



Fact Sheet



NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

1.5 million estimated Venezuelans in neighboring countries and beyond

600,000 estimated Venezuelans in Colombia

93,000 estimated Venezuelans in Ecuador

50,000 estimated Venezuelans in Brazil

33,000 estimated Venezuelans in Peru

8.5 million names added to Venezuela's immigration system since last audit (2003)

221,084 names of foreign nationals are in Venezuela's immigration system

10,000 estimated foreign nationals from SIA countries were provided Venezuelan ID documentation

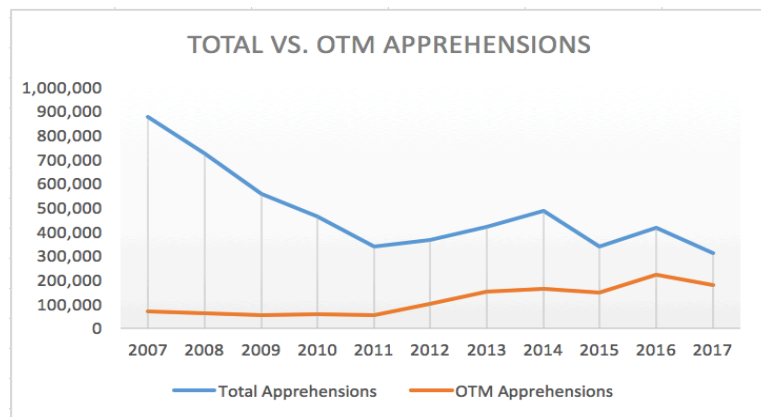
VENEZUELA'S MOUNTING REFUGEE CRISIS

CONTEXT

As Venezuela continues to implode, the country is rapidly becoming the Syria of the Western Hemisphere in terms of refugee outflows. More than 4 million Venezuelans have left the country after the late Hugo Chávez rose to power. Since 2014, an estimated 1.5 million Venezuelans have fled to neighboring countries, overwhelming Colombia, Ecuador, and Brazil, and the number of Venezuelan migrants to Peru and Chile has increased by more than 1,000 percent. Venezuela is the top country of origin for US asylum claims and is ranked 4th in new asylum claims worldwide. The deteriorating situation in Venezuela has established a regional refugee crisis with national security implications for the Western Hemisphere.

THREAT ASSESSMENT

Special Interest Aliens (SIA)¹ are classified as a subcategory under Other than Mexican (OTM) illegal migrants by the Department of Homeland Security. SIAs originate from countries that "have shown a tendency to promote, produce, or protect terrorist organizations." In the last decade, the total number of apprehensions of undocumented migrants crossing the US southwest border has decreased to the lowest levels since 1971. Meanwhile the number of OTM apprehensions has increased, with the number of SIAs growing at a commensurate rate.



¹ SIAs are citizens of 35 countries that could represent a terrorist threat: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, UAE, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.



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173 “Venezuelans” identified as foreign nationals from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, or Jordan (SIA countries) in 2012.

35 Syrians (SIA country) entered Guatemala illegally in 2016

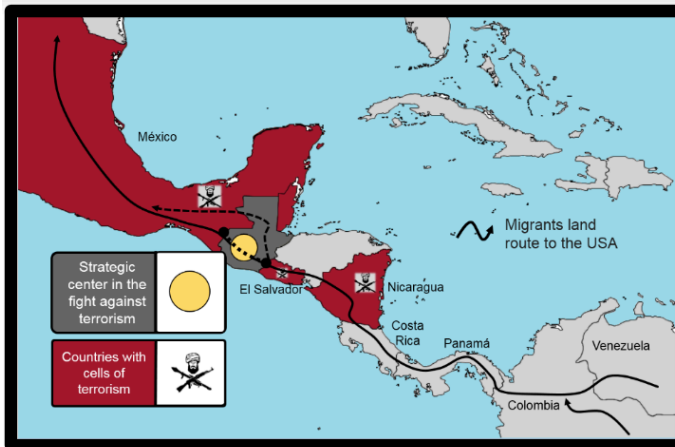
78 percent of OTM apprehensions on the US southwest border are at the Rio Grande River Valley in Texas

SOURCES

The data in this fact sheet has been taken from the following sources:

- USAID Venezuela Regional Crisis Fact Sheet #1, April 18, 2018
- Mayor’s office of Boa Vista, Brazil updated as of June 8, 2018
- CNN documentary *Passports in the Shadows* aired Feb. 14, 2017 on AC360°
- National Election Commission of Venezuela
- Image from a presentation on Nov. 16, 2017 by Guatemala’s Secretary of Strategic Intelligence, Mario Duarte, in Washington D.C.
- Texas Department of Public Safety unclassified 2015 Border Surge Report
- US Customs and Border Patrol sector profile reports, 2007-2017
- UNHCR Refugee Agency Global Trends in 2017 report
- US Department of Treasury Press Center, 2008 & 2017

In 2017, OTMs were 58 percent of the total apprehensions on the US southwest border and 78 percent of those apprehensions occurred at the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) sector in Texas. SIA migrants crossing the border into Texas through the RGV follow one of two routes: through Havana, Cuba or Mexico City. One of the more prominent routes to reach Mexico City is an air route originating in Iran, Iraq, Jordan, or Syria, landing in Peru, Ecuador or Colombia, then traveling through the Darien Gap to Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. Guatemala has become the most prominent staging and transit country in Central America for SIAs migrating into North America. According to Guatemala’s migration authorities (DGM), 35 Syrians entered the country illegally in 2016.



Presence of potential terrorist cells have expanded throughout the region, specially through cultural centers that have been detected to have ties to Hezbollah in neighbor countries, mainly in Chiapas, Mexico, border with Guatemala.

VENEZUELAN REFUGEE RISK

Venezuela is a prominent prior embarkation point for irregular migrants traveling from SIA countries into North America. The Government of Venezuela has provided numerous identification documents to suspected members of foreign terrorist organizations. It’s alleged that Venezuela’s Vice President, Tareck El Aissami, facilitated this crime-terror pipeline when he was Interior Minister from 2008-2012 purportedly working with Venezuelan-Lebanese diplomat, Ghazi Nasr al Din, previously stationed in Syria and Lebanon. Tareck El Aissami is sanctioned by OFAC as a Specially Designated Narcotics Trafficker. Ghazi Nasr al Din is also sanctioned by OFAC for facilitating travel and fundraising for Hezbollah and is wanted by the FBI.

