

Republicans slam Biden admin for ‘deeply troubling’ possibility VA docs could go to border for expected surge

Massive migrant surge expected when Title 42 ends in late May.

More than 50 House Republicans Wednesday are pressing Customs and Border Protection (CBP) over the possibility it may use Veterans Affairs (VA) medical personnel to stem an expected migrant border surge.

The letter comes a little over a month before the May 23 end date for the Title 42 policy — a Trump-era public health order that allows for the expulsion of most migrants entering the U.S. because of COVID-19.

After President Biden announced earlier this month he would end the order, fears grew over a potential surge of migrants to the southern border as a result. Fox News reported shortly before Biden’s announcement that CBP was considering the idea to have VA personnel assist in taking care of the migrants.

“On March 29, 2022, a CBP report indicated a surge of border crossings was imminent due to the rescinding of this authority. The report presents a dire situation that may result in as many as 18,000 possible encounters per day. If this number proves accurate, this could result in over 540,000 encounters in a single month,” the GOP letter, led by Rep. Jody Hice, R-Ga., said. “Currently, CBP does not have the facilities or manpower to handle the anticipated massive surge.”

The letter, addressed to Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, stated that any consideration of moving VA medical personnel to the border would be “deeply troubling.”

“Moving VA medical staff away from our veteran’s healthcare needs to examine illegal immigrants is a recipe for disaster,” the letter said. “Wait times for a veteran to see their doctor can average 22 days and reach as high as 42 days. This is unacceptable mismanagement of federal government resources by the

Biden administration.”

MODERATE DEMOCRATS URGE BIDEN NOT TO REPEAL TITLE 42

Hice was joined by 53 other House Republicans on the letter, including GOP Conference Chair Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., and Reps. Kat Cammack, R-Fla., Dan Crenshaw, R-Texas, and Andy Biggs, R-Ariz.

According to a CBP source who’s worked in law enforcement for over 20 years and is familiar with the process, using personnel from the VA to assist in medical care and COVID-19 shots for migrants is not being ruled out yet.

“It does not seem to be off the table with a whole of government response” to handle the surge at the border, the source said. The source added that such an arrangement would likely be part of a “voluntary force” asking federal agencies to help respond to the surge.

A CBP spokesperson Wednesday told Fox News that it did not have any evidence such conversations were taking place but could not definitively rule it out.

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A “whole of government response” could mirror a very broad strategy outlined in a March 30 press release from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which oversees CBP. Titled, “Preparations for a Potential Increase in Migration,” DHS said in the release it would “Ready to surge personnel and resources to the Southwest Border.”

“DHS has moved officers, agents, and DHS Volunteer Force personnel to rapidly decompress points along the border and more efficiently process migrants,” DHS said in the press release.

It notably did not mention the VA, which is not part of DHS. The press release also said it would implement “COVID mitigation measures” including handing out PPE. But it again did not mention the possibility of VA personnel assisting in that.

“Biden’s failed open border policies are no excuse to funnel resources away from our veterans. Our men and women who put their lives on the line to protect our liberties and our country’s sovereignty deserve the best resources for their health care needs,” Hice said in a statement separate from the GOP letter. “The Biden

Administration must provide the American people answers. Even the thought of abandoning our veterans' care for the needs of illegal aliens is disgraceful.”

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