

## COMMENTARY

# The Biden Admin Is Fuming Over Texas' Buoy Barrier

by Selene Rodriguez



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While Texas continues to attempt to secure its border, the Department of Justice (DOJ) disagrees with its methods.

The DOJ filed a [lawsuit](#) on Monday against Texas for its use of the buoy marine barrier system, a system which has been implemented to protect lives and deter illegal border crossings along the Rio Grande River.

The floating barrier consists of four-foot-wide buoys that spin when grabbed and it is designed to be moved and extended if necessary. Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) [Lt. Chris Olivarez](#) said that the buoys will have galvanized steel fixtures and rotating radial passive blades affixed between the buoys which will prevent human smugglers from crossing under the blades and rotating them.

Migrants attempt to walk or swim across the river, and smuggling guides have been noted to use makeshift inflatable rafts and flotation devices. In Eagle Pass, Texas, the fire chief [explained](#) that they respond to the river and recover at least one body per day, usually.

Unfortunately, not everyone who falls victim to the Rio Grande is recovered. U.S. Border Patrol has [reported](#) that some victims are never even found due to the difficulty of locating lost bodies in the river. Four migrants, including an infant, were found dead on the banks of the unforgiving Rio Grande River — in just one recent weekend.

Since none of the victims had any identifying documents on them, their identities remain unknown.

Fiscal year 2022 was the deadliest year yet for unlawful border crossings, totaling roughly 853 deaths, 307 more than fiscal year 2021.

In many areas, the Rio Grande River is not very deep, but it is unpredictable and perilous. Two major dam systems cause inconsistency in water levels, which can rise quickly. The floor of the river is uneven and contains debris, making it difficult to walk across.

While river-crossing deaths have increased significantly over these past couple of years, the problem is not new.

U.S. Border Patrol has been [warning](#) people not to risk their lives crossing the Rio Grande River for years, noting its unpredictable currents and deep waters. In 2020, the Army Corps of Engineers [proposed a buoy barrier](#) along parts of the Rio Grande to deter unauthorized river crossings.

That [project](#) is now underway in the Lone Star State as Gov. Greg Abbott approved 1,000 feet of the marine barrier system to be implemented on the Rio Grande near Eagle Pass as part of Operation Lone Star.

Designed by Cochrane USA, the barrier will cost the state \$1 million, funding which is included in the \$5.1 billion approved by the Texas Legislature to secure the border. DPS has added concertina wire on the bank of the river, making the buoys part of a layering effect that will allow law enforcement to quickly mobilize to border crossing hot spots.

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The buoy barrier is a great step toward strengthened border security, but Texas DPS must continue to hold the line at the border. The buoys will decrease the river crossings in the area in which they are placed, but that traffic is also likely to move to less secured parts of the river, which could be even more dangerous to those crossing.

The state of Texas has the right and the [duty](#) to step in and defend itself from threats coming across the border. It must also deter the men, women, and children thinking it is safe to illegally cross the river, and ensure they only use safe and legal pathways into the U.S.

As Texas continues to increase its border security efforts, migrants seeking a new life in the U.S. will hopefully pursue safe and legal pathways through ports of entry. ★

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