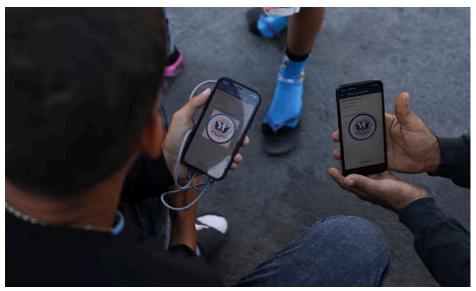
US immigration

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US rebrands immigration app to CBP Home with 'self-deport' function

Kristi Noem, the DHS secretary, announced the new version, raising privacy concerns for those using CBP One



CBP One allowed immigrants to book appointments for a claim to asylum. Photograph: Hérika Martínez/AFP/Getty Images

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On day one of his presidency, <u>Donald Trump</u> issued a directive abruptly <u>ending the government's use of CBP One</u> - an online application that had served as the primary means for people at the southern border to apply for asylum in the US. On Monday, the <u>administration</u> announced it has reimagined the app as a platform for "self-deportation".

Kristi Noem, the secretary of Homeland Security, announced that the app had been rebranded as "CBP Home" and that anyone with the old CBP One app would be redirected to the new version.

"The CBP Home app gives aliens the option to leave now and self-deport, so they may still have the opportunity to return legally in the future and live the American dream," Noem said. "If they don't, we will find them, we will deport them, and they will never return."

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said that the app's "self-deportation functionality is part of a larger \$200m domestic and international ad campaign" which they said it a way to encourage undocumented immigrants to 'Stay Out and Leave Now'."

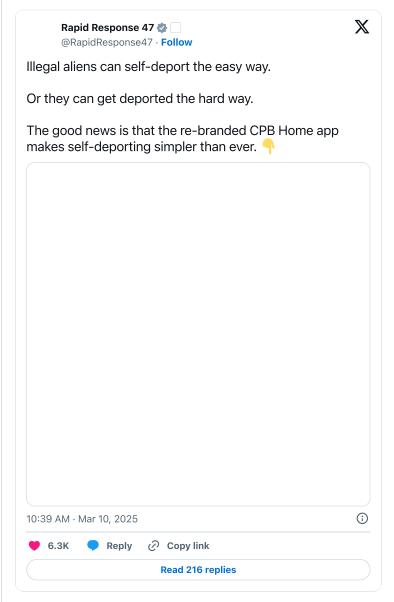
It's unclear who would actually use the new CBP Home app to "self-deport". The phrase has long been used to describe the idea that life in the US can be made so unbearable for immigrants that they will choose to leave voluntarily.

"Immigrant community members should be wary of any promises made by those encouraging them to 'self-deport' and instead carefully examine their legal options with trusted advisers," said Laura Rivera, a senior staff attorney at Just Futures Law. "This move reflects Trump's cynical strategy to flood

the zone with messaging that creates fear among immigrant communities while currying favor with his base."

The app's relaunch also raises privacy concerns, Rivera said. Experts had long warned that the original CBP One app, which collected biometric data and photos, had allowed for a massive expansion of government databases of noncitizens' photos and other biographic information.

The rebranding of the app "is also a chilling example of how easily tools like CBP One, which collected photos and other sensitive personal information, can be weaponized to surveil and punish", Rivera said.



Trump had built his presidential campaign on a promise of "mass deportations" of undocumented immigrants. His administration has already moved to cancel several legal pathways for immigrants to enter the US, categorically banning asylum at the US borders, terminating private sponsorship programs that allowed Americans to financially support certain people seeking to immigrate and suspending the US's refugee resettlement program.

When the administration cancelled the CBP One app, about 30,000 people waiting in Mexico with scheduled appointments with US immigration officials lost them, and were left in limbo. The app was initially launched by the Trump administration during Trump's first term, as a way to arrange a number of immigration services.

In 2023, Joe Biden's administration expanded the app's use. Seeking to limit the arrival of asylum seekers at the border, Biden made it all but mandatory to use the app to schedule appointments to make a claim for asylum - and allowed just 1,450 appointments a day, even though thousands more were arriving at the border daily.

Human rights groups and immigration lawyers had criticized the app, pointing to glitches, language issues and racial biases in its <u>facial recognition</u> features. Forcing migrants to use the app and wait in Mexico for appointments with immigration officials had the effect of stranding vulnerable groups in Mexico and enriching organized crime groups, a <u>report from Human Rights Watch</u> (HRW) found. But Trump and his allies had characterized the app as too permissive, conversely – and falsely – claiming it fast-tracked entry into the US, and promised to end the system.

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Betsy Reed *Editor, Guardian US*

