



POLITICS

White House says Colombia agrees to take deported migrants after Trump tariff showdown

1 of 3 | The White House is claiming victory in a showdown with Colombia over accepting flights of deported migrants from the U.S., hours after President Donald Trump threatened steep tariffs on imports and other sanctions on the longtime

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BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — The White House claimed victory in a showdown with Colombia over accepting flights of deported migrants from the U.S. on Sunday, hours after President Donald Trump threatened steep tariffs on imports and other sanctions on the longtime U.S. partner.

Long close partners in anti-narcotics efforts, the U.S. and Colombia clashed Sunday over the deportation of migrants and imposed tariffs on each other's goods in a show of what other countries could face if they intervene in the [Trump administration's crackdown](#) on illegal immigration. The White House held up the episode as a warning to other nations who might seek to impede his plans.

Earlier, the U.S. president had ordered visa restrictions, 25% tariffs on all Colombian incoming goods, which would be raised to 50% in one week, and other retaliatory measures sparked by President Gustavo Petro's decision to reject two Colombia-bound U.S. military aircraft carrying migrants after Petro accused [Trump](#) of not treating immigrants with dignity during deportation. Petro also announced a retaliatory 25% increase in Colombian tariffs on U.S. goods.

Trump said the measures were necessary because Petro's decision "jeopardized" national security in the U.S. by blocking the deportation flights.

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"These measures are just the beginning," Trump wrote on his social media platform Truth Social. "We will not allow the Colombian Government to violate its legal obligations with regard to the acceptance and return of the Criminals they forced into the United States."

Press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a late Sunday statement that the "Government of Colombia has agreed to all of President Trump's terms, including the unrestricted acceptance of all illegal aliens from Colombia returned from the United States, including on U.S. military aircraft, without limitation or delay."

Leavitt said the tariff orders will be "held in reserve, and not signed." But Leavitt said Trump would maintain visa restrictions on Colombian officials and enhanced customs inspections of goods from the country, "until the first planeload of Colombian deportees is successfully returned."

The Colombian government late Sunday said it considered as "overcome" the episode with the Trump administration and Petro reposted the statement from the White House on X.

"We have overcome the impasse with the United States government," said Colombian Foreign Minister Luis Gilberto Murillo. "We will continue to receive Colombians who return as deportees, guaranteeing them decent conditions as citizens subject to rights."

Murillo added that the South American country's presidential aircraft is available to facilitate the return of migrants who were to arrive hours earlier on the U.S. military airplanes.

Earlier Sunday, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced he was authorizing the visa restrictions on Colombian government officials and their families "who were responsible for the interference of U.S. repatriation flight operations." They were being imposed on top of the State Department's move to suspend the processing of visas at the U.S. Embassy in Colombia's capital, Bogota.

Petro had said earlier that his government would not accept flights carrying migrants deported from the U.S. until the Trump administration creates a protocol that treats them with "dignity." Petro made the announcement in two X posts, one of which included a news video of migrants reportedly deported to Brazil walking on a tarmac with restraints on their hands and feet.

"A migrant is not a criminal and must be treated with the dignity that a human being deserves," Petro said. "That is why I returned the U.S. military planes that were carrying Colombian migrants... In civilian planes, without being treated like criminals, we will receive our fellow citizens."

After Trump's earlier tariff threat, Petro said in a post on X that he had ordered the "foreign trade minister to raise import tariffs from the U.S. by 25%."

Colombia has traditionally been the U.S.'s top ally in Latin America. But their relationship has strained since Petro, a former guerrilla, became Colombia's first leftist president in 2022 and sought distance from the U.S.

Colombia accepted 475 deportation flights from the U.S. from 2020 to 2024, fifth behind Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and El Salvador, according to Witness at the Border, an advocacy group that tracks flight data. It accepted 124 deportation flights in 2024.

Colombia is also among the countries that last year began accepting U.S.-funded deportation flights from Panama.

The U.S. government didn't immediately respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press regarding aircraft and protocols used in deportations to Colombia.

"This is a clear message we are sending that countries have an obligation to accept repatriation flights," a senior administration official told AP. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss issue publicly.

Rubio in a statement said Petro "canceled his authorization" for the flights when the aircraft were in the air.

Colombians emerged in recent years as a major presence on the U.S. border with Mexico, aided in part by [a visa regime](#) that allows them to easily fly to Mexico and avoid trekking through the treacherous Darien Gap. They ranked fourth with 127,604 arrests for illegal crossings during a 12-month period through September, behind Mexicans, Guatemalans and Venezuelans.

Mexico hasn't imposed visa restrictions on Colombians, as [they have on Venezuelans, Ecuadoreans and Peruvians](#).

Petro's government in a statement later announced that the South American country's presidential aircraft had been made available to facilitate the return of migrants who were to arrive hours earlier on the U.S. military airplanes and guarantee them "dignified conditions."

As part of a flurry of actions to make good on Trump's campaign promises to crack down on illegal immigration, his government is using active-duty military to help secure the border and carry out deportations.

Two U.S. Air Force C-17 cargo planes carrying migrants removed from the U.S. touched down early Friday in Guatemala. That same day, Honduras received two deportation flights carrying a total of 193 people.

Colombia is the U.S.'s fourth-largest overseas supplier of crude oil, shipping about 209,000 barrels of oil per day last year, although booming domestic production has reduced the U.S.' dependence on foreign oil. The South American country is also the U.S.'s largest supplier of fresh cut flowers.

Regina Garcia Cano reported from Caracas, Venezuela, and Zeke Miller from Washington. Associated Press writers Jill Colvin in New York, Joshua Goodman in Miami, and Elliot Spagat in San Diego contributed to this report.



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