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Inside C2

# Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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## U.S. to relax restrictions for vaccinated international travelers in November



Passengers walk past artwork between terminals at IAH George Bush Intercontinental Airport amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak in Houston, Texas, U.S., July 21, 2020. REUTERS/Adrees Latif

WASHINGTON, Sept 20 (Reuters) - The United States in November will re-open for air travelers from 33 countries including China, India, Brazil and most of Europe who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, the White House said on Monday, easing tough pandemic-related travel restrictions imposed beginning early last year.

The decision, announced by White House coronavirus response coordinator Jeff Zients, marked an abrupt shift for President Joe Biden's administration, which last week said it was not the right time to lift any restrictions amid rising COVID-19 cases.

The United States had lagged many other countries in lifting such restrictions, and allies including Britain and Germany welcomed the move. The U.S. restrictions have barred travelers from most of the world including tens of thousands of foreign nationals with relatives or business links in the United States.

Restrictions on non-U.S. citizens were first imposed on air travelers from China in January 2020 by then-Pres-

ident Donald Trump and then extended to dozens of other countries, without any clear metrics for how and when to lift them.

The United States will admit fully vaccinated air travelers from the 26 so-called Schengen countries in Europe including France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and Greece, as well as Britain, Ireland, China, India, South Africa, Iran and Brazil. The existing policy has barred non-U.S. citizens who were in those countries within 14 days.

Zients did not give a precise start date beyond saying "early November."

Separately on Monday, the United States extended its pandemic-related restrictions at land borders with Canada and Mexico that bar nonessential travel such as tourism through Oct. 21, while giving no indication if it would apply the vaccine rules to those borders.

The United States has allowed foreign air travelers from more than 150 countries throughout the pandemic. Its action on Monday means that new COVID-19 vaccine requirements will now apply to nearly all foreign nationals flying to

the United States - including those not subject to the prior restrictions. Critics had said that the U.S. travel restrictions no longer made sense because some countries with high COVID-19 rates were not on the restricted list while some countries on the list have the pandemic more under control.

Americans traveling from abroad who are not vaccinated will face tougher rules than vaccinated citizens, including needing to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test within a day of travel and proof of purchasing a viral test to be taken after arrival.

Air travel restrictions and bans were imposed by many countries in a bid to slow the spread of COVID-19, devastating international travel and tourism and shaking the airline industry.

Passengers walk past artwork between terminals at IAH George Bush Intercontinental Airport amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak in Houston, Texas, U.S., July 21, 2020. REUTERS/Adrees Latif  
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ease (COVID-19) outbreak in Houston, Texas, U.S., July 21, 2020. REUTERS/Adrees Latif

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce business group praised the U.S. announcement, saying "allowing vaccinated foreign nationals to travel freely to the United States will help foster a robust and durable recovery for the American economy." Airlines for America, an industry trade group, said that through late August, international air travel was down 43% from pre-pandemic levels. Shares in U.S. airlines were little changed while some European carriers gained. British Airways parent IAG SA (ICAG.L) rose about 11% while Air France-KLM (AIRF.PA) and Deutsche Lufthansa (LHAG.DE) AG were both up about 5%.

British Airways CEO and Chairman Sean Doyle said the news "marks an historic moment and one which will provide a huge boost to Global Britain as it emerges from this pandemic."

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson called the announcement "a fantastic boost for business and trade, and great that family and friends on both sides of the pond can be reunited once again."

Germany's U.S. ambassador, Emily Haber, welcomed the announcement, writing on Twitter: "Hugely important to promote people-to-people contacts and transatlantic business."

Biden, who makes his first U.N. General Assembly speech on Tuesday, hosts leaders from Britain, India, Japan and Australia this week.

WHICH VACCINES? The White House said federal health authorities will decide which vaccines qualify, including if those not approved by U.S. regulators will be acceptable. Foreign nationals will need to present proof of vaccination before travel and will not be required to quarantine upon arrival.

Exceptions to the vaccine policy include children not yet eligible for shots. Reuters reported on Aug. 5 the White House was developing vaccine entry requirements that could cover nearly all foreign air visitors.

