

Defense Secretary Hegseth Outlines Plan to House Migrants on Military Bases

July 19, 2025

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Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth informed Congress this week of a proposal to temporarily detain undocumented immigrants at two U.S. military bases, Camp Atterbury in Indiana and Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey. The move aims to expand detention capacity without compromising military readiness.

Hegseth asserted that the initiative would not interfere with base operations or training schedules. The proposal supports President Trump's broader immigration enforcement strategy, which seeks to increase detention capacity from approximately 60,000 beds to a projected 100,000, according to border czar Tom Homan.

The announcement has sparked criticism from national and local leaders. New Jersey's Democratic congressional delegation argued that using military resources for immigration detention threatens military preparedness and may open the door to ICE raids in civilian communities. Indiana Representative Andre Carson also raised concerns about detainee conditions, saying his questions to the administration have not been adequately addressed. Civil rights advocates, including the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey, warned that the plan risks undermining constitutional values and sets a troubling precedent.

Historically, both bases have accommodated refugees, hosting Afghan evacuees and Ukrainian families in recent years. The concept of using military installations for immigration purposes is not unprecedented: during both Trump's first term and President Obama's administration, bases were occasionally used to detain migrants, especially children and families.

While no timeline has been provided for when detainees might arrive, and it remains unclear whether additional bases are being considered, Hegseth emphasized the urgent need for available "bed space" to meet detention pressure. The proposal is part of a continuing effort by the current administration to enforce immigration laws more aggressively, even against individuals with no prior criminal records.

As the plan advances, lawmakers from both states and civil rights groups promise continued oversight. They say the conditions, legality, and operational impacts must be thoroughly examined before any detainees are transferred. Military officials have yet to publicly confirm coordination details or how the influx would integrate with routine military activity.

With enforcement efforts intensifying and detention capacity nearing its limit, the announcement raises important questions about the balance between national defense priorities and immigration policy execution. The coming weeks will likely determine whether military facilities will play a significant role in the nation's immigration strategy and how communities and lawmakers respond to the shift.