

U.S. POLICY ON LATIN AMERICA

AQ tracks major moments in U.S. relations with the region under the Trump and Biden administrations.

NOTE: TIMELINE COVERS EVENTS FROM 2017 TO JUNE 2024, WHEN THIS ISSUE WENT TO PRINT.

by Rich Brown and Emilie Sweigart

TRUMP

Jan 2017-Jan 2021



JAN 2017
U.S. WITHDRAWS FROM THE TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP (TPP)

In his first week in office, Trump withdrew the U.S. from the 12-nation TPP trade deal that included Mexico, Peru and Chile.

JUNE 2017
TRUMP REVERSES OBAMA POLICY ON CUBA

The U.S. reinstated some travel and commercial restrictions that the Obama administration had loosened. Later, in Trump's final weeks in office, the U.S. tightened sanctions on Cuba and put it on the State Department's four-country list of state sponsors of terrorism.

MAY-OCT 2018
U.S. INTRODUCES "ZERO TOLERANCE" BORDER POLICY

The U.S. cracked down on illegal border crossings with a deterrence-first approach. After Trump threatened tariffs on all Mexican goods, Mexico agreed to increase enforcement and detentions on its soil. The U.S. expanded controversial policies, including family separation.



JAN 2019
U.S. RECOGNIZES GUAIDÓ

The U.S., Canada, many Latin American and some European governments recognized Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's interim president.

JULY-SEPT 2019

SAFE THIRD COUNTRY AGREEMENTS SIGNED

The U.S. signed deals with El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras that required these nations to receive asylum applicants who would have to first seek protection in these countries. The U.S. began immediately to deport asylum seekers to the so-called Northern Triangle countries.

2017

2018

2019

2020

FEB 2017
SANCTIONS AGAINST VENEZUELA

New U.S. sanctions on the Nicolás Maduro regime designated then-Vice President Tareck El Aissami under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act. Many more sanctions would follow.



JUNE 2018
U.S. BACKS HISTORIC IMF ARGENTINA BAILOUT

Argentina became the IMF's biggest debtor after receiving an emergency \$57 billion loan, in a deal sought by then-President Mauricio Macri and supported by the U.S.



NOV 2018
USMCA SIGNED

After the U.S. imposed new tariffs on Mexico and Canada, the three nations signed a trade deal replacing NAFTA. It includes stricter intellectual property, labor and environmental protections and raised minimum limits for cars to qualify as North American-made.

JAN-FEB 2019
BORDER WALL DISPUTE CAUSES U.S. GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN, REMAIN IN MEXICO PROGRAM TAKES EFFECT

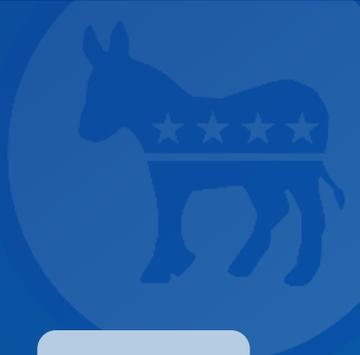
Trump and Congress failed to pass a budget after the White House demanded \$5 billion for a border wall. The ensuing 35-day government shutdown, the longest in U.S. history, slowed federal agencies until Trump dropped the demand. The Remain in Mexico program took effect, immediately sending tens of thousands of migrants to Mexico to await U.S. court hearings.

SEPT 2019
GUATEMALA EXPELS ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION

The White House did not contest President Jimmy Morales' campaign to oust the Commission Against Corruption and Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), which was funded in part by the U.S., after striking deals on migration and international policy.



TOP: JOSE CARUCI/AFP/GETTY; YURI CORTEZ/AFP/GETTY. BOTTOM: CARLOS BECERRA/BLOOMBERG/GETTY; CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY; JOHAN ORDONEZ/AFP/GETTY



BIDEN

Jan 2021-Present

JAN 2021 U.S. STOPS BORDER WALL CONSTRUCTION

Just after taking office, Biden paused the construction of walls along the southern border. In 2023, as migration levels soared, the administration waived federal laws to allow border wall construction in Texas.



JULY 2021 U.S. RELEASES ROOT CAUSES STRATEGY

The initiative committed to investing \$4 billion in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras over four years to improve conditions and stem migration from the Northern Triangle.

JUNE 2022 SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS HELD IN LOS ANGELES

While the summit saw several absences, the U.S. and 20 other countries in the hemisphere endorsed the Los Angeles Declaration for Migration and Protection. Biden announced the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity, a 12-country initiative aimed at bolstering investment and growth.

OCT 2023 U.S. LIFTS SOME VENEZUELA SANCTIONS

The Venezuelan government and the opposition signed the Barbados Agreement to carry out free and fair elections in 2024. The next day, the U.S. lifted most sanctions on Venezuela's oil and gold mining industries for a six-month period.

APR 2024 U.S. REINSTATES SOME VENEZUELA SANCTIONS

Amid the Maduro government's crackdown on opponents and noncompliance with the Barbados Agreement, the U.S. reimposed some sanctions lifted in October 2023.



2021

2022

2023

2024

MAY 2021 U.S. STARTS DONATING COVID-19 VACCINES TO LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Between 2021 and 2024 the U.S. donated approximately 75 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to 30 nations in LAC, although many countries were frustrated with the amount and timing.



APR 2022 JUAN ORLANDO HERNÁNDEZ IS EXTRADITED TO THE U.S.

Hernández, Honduras' former president and a U.S. ally while in office from 2014-22, was extradited on drug and weapons trafficking charges. He was found guilty in a U.S. court in March 2024.



OCT 2022 U.S. DEFENDS BRAZIL ELECTION RESULTS

The Biden administration played a key role in dissuading former President Jair Bolsonaro and parts of the Brazilian military from trying to overturn President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's presidential election victory.



JAN 2024 U.S. SUPPORTS BERNARDO AREVALO IN GUATEMALA

The U.S. took potentially decisive diplomatic action to support the transfer of power as the president-elect's opponents attempted to derail his inauguration.

JUNE 2024 BIDEN CRACKS DOWN ON BORDER

Biden signed an executive action that deports asylum seekers when 2,500 or more people illegally cross the U.S.-Mexico border per day, with some exceptions. The move came after encounters neared 180,000 in April. This represented a dramatic decline from December 2023, when they topped 300,000 and Mexico agreed to increase migrant detentions.

TOP: ANDREW LICHTENSTEIN/CORBIS/GETTY; ANNA MONEYMAKER/GETTY; GABY ORAA/BLOOMBERG/GETTY. BOTTOM: JOHAN ORDONEZ/AFP/GETTY; JORGE CABRERA/GETTY; SANDRA SEBASTIAN/PICTURE ALLIANCE/GETTY.