The U.S. Travel Association trade group previously estimated that the U.S. restrictions, if they ran to the end of the year, would cost the American economy \$325 billion in total losses and 1.1 million jobs.

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# WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

## CORONAVIRUS DIARY 09/20/2021



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### Great News For Our Young Kids



Pfizer made an announcement Monday saying that a Phase 2/3 trial showed its Covid-19 vaccine was safe and generated a "robust" antibody response in children ages 5-11.

This is the first time such results have been released for this age group. Pfizer plans to submit its plan to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for emergency use soon.

The trial included 2,268 people ages 5 to 11 years old. This trial used 10-microgram doses, smaller than the 30-microgram doses used on older than 16 year olds. It demonstrated a strong immune response.

Since July of this year, pediatric cases of Covid-19 have risen 240 percent in the U.S. Pfizer plans to have a vaccine for children ages

5-11 available by Halloween.

U.S. health officials have emphasized that children are not just small adults and even those approaching age 12 should not be given the larger vaccine doses available for older people.

This is really great news for all of us. Over the past several months, many kids have contracted Covid-19 and made life very difficult for

their families. Now they might feel a little more relaxed. For now, almost 29% of all Covid-19 cases reported in the U.S. are children under 16.

It has been almost two years now since we all have been suffering from the pandemic that has brought us so much pain. We really appreciate all the scientists who do such a great job to come to the rescue of our society.



**Southern DAILY** Make Today Different

### Editor's Choice



Lava and smoke are seen following the eruption of a volcano in the Cumbre Vieja national park at El Paso, on the Canary Island of La Palma. REUTERS/Borja Suarez



A sign is held during a rally in support of defendants being prosecuted in the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, in Washington, D.C. REUTERS/Jonathan Ernst



Inspiration4 crew seen on their first day in space. SpaceX/via REUTERS



Children take part in the Settrington Cup Pedal Car Race as motoring enthusiasts attend the Goodwood Revival, a three-day historic car racing festival in Goodwood, Chichester, southern Britain. REUTERS/Toby Melville



Migrants seeking refuge in United States cross the Rio Grande river back into Acuna, Mexico from Del Rio, Texas. REUTERS/Adrees Latif



Canada's Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau gestures during an election campaign stop in Kitchener, Canada. REUTERS/Carlos Osorio

The U.S. Needs A COVID Goal



Illustration: Eniola Odetunde/

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

A huge reason why the pandemic response — or the lack of one — feels so chaotic right now is that the U.S. doesn't have a well-defined goal, experts recently argued in a pair of op-eds.

**Why it matters:** Policy decisions and individual behavioral choices should ideally be aligned in pursuit of an agreed-upon outcome, but as of now, we don't have one.

**What they're saying:** "We think much of the confusion and disagreement among scientists and nonexperts alike comes down to undefined and sometimes conflicting goals in responding to the pandemic," Harvard's Joseph Allen and Boston University's Helen Jenkins wrote yesterday in the New York Times.

**State of play:** The federal government is pushing ahead with a vaccine booster effort that some experts say is unnecessary, state and local governments are taking a patchwork approach to masking and vaccine policies and individual Americans are all trying to figure out how much risk they're willing to tolerate in everyday life.

•School districts and businesses are trying to figure out how to handle — and are taking very different approaches to — the return to school and work.



•But the U.S. as a country hasn't agreed on a set of outcomes we're trying to achieve, particularly whether we're trying to eliminate the spread of the virus or to greatly reduce the level of hospitalizations and death it causes.

•"If the goal is getting to zero infections and staying at that level before dropping restrictions, one set of policies apply. If the goal is to make this virus like the seasonal flu, a different set of policies follow," Allen and Jenkins write.

**Zoom in:** The vaccination effort is similarly struggling from an undefined set of goals, NYU's Céline Gounder wrote recently in The Atlantic.

•This ambiguity has become more problematic as more evidence emerges that the vaccines' effectiveness against infection has decreased.

•"The public discussion of the pandemic has become distorted by a presumption that vaccination can and should eliminate COVID-19 entirely," Gounder argues.

•"The goal isn't to eliminate SARS-CoV-2 infections. We can't, no matter how many booster shots the United States gives," she adds.

