2 flights on Gryphon Air Gulfstreams that carry 12-15 passengers as a maximum. Deportations on these routes included Liberia, Angola, and DR Congo (pages 20,21).

Other Removal Destinations were The Dominican Republic (3), Nicaragua (1), and Jamaica (1), all within generally normal patterns (page 20,21).

Mexico Operated Removal flights increased by 1 to 36 in March, which is 8 over the prior 6-month average (excluding charter carrier transition low months), but not inconsistent with many months (page 15).

Flights to almost all countries were reasonably consistent with February with Honduras down 1 (12 to 11), Guatemala up 3 (12 to 15), El Salvador up 1 (4 to 5), Ecuador up 1 (3 to 4), Nicaragua down 2 (2 to 0), and Cuba down 1 (2 to 1). (page 15). Departure cities in Mexico include primarily Mexico City, Tapachula, Saltillo, Reynosa, Hermosillo, and San Luis Potosi.

Cuba deportation flights were [widely reported](#) to be approved by Cuba now, although there was little specific information. However, it does seem, based on the November court declaration and comments from others, that T42 flights are not approved. To date I have not observed any likely deportation flights to Cuba.

MARCH FLIGHT SUMMARY

In March, there were 767 likely ICE Air flights, up 82 (12%) from February, and up 139 (22%) from the same month of 2022. Removal flights of 145 were up 18 (14%) from February while domestic shuffle flights decreased by 23 (6%).

- - 145 removal flights, with 146 return flights, to 14 different countries in Latin America, Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean.
- - 87 domestic flights connecting directly to removal flights.

- - 389 domestic shuffle flights between deportation locations.
- - 476 domestic flights (connections and shuffle flights).
- - **Since President Biden's inauguration there have been 15,839 likely ICE Air flights** including 2,762 removal flights. Including just the 264 lateral flights before October 2021 and 50 for October - December 2022 as expulsion flights would yield 3,076 removal flights.

Last 12 Months – 8,218 likely total flights

- - 1,419 removal flights, with 1,317 return flights, to at least 23 countries in Latin America, Europe, the Caribbean, Africa, and Southeast Asia.
- - 570 domestic flights connecting directly to removal flights.
- - 4,912 domestic shuffle flights between removal locations.
- - 5,482 domestic flights (connections and shuffle flights).
- - 40% of flights were return related (removal, return and connections) and 60% were domestic shuffle flights.