



JUDGE CALLS TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S LATEST RESPONSE ON DEPORTATION FLIGHTS 'WOEFULLY INSUFFICIENT' - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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U.S. District Judge James Boasberg, chief judge of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, stands for a portrait at E. Barrett Prettyman Federal Courthouse in Washington, March 16, 2023.

A federal judge instructed the Trump administration on Thursday to explain why its failure to turn around [flights carrying deportees to El Salvador](#) did not violate his court order in a growing showdown between the judicial and executive branches.

U.S. District Judge Jeb Boasberg demanded answers after flights carrying Venezuelan immigrants alleged by [the Trump administration to be gang members](#) landed in El Salvador after the judge temporarily blocked deportations under [an 18th century wartime law](#). Boasberg had directed the administration to return to the U.S. planes that were already in the air when he ordered the halt.

Boasberg had given the administration until noon Thursday to either provide more details about the flights or make a claim that it must be withheld because it would harm "state secrets." The administration resisted the judge's request, calling it an "unnecessary judicial fishing" expedition.

In a written order, Boasberg called Trump officials' latest response "woefully insufficient." The judge said the administration "again evaded its obligations" by merely repeating "the same general information about the flights." And he ordered the administration to "show cause," as to why it didn't violate his court order to turn around the planes, increasing the prospect that he may consider holding administration officials in contempt of court.

The Justice Department has said the judge's verbal directions did not count, that only his written order needed to be followed and that it couldn't apply to flights that had already left the U.S. A Justice Department spokesperson said Thursday that it "continues to believe that the court's superfluous questioning of sensitive national security information is inappropriate judicial overreach."

A U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement official told the judge Thursday the administration needed more time to decide whether it would invoke the state secrets privilege in an effort to block the information's release.

Boasberg ordered Trump officials by Friday to submit a sworn declaration by a person "with direct involvement in the Cabinet-level discussions" about the state secrets privilege and to tell the court by next Tuesday whether the administration will invoke it.

In a deepening conflict between the judicial and executive branch, Trump and many of his allies have called for impeaching Boasberg, who was nominated to the federal bench by Democratic President Barack Obama. In a rare statement earlier this week, Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts [rejected such calls](#), saying "impeachment is not an appropriate response to disagreement concerning a judicial decision."