(Courtesy axios.com)

Related

New 'MU' COVID Variant Now Found In 49 U.S. States

Since being discovered in Colombia in January, the mu variant of COVID-19 has spread to nearly four dozen countries and has made its presence known in Hawaii and Alaska. It has so far been found in 49 states with Nebraska being the only state to not have a mu variant case detected.

Health officials believe mu is even more transmissible than the delta variant and has the potential to resist vaccines.

In the U.S., the mu variant has been detected in 49 states and the District of Columbia, according to Newsweek.

California has reported the highest number of the latest variant with 384. A total of 167 of those cases were found in Los

Angeles County. "The identification of variants like mu, and the spreading of variants across the globe, highlights the need for L.A. County residents to continue to take measures to protect themselves and others," said Dr. Barbara Ferrer, director of LA County Public Health, in a statement.

The U.S. saw its peak of mu variant cases in mid-July but case numbers involving that variant have been declining since, signaling either a weakening of the strain or indicating a worrisome future. (Courtesy <https://www.nydailynews.com/news/>)

Related



Coronavirus Dashboard

**Vaccines:** Fauci: Pfizer booster likely ready by Sept. 20, Moderna may need longer — AstraZeneca agrees to give EU 200M more vaccine doses, ending legal dispute.

**1.Politics:** Biden's high-stakes booster tension with Moderna — Wall Street boosts lab companies amid Delta testing surge — Restaurant recovery's screeching halt.

**2.States:** Kentucky governor says state is in "dire" situation from coronavirus surge — Ousted Tennessee vaccine chief sues state officials for defamation over firing.

**3.Cities:** New Zealand to lift lockdown outside of Auckland — Florida DOE investigating Hillsborough and Sarasota schools over mask policy.

"This is what makes getting vaccinated and layering protections so important. These are actions that break the chain of transmission and limits COVID-19 proliferation that allows for the virus to mutate into something that could be more dangerous."

On Aug. 30, the World Health Organization called the mu variant a variant of interest due to its ability to be more transmissible than any of the other strains of COVID-19.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has not yet made similar classifications about mu in the U.S.

Blood specimen collection tubes are



seen in the laboratory of Bellville Medical Center, in Bellville, Texas, September 1, 2021. (FRANCOIS PICARD/AFP via Getty Images)

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said that health officials were maintaining a "close eye" on the mu variant despite it being "not at all even close" to becoming the dominant COVID-19 strain in the U.S.

"Even though it has not in essence taken hold to any extent here we always pay attention to at all times variants," Fauci said.



**4.Variant tracker:** Where different strains are spreading.

Cases:

**1.Global:** Total confirmed cases as of 12 p.m. ET on Monday: 220,875,406 — Total deaths: 4,571,188 — Total vaccine doses administered: 5,479,375,909

**2.U.S.:** Total confirmed cases as of 12 p.m. ET on Monday: 39,962,023 — Total deaths: 648,656 (Courtesy axios.com)

Why Are China's Bitcoin Miners Moving To Texas?



Quick Look

China's ban on cryptocurrency mining has forced bitcoin entrepreneurs to flee overseas. Many are heading to Texas, which is quickly becoming the next global cryptocurrency capital.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

When China announced a crackdown on bitcoin mining and trading in May, Kevin Pan, CEO of Chinese cryptocurrency mining company Poolin, got on a flight the next day to leave the country.

"We decided to move out, once [and] for all. [We'll] never come back again," Mr Pan told the BBC.

Headquartered in Hong Kong, Poolin is the second largest bitcoin mining network in the world, with most of its operations in mainland China. The country was home to around 70% of global bitcoin mining power, until the clampdown sent the price of bitcoin into a tailspin and caught miners off guard.

Now China's "bitcoin refugees" are urgently scrambling to find a new home, whether in neighbouring Kazakhstan, Russia or North America, because for bitcoin miners, time is literally money.



"We had to find a new location for the [bitcoin mining] machines," Poolin's vice-president Alejandro De La Torre

said. "Because every minute that the machine is not on, it's not making money."

In what some call the "Great Mining Migration," the Poolin executives are among the many bitcoin miners who have recently landed in a place reputed as part of America's wild west: Austin, Texas

Bitcoins are a digital currency with no physical form - they exist and are exchanged only online.

