



Number of American teens being arrested for HUMAN SMUGGLING on the rise

Description

US : The number of American teens smuggling illegals unlawfully into the U.S. is on the rise, with law enforcement pointing to money as the foremost motivator for these attempts.

According to the federal government, human smuggling is defined as the illegal importation of people into the country by evading federal immigration laws. It also pertains to the unlawful transportation and harboring of individuals already in the country illegally. Newsweek focused on several cases that happened in Texas and Arizona.

In November 2023, two Dallas teens were arrested for smuggling. Seventeen-year-old Jonathan Rodriguez, one of the suspects taken into custody, disclosed that they were offered \$1,300 to [transport](#) illegals. Rodriguez was subsequently charged as an adult.

A month later in December 2023, a 15-year-old male was taken into custody and charged with smuggling and evading arrest/detention. At the time of his arrest, the suspect was driving a vehicle that had five illegal immigrants as passengers. The five were later released to the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP).

A spokesperson for the El Paso Sheriff's Office told Newsweek that the department had only one case of smuggling involving a minor. The case, which happened back in 2020, also had money as the prime motivator.

[Over in Arizona](#), Cochise County Attorney Brian McIntyre shared county data that showed 33 juvenile prosecutions for border-related crimes as of November 2023. Of this number, 20 were prosecuted as adults and 13 as juveniles. This number was lower than the 49 juvenile prosecutions in 2022, with 38 charged as adults and 11 as juveniles, but remains alarming.

“It’s a complicated spiderweb, but in particular in what we’re dealing with now, human smuggling being the primary driver for juveniles and adults – they’re coming from everywhere,” he said. “We’ve become like a criminal tourist country. We’ve had them from Maine, Oregon, Chicago, you name it.”

Smugglers recruiting mules on SOCIAL MEDIA

The Cochise County attorney told Newsweek that advertisements on social media platforms like Snapchat are driving this uptick. This is because of the encryption on these apps and the ease for teens to get involved in criminal activity. Ads shared with the magazine show recruiters posting photos with wads of cash, calling it “easy money” to drive to checkpoints in cities like Douglas and Sierra Vista – both located in Cochise County.

“That’s what’s driving it, plain and simple,” said McIntyre. “If you can get paid \$1,500 a body to drive down here from Phoenix, load [them] up and get [them] to Phoenix as fast as you can without getting caught, it’s a risk people are willing to take.”

Illegals transported in this manner will “literally crawl through the desert” while covered head to toe in camouflage, he added. But once smuggled, they have no intention to deal with USBP or seek asylum.

Smuggling cartels run the entire network for a fee, which costs between \$6,000 and \$8,000 if someone is from Mexico. Those wanting to enter the U.S. illegally often tend to pay a small amount upfront and then must pay off the remainder while in the United States. This, according to McIntyre, makes them “indentured servants.”

Ray Rede, Homeland Security Investigations assistant special agent in charge for Arizona, said the smuggling cartels “prey on the fact that they create a false sense of anonymity” through social media apps. The cartels do this, he explained, through social media ads that recruit young people to become mules for human smuggling.

“When these individuals answer these ads, they’re just looking for easy money. And at the end of the day, that’s really what it is. They’re just looking for easy money,” he said.

“If you’re a 20-year-old sitting in Phoenix, Arizona, and you’re on your favorite social media site, and you see the advertisement pop up, and it’s easy money for you, and you answer the ad and you decide to do it – those are individual choices.”

By Ramon Tomey

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