At What Cost? Inside the Trump Administration's Secret Deportation Deals

Executive Summary

Over the past year, the Trump Administration has dramatically expanded the use of third country deportations—in which it deports migrants to countries that are not their own—transforming a narrow and rarely used practice into a standing system of global removals.

Through a growing web of bilateral arrangements, the United States is convincing foreign governments to take in people with no connection to their country, largely through financial payments or pressure. In some cases, the Administration is sending migrants thousands of miles only for them to later be returned to their home country at additional taxpayer expense. The Administration justifies these deals as necessary because home countries refuse to accept their nationals, but evidence contradicts these claims. In practice, third country deportations have produced little measurable benefit while imposing significant financial and diplomatic costs on the United States.

The Administration has pursued these arrangements through opaque negotiations, including with corrupt governments, without meaningful oversight or accountability. Tens of millions of dollars in taxpayer funds have been sent to foreign governments, yet Congress and the public have few details on the terms of these deals, how funds are being used or what the United States is offering in return.

This Senate Foreign Relations Committee Minority report documents the Trump Administration's expanding use of third country deportations. It is based on a review of agreements through January 2026, staff travel to relevant countries and meetings and communication with current U.S. officials, foreign government officials, human rights organizations, deportees and attorneys.[1]

This report identifies six central ways in which the Administration's use of third country deportations has undermined U.S. interests:

- **EXPENSIVE AND INEFFECTIVE OPERATIONS:** The Administration has spent tens of millions of dollars to move a relatively small number of migrants to third countries, in some cases paying more than one million dollars per person, with little measurable impact on its deportation agenda.

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1   This report covers agreements and reported third country deportations through January 31, 2026. The State Department is actively pressing dozens of other countries to enter into similar agreements.

- **NEEDLESSLY WASTING TAXPAYER FUNDS:** In many cases, migrants could have been returned directly to their home countries, avoiding costly third country deportations. As of January 2026, more than eighty percent of the migrants sent to third countries paid by the United States to take them in have already returned to their country of origin or are in the process of doing so. In some cases, the U.S. paid to fly migrants to third countries only to later pay again for them to fly to their home country.

- **PROVIDING MONEY TO CORRUPT GOVERNMENTS WITHOUT OVERSIGHT:** The United States has sent more than thirty-two million dollars to foreign governments in direct connection with third country deportation deals, including those with records of corruption, human rights abuses and human trafficking, without monitoring how the money is used or whether taxpayer funds are being used to facilitate corruption, human rights abuses or human trafficking. It is unclear how much additional U.S. funding is being redirected to indirectly support these deals.

- **FAILURE TO MONITOR AND ENFORCE AGREEMENTS:** The State Department is not tracking foreign government compliance with diplomatic assurances or enforcing agreement terms, even where evidence suggests foreign governments are violating their commitments. In at least one country, U.S. officials told Committee Minority staff that Trump Administration officials instructed them not to follow up on how deportees were being treated.

- **SECRET DEALS THAT DO NOT SERVE AMERICAN INTERESTS:** Third country deportation agreements have become a central feature of U.S. bilateral relations, involving cash payments, political concessions and coercion, without transparency about the full extent of what the United States is giving in return or the pressures it is exerting. In addition, the Administration is making secret deals with adversarial regimes such as Iran, to accept their nationals back.

- **CIRCUMVENTING U.S. IMMIGRATION LAW:** Evidence suggests the Trump Administration is using third countries to carry out removals that U.S. law would otherwise prohibit, such as sending protected individuals onward to countries where they may face persecution or torture.