

# Investigative Note

**Key Takeaway:** Our maritime borders may soon be under assault by would-be migrants, just like our southern border.

***The Issue: A Rise in Waterborne Attempts by Migrants to Enter the U.S. Unlawfully***

In October 2019, the *Los Angeles Times* [reported on](#) a rise in waterborne smuggling of illegal aliens from south of the border into California. Because it has generally been easier to fly into Mexico and cross the land border into Arizona, California, New Mexico or Texas, the West Coast has traditionally experienced fewer waterborne attempts to enter the U.S. illegally. However, the rise of violent criminal cartels in Mexico has led to an increase in West Coast maritime attempts to covertly enter the United States.

And in May of 2022, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) published a [report](#) noting a similar rise in maritime migration to the United States by individuals from the Caribbean basin. Haitians, Cubans and other Caribbean islanders appear to have forgone attempts to enter the U.S. via Mexico, in favor of direct seaborne travel to the East Coast of the United States.

***Why Americans Should Be Concerned***

The primary objective of both of the aforementioned reports appears to have been criticizing current U.S. immigration policy for being too restrictive. According to the pro-illegal-alien, anti-borders narrative, any kind of immigration enforcement “coerces” those who wish to travel to America without authorization into forsaking the terrestrial path to the U.S. in favor of the maritime route, so that they are less likely to encounter U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) or U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

In reality, as the Biden administration has refused to enforce any immigration laws along the southern border, the border zone has become increasingly more crowded and dangerous. As a result, many more migrants have been tempted to make a waterborne journey to the United States not for the purpose of avoiding the Border Patrol, but specifically to avoid the lawlessness that Team Biden has allowed to flourish within the border zone. The maritime path into the U.S. typically enables would-be illegal aliens to make covert entry further into the interior, allowing them to avoid the gangs, drug cartels and other roving organized crime groups that make a full-time business out of preying upon migrants making their way to the U.S./Mexico frontier.

However, despite their ideological slant, these two reports should still remind discerning readers of two important points:

- 1) The United States has four borders, two of which are costal boundaries.
- 2) If the total loss of control currently being experienced along our Southern border is any indication of things to come, we are likely to see a similar loss of control along both of our coasts as more and more would-be illegal aliens attempt to enter the U.S. by sea.

The U.S. - Canada border is roughly [5,975 miles long](#) - 3,145 miles on land and 2,830 miles on lakes and rivers. It is as rugged and remote as the U.S./Mexico border and presents similar enforcement problems. However, because Canada's economy and standard of living have always been comparable to the United States, *mass migration* from Canada has rarely been a problem.

Our border with Mexico is approximately [1,960 miles long](#). And most Americans are aware of the decades-long crisis that has been occurring there.

The two remaining borders, however, are rarely considered as national boundaries by people who don't work in international travel or border security. Actually, however, America's two coasts, taken collectively, represent our largest national frontiers.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) estimates that the U.S. has 95,471 total miles of tidal shoreline that runs along bays, harbors, coves and inlets that dot both coasts. That's about half the distance from Earth to the [Moon](#).

A significant percentage of that shoreline is fairly isolated while still being easily accessible to any competent sailor with basic seamanship skills – making it relatively easy for illegal aliens to be brought to shore undetected. If discovered, migrants being smuggled into the U.S. over water most often surrender to the Coast Guard and request asylum, whether they have a valid claim or not.

Increased attempts by migrants to reach the U.S. by water have occurred in cycles, primarily in response to geopolitical crises, economic downturns and natural disasters. In 1980, there was a mass exodus of Cubans, across the Straits of Florida, to Miami

and nearby cities, referred to as the “[Mariel Boatlift](#).” In 1991, 40,000 [Haitians](#) attempted to travel to the U.S. in a similar boatlift. In 1993, the [Golden Venture](#), a ship full of would-be illegal aliens from China ran aground off Queens, NY, prompting a massive rescue operation. And, in August of 2022, the [Coast Guard](#) took 113 Haitian migrants into custody after their overloaded sailing vessel ran aground off Key Largo, FL.

As noted above, the latest wave has been triggered by the fact that the Biden administration has abandoned any pretense of engaging in either border enforcement or interior immigration enforcement. This has communicated a clear message to any foreign national who wants to migrate to the U.S. but doesn’t qualify under the current immigration laws: “If you enter the U.S., even unlawfully, you will be allowed to stay.” For the first time in the history of modern nation-states, a country has informally declared that its borders no longer exist.

The current uptick in migrants traveling to the U.S. by boat is an undeniable sign that would-be migrants everywhere have heard the Biden administration’s message loud and clear. And that is a profoundly dangerous thing. The chaos that currently reigns along our southern land border has been extremely costly – in both blood and treasure. The U.S. simply cannot afford to experience that kind of lawlessness along both of its coasts. That type of anarchy would cripple the U.S. economy because the bulk of U.S. imports and exports are delivered by cargo ship.

So, is the Haitian migrant boat that ran aground off Key Largo just the first drop in a forthcoming deluge? That remains to be seen. But, one thing is certain. While the overland route to the United States border is fraught with danger, mass migration by water is a recipe for disaster. Large numbers of migrants, packed into leaky vessels, traveling across dangerous and unpredictable oceans generally leads to tragic results – as the [iconic photo](#) of the Syrian boy who drowned during the 2015 European migration crisis sadly demonstrates.

### ***What’s the Solution?***

If the Biden administration wishes to avoid a year marked by American versions of the tragic, drowned Syrian boy photo, it should take steps to secure our maritime borders and ensure that they do not succumb to the type of hellish anarchy that currently prevails along the Rio Grande.