

# Trump administration rapidly expands Guantánamo migrant concentration camp

Andrea Lobo  
10 February 2025

Less than two weeks after ordering the detention of as many as 30,000 undocumented people at the US naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, the Trump administration's broader aim has become clear. It is arrogating to itself the power to jail anyone it pleases in what amounts to an offshore torture center subject to no legal restraints.

On Sunday, the *Washington Post* published satellite imagery showing that military personnel have erected more than 185 tents and temporary structures at the site, which initially had a capacity for about 120 detainees.

The *Post* also interviewed several human rights lawyers familiar with the detention center who warned that migrants held in Guantánamo have entered a “legal black hole” and that even their names are being withheld from the public.

During the so-called “War on Terror,” Guantánamo became notorious as a military-CIA detention camp, where hundreds of suspected members of “terrorist groups” kidnapped from around the world were subjected to cruel and degrading methods of torture and abuse.

The White House initially issued a memorandum on January 29 ordering the expansion to “full capacity” of Guantánamo's migrant detention wing “in order to halt the border invasion, dismantle criminal cartels and restore national sovereignty.”

Within a few days, military personnel began arriving at the base in Cuba to start pitching tents, and the first military flight with 10 detainees arrived on February 4. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) claimed all detainees were known members of the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua, which Trump has designated as a foreign terrorist organization.

The following Friday, DHS Secretary Kristi Noem personally traveled to Guantánamo, where she declared: “President Donald Trump has been very clear: Guantánamo Bay will hold the worst of the worst.”

About 50 men have been sent so far to the island on five military flights, with a Pentagon spokesperson and DHS Secretary Noem making assurances over the weekend that migrants are being held under ICE custody—not military—as

a “temporary solution” until transport is arranged to their countries of origin, and that “due process” and “international humanitarian standards” are being respected.

But it only took hours for all assurances about democratic rights and claims that detainees are gang members to be exposed as outright lies.

J. Wells Dixon, a lawyer for a current detainee in Guantánamo, explained to the *Post* that the distinction of being held under ICE custody at a military detention center is not a real one, noting that Camp 6, where deportees are being sent, “is inextricably intertwined with military detention.” Under current legislation, only people affiliated with groups allegedly behind the 9/11 attacks can be held under military custody.

The prison, Dixon added, “was designed to break detainees psychologically.” Other interviewees pointed to the unsanitary and inhumane conditions in Guantánamo and noted that the combined capacity of the migrant and military sites is 220.

On Sunday, a US federal judge barred the deportation of three Venezuelan men to Guantánamo in response to a complaint that states that the migrants have been falsely accused of having ties to the Tren de Aragua gang.

Finally, the publication *Migrant Insider* exposed that one of the 10 detainees in the first flight to Guantánamo was a legal Venezuelan asylum seeker, Luis Alberto Castillo Rivera, who had no criminal record but was reportedly accused of being a gang member for having a tattoo of the Air Jordan logo with a crown.

Most significantly, his relatives found out through photos shared on social media by DHS that the 23-year-old had been sent to Guantánamo. Just the day before, on February 3, he had called to say he was about to be released into the United States pending an asylum hearing.

As of this writing, the ICE website shows that he is being held by the agency in Florida, raising the alarm that records are being tampered with and the ability to track detainees eliminated.

A stark warning must be issued to all workers in the

United States, irrespective of legal status: Anyone targeted by the Trump administration can be seized on this basis. Given the total lack of transparency, not even the claim that these are migrants and not US citizens can be believed.

The Trump administration has made clear that it seeks unchecked executive powers with total disregard for constitutional legality.

Trump himself has relished the blatantly unconstitutional prospect of deporting US citizens to El Salvador, after that country's fascistic President Nayib Bukele offered to detain US convicts in its sprawling "Terrorism Confinement Center," where there have been numerous reports of torture and inmate deaths.

Last Tuesday, Trump said he hoped to "get these animals out of our country and put them in a different country under the supervision of somebody" that could "keep them because these people will never be any good."

While not making clear the scope of "these people" targeted for deportation, Trump has repeatedly identified those who oppose his right-wing policies as criminals who should be investigated and jailed.

The entire sham framework of a dangerous "invasion" by migrants is being used by the Trump administration to justify a broader war on the social and democratic rights of the working class.

The Democratic Party has refused to oppose the Trump administration's deportations to Guantánamo or the overall push to set up a presidential dictatorship. Not only have Democrats in some cases provided key votes for the congressional confirmation of Trump's cabinet nominees, but past Democratic administrations have been directly responsible for laying much of the groundwork for Trump's agenda, including in Guantánamo.

In the 1990s, the Democratic administration of Bill Clinton detained tens of thousands of Haitian and Cuban migrants at the Guantánamo naval base, expanding on a policy that began under his predecessor Republican George H.W. Bush, while Barack Obama reneged on his loudly proclaimed promise to shut down the prison complex in Guantánamo entirely.

Just last August, the Biden administration awarded a contract to Akima Infrastructure Protection to expand the Guantánamo Migrant Operations Center ("GMOC"). This was followed in September by a report issued by the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), exposing the secret holding of migrants at the facility in "inhumane" conditions indefinitely.

There are ample historical precedents that workers must be aware of as the US military and intelligence apparatus whisks away detainees to tent camps in the middle of the Caribbean.

Less than two months after Hitler was installed in power in January 1933, the first concentration camp was inaugurated at Dachau as a prototype. It initially interned political opponents, chiefly left-wing workers and intellectuals belonging to the Communist Party and Social Democratic Party, and was later expanded to imprison Jews, other minorities and others targeted by the Nazis.

Closer to home, during the 1970s and 1980s, the US backed or directly orchestrated the installation of fascist military dictatorships across most of South and Central America that conducted the kidnapping, torture, and murder of hundreds of thousands of political opponents and suspected leftists, in a practice now widely known as "disappearances."

The torture chambers under Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet employed the most infamous methods, developed in close collaboration with former Nazi officials and CIA "advisers." As in Germany, the detention camps across South America were often used for slave labor.

Now there is a clear and present danger that the US oligarchy will seek to use this accumulated "knowhow," further developed under the "War on Terror," to preemptively suppress the imminent and already emerging mass opposition in the American and international working class.

The struggle to defend democratic rights requires the building of a socialist movement in the working class. The Socialist Equality Party is spearheading the development of a mass movement of the working class, directed not only against Trump and the Republicans, but against the entire political establishment. The fight against dictatorship is inseparable from the fight against the system that produces it—capitalism. We urge all those who want to take up this fight to join and build the Socialist Equality Party.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**