

Trump Has Spent \$40 Million in Secretive Deals Deporting Hundreds of People to Third Countries

“Through its third country deportation deals, the Trump administration is putting millions of taxpayer dollars into the hands of foreign governments, while turning a blind eye to the human costs,” reads a new Senate report.

By JULIA CONLEY | Feb 13, 2026

Using secretive agreements, often with countries that have histories of human rights abuses, the Trump administration has “expanded and institutionalized” a system in which the government deports migrants to nations where they have never lived, according to a report released Friday by Democrats on the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The report, titled *At What Cost? Inside the Trump Administration's Secret Deportation Deals*, was commissioned by Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and is the first comprehensive review of the administration's coercive and secretive agreements with countries including El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, and Eswatini.

Third-country deportations were “previously a rare tool used only in exceptional circumstances,” said the authors, but “the Trump administration has broadened this practice into a sprawling system of global removals,” sending direct financial payments of \$32 million in taxpayer money to foreign governments.

Five countries, which also include Palau and Rwanda, entered into those deals and have taken 300 people. In all, the administration has spent more than \$40 million on the deportations, according to the report.

“This report outlines the troubling practice by the Trump administration of deporting individuals to third countries—places where these people have no connection—at great expense to the American taxpayer and raises serious questions,” said Shaheen, the ranking member of the committee. “Through its third country deportation deals, the Trump

administration is putting millions of taxpayer dollars into the hands of foreign governments... For an administration that claims to be reigning in fraud, waste, and abuse, this policy is the epitome of all three.”

The senators conducted a 10-month review of the administration’s agreements and third country deportations through January 2026, with staff traveling to the countries and meeting with people who have been deported, attorneys, US and foreign officials, and human rights organizations.

The agreements, said the senators, amount to an “expensive and dangerous form of shadow diplomacy that prioritizes the appearance of toughness over the security of Americans” and includes little oversight over whether public funds are being used to finance human trafficking or rights abuses.

While the agreements include “blanket language” on upholding international human rights laws, the report states, the senators’ extensive review uncovered no evidence that the administration is conducting systemic monitoring or follow-up enforcement, “raising serious concerns that the assurances made by foreign governments exist only on paper and that the United States is turning a blind eye to what happens to migrants in third countries.”

Cart Weiland, a deputy assistant secretary at the US State Department, was questioned by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about his work helping to establish the third country agreements and “could not articulate whether any oversight on their treatment had been conducted. Instead, he reiterated that ‘the agreement has a provision that explicitly mandates adherence to international human rights treaties and conventions.’”

Committee staff members also heard from US officials in one country that they had been instructed “not to follow up on the treatment of deportees.”

A Trump administration attorney even acknowledged in a federal court case regarding deportations to Ghana, another country that has entered into agreements with the administration, that it appeared “Ghana was violating assurances it had provided the United States, including that it would comply with the Convention Against Torture, after sending a migrant onward to a country where they would likely be tortured.”

The senators also found that the administration is likely using third countries to circumvent US immigration law—carrying out removals “that US law would otherwise prohibit, such as sending protected individuals onward to countries where they may face persecution or death.”

The majority of migrants flown to third countries have had court-ordered protections prohibiting the US from sending them back to their home countries, where they could face persecution or torture.

“One migrant with protective orders stated: ‘While at the fuel stop in the US Virgin Islands, the apparent head [US Immigration and Customs Enforcement] official on the plane... told me that those on the plane were being sent to Ghana and that Ghana would send us to our home countries,’ according to the report.

The document said that “the Trump administration’s defense is that the United States ‘does not have the power to tell Ghana what to do,’” a claim it also made after garnering condemnation for its use of the Alien Enemies Act to deport about 250 Venezuelan migrants to El Salvador, where they were imprisoned in the notorious Terrorism Confinement Center (CECOT).

The report also details how the administration has threatened some countries with increased tariffs, travel bans, or cuts to US foreign aid if they don’t enter into the deals.

“The Trump administration is expending political capital in its bilateral relationships that could instead be used to advance more pressing US national security interests, while not being transparent about the full extent of its deal-making, including what is being offered to foreign governments,” reads the report.

The senators emphasized that they released their report “as the administration is aggressively seeking to strip hundreds of thousands of migrants of legal status in the United States through the ending of temporary protected status and humanitarian parole, among other avenues, increasing the risk of expanded third country deportations.”

The Democrats on the committee said they would continue to conduct oversight of the agreements and demand transparency.

“The Trump administration should cease its use of these third country deportation deals,” they said, “which are putting millions of taxpayer dollars into the hands of foreign governments without oversight while turning a blind eye to the potential human cost.”