

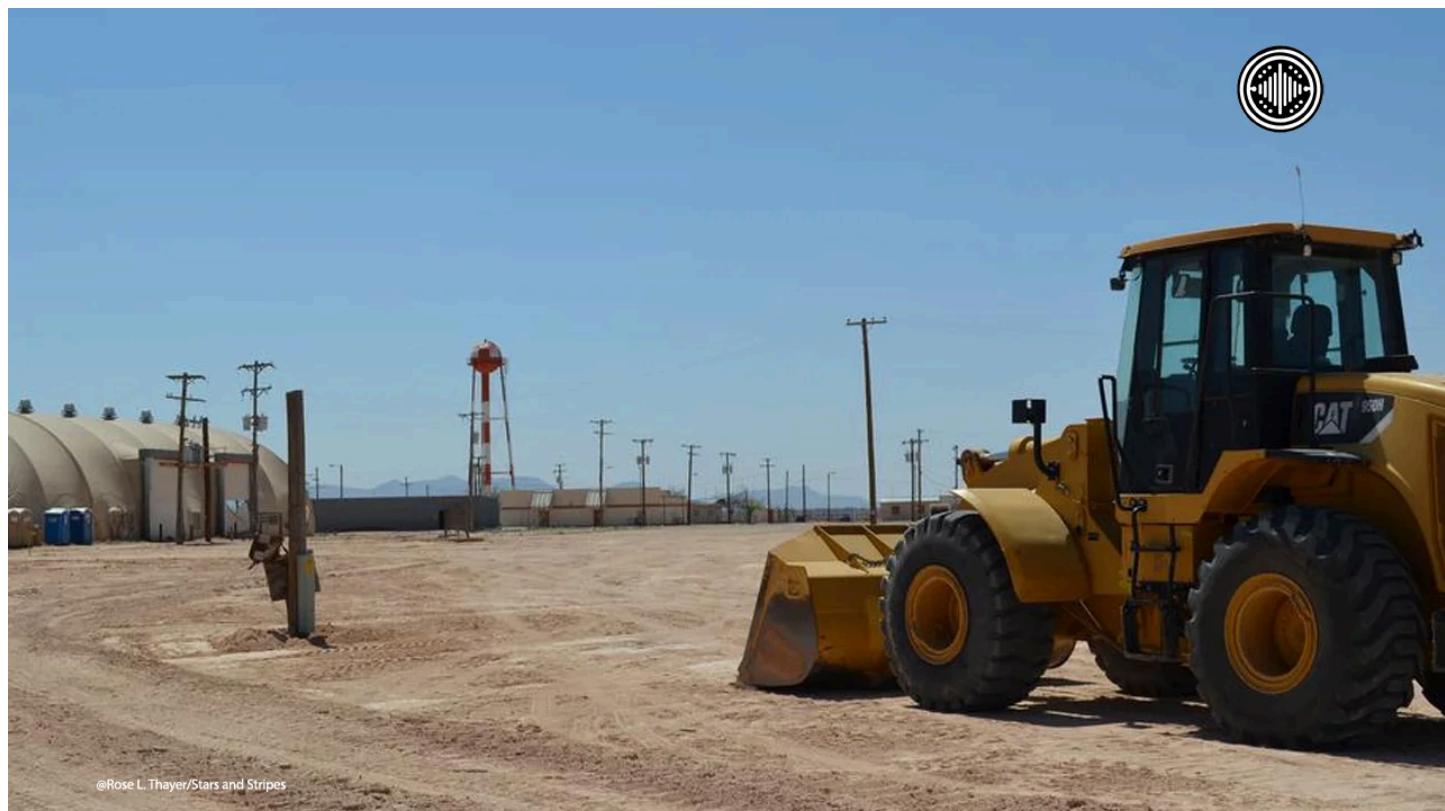
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Pentagon Begins Construction on 5,000-Bed Migrant Detention Facility at Fort Bliss, Texas

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@Rose L. Thayer/Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) has confirmed the development of a large-scale migrant detention facility at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas. Once completed, the center is expected to become the largest federal detention site for illegal immigrants in American history, with a total capacity of up to 5,000 beds. Initial operations are expected to begin later this month, with the first 1,000-bed phase already under construction.

Pentagon Press Secretary Kingsley Wilson shared details during a briefing on Thursday, noting that the initial capacity for detaining 1,000 individuals would be operational by mid to late August. “Once DOD achieves initial stand up, we will finish construction for up to

5,000 beds in the weeks and months ahead,” Wilson said. She described the facility’s mission as critical to carrying out the deportation of individuals in the country unlawfully, aligning with President Donald Trump’s executive directive aimed at enhancing national security and enforcing immigration laws.

The initiative forms part of a broader national effort to manage illegal immigration through enhanced detention infrastructure and increased federal-state cooperation. Fort Bliss, a key U.S. Army post near the U.S.-Mexico border, was previously used for temporary migrant housing and is now being repurposed for long-term detainment and deportation operations.

This announcement comes on the heels of a similar effort in Indiana, where Governor Mike Braun confirmed the creation of a state-run facility known as the “Speedway Slammer.” The detention site, located at the Miami Correctional Center between Indianapolis and Fort Wayne, is expected to hold up to 1,000 migrants. Braun emphasized Indiana’s leadership role in addressing border security and praised the partnership with federal officials. “We are proud to work with President Trump and Secretary Noem as they remove the worst of the worst with this innovative partnership,” Braun said earlier this week.

The funding behind these initiatives is tied to a reconciliation bill signed into law by President Trump last month. The legislation supports key immigration enforcement programs, including the 287(g) program, which enables local law enforcement agencies to work directly with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). It also provides funding for 80,000 ICE detention beds nationwide.

Under this framework, the Trump administration continues to encourage voluntary deportation for undocumented immigrants without additional criminal charges. According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), those who choose to leave voluntarily may be eligible for a \$1,000 cash incentive and free transportation, with the possibility of applying for legal reentry in the future.

In Florida, another federally supported facility, nicknamed “Alligator Alcatraz,” began operating earlier this summer. Located at a repurposed airport in the Everglades and overseen by Governor Ron DeSantis, the center currently holds around 2,000 individuals and is expected to double in capacity. Funded initially by the state, it is now receiving support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Deportation flights from the site began in late July.

Although these projects have drawn criticism from immigration and environmental advocacy groups, state and federal officials maintain that expanding detention capabilities is necessary for enforcing immigration laws and protecting U.S. communities.