They are created when a computer 'mines' the money by solving a complex set of maths problems and that is how bitcoin 'miners' who run the computers earn the currency.

This takes a lot of energy. As a new form of money that transcends national boundaries, there is also much confusion and potential to run afoul of government rules - so two things bitcoin entrepreneurs value are cheap electricity and a relaxed regulatory environment.

The Lone Star State fits the bill to a tee.



New frontier for bitcoin mining

For Mr Pan, Texas felt like home almost instantly. Days after his arrival, he was gifted an AR-15 rifle, which he says he may use to "hunt hogs from a helicopter" one day.

While the shooting ranges and Texas barbecue provide for welcome entertainment, legal protection for business is the major attraction for the bitcoin miners. "What happened to us in China won't happen in the US," Mr De La Torre says.



Kevin Pan (left) and Alejandro De La Torre.

Governor of Texas Greg Abbott has been a vocal supporter for cryptocurrency. "It's happening! Texas will be the crypto leader," he tweeted in June. In the same month, the Lone Star State became the second US state after Wyoming to recognise blockchain and cryptocurrency in its commercial law, paving the way for crypto businesses to operate in the state.

Many Chinese bitcoin companies have looked to Texas for stability and opportunity. Shenzhen-based firm BIT Mining has planned to invest \$26 million to build a data centre in the state, while Beijing-based Bitmain is expanding its facility in Rockdale, Texas. This small town with around 5,600 residents once housed one of the world's largest aluminium plants, and now it's emerging as the next global hub for bitcoin mining.

There might be another underlying connection between the industry and the state, as De La Torre says that bitcoiners and Texans share the same values. "Texans take their freedom and rights very seriously, and so do we bitcoiners." Experts believe China's bitcoin crackdown was motivated by having greater

control over the financial markets, and it may become a boon for America. "The migration benefits the US in terms of talent acquisition and furthering the innovation ecosystem," says Kevin Desouza, a business professor at the Queensland University of Technology who has done research on China's digital currency policy. In return, the bitcoin miners get access to a thriving and innovative community, as well as more diverse sources of capital, according to Prof Desouza.



China was once the world's centre of bitcoin mining.

Energy and political risks

Other than a stable regulatory environment, the energy-hungry industry is hunting for cheap electricity in Texas. Texas has some of the cheapest energy prices in the world, due to its deregulated power grid. Consumers enjoy more choices of electricity providers, which encourage providers to lower prices to stay competitive. During peaks of electricity demand, bitcoin farms can even sell unused power back to the grid.

Although El Salvador is set to become the first country to adopt bitcoin as a national currency, bitcoin miners prefer the US because of its well-developed electrical infrastructure, says Mr

De La Torre.

But some analysts warn that the "Great Mining Migration" may lead to serious repercussions, as cities and towns struggle to meet the huge energy appetite.

In February, blackouts following a deadly snowstorm left millions of homes and businesses in Texas without power for days. More than 200 people died. During the power outage, bitcoin farms were compensated to stay offline.



The increased scrutiny of Chinese companies in America may also lead to more attention on these mining newcomers. Texas recently passed a law that prevents "hostile foreign actors" from accessing critical infrastructure, including its power grid. The new law was reportedly prompted by a Chinese billionaire's plan to build a wind farm in southwest Texas. Critics allege that the project could be used to hack into the Texas energy grid and to gather intelligence from a nearby US military base.

Prof Desouza says that while access to electricity grids is unlikely to be an issue for bitcoin miners in the short term, political risk will continue to evolve.

The bitcoin miners do miss something in China - cheap labour cost and speedy construction.

According to Mr Pan, while a new bitcoin farm takes up to five months to build in China, it could take as long as 18 months in Texas. Global shipping prices have also skyrocketed during the pandemic, making it significantly more expensive to ship mining machines from China to the US.

Despite the costly and time-consuming efforts, Mr Pan says his company is committed to settle in Texas, "It's a free land, and a lot of bitcoiners are here," he says, "so we feel: 'whoa, family reunion.'" (<https://www.bbc.com/>)