

Biden national security adviser: 'Our borders are not open'



Honduran boys whose family wants to seek asylum in the U.S., play on the sidewalk in Tijuana, Mexico, Monday, Feb. 8, 2021. Thousands of people are waiting to claim asylum and more come each day, falsely believing they will be able to enter the U.S. now that former President Donald Trump is out of office. While President Joe Biden has taken some major steps in his first weeks in office to reverse Trump's hardline immigration policies, his administration hasn't lifted some of the most significant barriers to asylum-seekers. (AP Photo/Elliot Spagat)

National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan insisted Tuesday that America's borders "are not open" as the White House moved to try to head off a growing migrant surge that threatens to undermine President Biden's immigration plans.

In a statement issued in English and Spanish, Mr. Sullivan and Homeland Security Adviser Liz Sherwood-Randall tried to tamp down on expectations of a more lenient posture for both illegal immigrants and future legal migrants eager to come.

Their warning came even as they announced they would allow entry of tens of thousands of migrants who have been mired in Mexico, blocked from entering by the Trump team.

“We caution people seeking to immigrate to the United States that our borders are not open and that this is just the first phase in the administration’s work to reopen access to an orderly asylum process,” the advisers said.

Homeland Security is preparing to admit some 25,000 migrants who were blocked from entry under the Migrant Protection Protocols, better known as the “Remain in Mexico” policy. MPP helped solve the last border surge in 2019, sapping the incentive for illegal immigrants to come by making them wait in Mexico while their cases proceeded in U.S. immigration courts, denying them a foothold here.

But the program was criticized by immigrant-rights advocates who said it left some legitimate asylum-seekers vulnerable in Mexico. Bowing to those concerns, the Biden team has said it is scrapping the MPP and will process those people still stuck in the program for entry over the ensuing weeks.

Mr. Sullivan said the new administration’s leniency only applies to people with active MPP cases.

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