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USA

Trump Confrontation with Mexico over Tariffs, Migration, and Drugs

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As a candidate, Donald Trump threatened to put a 25% tariff on Mexican goods entering the United States and to close the Mexico-U.S. border, both actions that could have devastating consequences for Mexico and perhaps the United States as well. “This Tariff,” he wrote a few weeks ago, “will remain in effect until such time as Drugs, in particular Fentanyl, and all Illegal Aliens stop this Invasion of our Country!”

So, president-elect Trump and Mexican president Claudia Sheinbaum had a conversation on November 27, a chat that Trump recalled with delight, writing on his Truth Social media site, “Just had a wonderful conversation with the new President of Mexico, Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo. She has agreed to stop Migration through Mexico, and into the United States, effectively closing our Southern Border. We also talked about what can be done to stop the massive drug inflow into the United States, and also, U.S. consumption of these drugs. It was a very productive conversation!”

That was not how she remembered it. Sheinbaum responded on X, formerly Twitter, “I explained to him the comprehensive strategy that Mexico has followed to address the migration phenomenon, respecting human rights. Thanks to this, migrants and caravans are assisted before they reach the border. We reiterate that Mexico’s position is not to close borders.”

Sheinbaum also issued a statement saying, “Among Mexico’s main exporters to the United States are General Motors, Stellantis, and Ford Motor Company, which arrived in Mexico 80 years ago. Why impose a tariff that would jeopardize them? Such a measure would be unacceptable and would lead to inflation and job losses in both the United States and Mexico.” She said that Mexico could impose a tariff on the United States.

Some believe that the agricultural, construction, hotel, and manufacturing industries that engage in international commerce and rely on undocumented immigrant labor will pressure Trump to stop both the tariffs and such mass deportation. For now, he says he’s going ahead with both.

Trump promises that on day one he’ll also begin the mass deportation of 11 million undocumented immigrants, many of whom are long-term residents with ten years or more in the country, with jobs and children who, born in America are U.S. citizens. Trump says he will declare a national emergency and mobilize the army to carry out the deportation at whatever financial cost. Asked if he will divide families, Thomas Homan, who will be Trump’s “border Czar,” says families don’t have to be divided—parents can take their American children with them when they go.

Republican governor of Texas, Greg Abbott, notorious for sending more than 10,200 migrants at a cost of \$148 million to states governed by Democrats, has offered president-elect Trump 1,402 acres (567 hectares) for a concentration camp for migrants detained for deportation. Border Czar Homan says other migrants will be arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (Ice) officers or county sheriffs and held in local jails before being flown home.

Tens of thousands of immigrants are gathering their documents, meeting with lawyers, some are marrying U.S. citizens, and immigrant rights groups are being overwhelmed by people seeking advice. Immigrant rights organizations and labor unions are making plans to defend their members. Sanctuary states and cities like California that refuse to cooperate with ICE, are planning to resist Trump and to defend their residents.

Most of the undocumented immigrants are Latinos and most of them Mexican, so Sheinbaum, herself an

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authoritarian president who has increased the role of the military and shut down government human rights watchdog groups, will be faced with an inundation of her compatriots being returned home, and we can expect abuses on both side of the border. Our work is cut out for us.

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