

# **“Migrants lost factory job in China”: Vietnam Cracks Down on Growing Wave of Migrant Workers From China**

Monday 25 January 2021, by [LONG Qiao](#) (Date first published: 29 October 2020).

**Vietnamese authorities say they are cracking down on a growing number of migrants crossing the border illegally from neighboring China, in an apparent reversal of previous trends.**

## Contents

- [Migrants lost factory jobs](#)
- [China's economy 'deteriorating](#)

Police in the border area of Lang Son in northern Vietnam, across the border from the southwestern Chinese Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, recently arrested 20 foreign nationals and three Vietnamese drivers on suspicion of smuggling.

Lt. Col. Nguyen Chang Shan of the No. 2 Highway Checkpoint traffic police said Lang Son police had intercepted a group of “stowaways” at around 1.00 p.m. local time on Oct. 26 hiding in two Toyota off-road vehicles and one Toyota commercial vehicle, traveling down the highway from Quang Ninh in the direction of Haiphong and Hanoi, according to a Vietnamese news account on China's Tencent Weibo social media platform.



*Hundreds of Chinese technicians gather at the Sino-Vietnamese Friendship Pass in Guangxi hoping to find work in Vietnam, Oct. 20, 2020.*

*Screenshot from video*

“The arrested persons were taken to the Lang Son Public Security Bureau for further investigation by the police,” the report said.

Kuo Hai-kuang, a Taiwanese businessman based in Binh Duong province, said there have been a growing number of migrants from China seeking work in Vietnam since the coronavirus pandemic hit the national economy at the start of this year.

“There have been a lot more in recent years, most of them coming down from the north [of Vietnam],” Kuo said. “They cross the border illegally on minor roads and paths.”

"They come over from Guangxi, and some from Yunnan province, on the Chinese side."

Kuo said the detainees will likely be held in custody for a time, before being fined and repatriated.

"Vietnamese police don't mess about," he said. "They lock you up, investigate, then they drive you right back where you came from."

### **Migrants lost factory jobs**

The Vietnam Public Security Border Bureau has reported arresting more than 100 stowaways from Guangxi, China, in the area near the Chinese border, according to state media reports.

The migrants had lost jobs in factories in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong, and had been hoping to find work in Vietnam, state media reported.

In one case, border patrols in the northern Vietnamese province of Lao Cai found 76 smuggled migrants from China, while a further 25 Chinese nationals were found by police in Ha Giang province.

On Oct. 20, video footage of around 1,000 Chinese migrant workers gathering near the border checkpoint in Guangxi, readying themselves to seek work in Vietnam, was posted to social media.

While they may struggle to find work in larger, foreign-invested companies, such workers are often quietly taken on by Chinese-invested firms across the border, according to Kuo.

"Most wouldn't dare [to hire them], except for mainland Chinese companies," he said. "But we are talking about small companies, not the larger ones."

A Guangxi-based businessman surnamed Chen told RFA that many are lured by the promise of stronger economic growth and a more liberal form of government in Vietnam than is currently available back home.

"Right now, Vietnam's economic development is like Shenzhen back in the day," Chen said. "It is probably much stronger than the open areas of mainland China."

"That's basically what is behind the movement of labor into Vietnam," he said. "The pay and conditions there are better, especially for skilled workers, so a lot of people are going. A friend of mine went."

### **China's economy 'deteriorating'**

Beijing resident Sun Yuchen said the reversed trend is food for thought for those living under the rule of ruling Chinese Communist Party general secretary Xi Jinping.

"At the very least, illegal migration to Vietnam shows that there aren't that many opportunities in China," Sun said. "It shows that the economy in mainland China is deteriorating."

Reports have also emerged that China is constructing a wall along its border with Vietnam in a bid to stem the outward flow of smuggled migrant workers.

Video footage recently uploaded to social media revealed the construction of a two-meter-high

concrete wall in the border regions.

Some social media comments appeared to confirm the content of the video.

“It’s not surprising that they are in such a hurry to build a wall along the Sino-Vietnamese border,” one Guangxi resident told RFA, adding sarcastically: “It’s to prevent [Chinese citizens] from going astray and suffering all that freedom and democracy entails.”

Some said the wall would eventually stretch the entire length of the 1,300 land border between the two countries, but RFA was unable to confirm this.

Back in 2015, when Beijing was keen to stem the flow of illegal migrant workers in the opposite direction, from Vietnam into China, official media announced the government would build an eight-kilometer fence in Guangxi to prevent cross-border “smuggling.”

The apparent reversal of fortune has led Chinese social media users to quip that while the U.S. built a wall to prevent people from getting in, Beijing needs to build one to stop its own citizens from escaping.

Reported by **Qiao Long** for RFA’s Mandarin Service. Translated and edited by **Luisetta Mudie**.

---

---

## **P.S.**

- Radio Free Asia. 2020-10-29:  
<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/workers-10292020111656.html>