

CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT OF IMMIGRATION DETENTION AT NAVAL STATION GUANTÁNAMO BAY



Published October 9, 2026

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On August 10, 2026, Senate staff visited Naval Station Guantánamo Bay (NSGB) to conduct oversight of detention operations.

General Immigration Detention Operations at Naval Station Guantánamo Bay

On January 29, 2025, President Trump issued an unprecedented order to the Department of Defense (DoD) to begin transporting immigrants from the U.S. to detain them at NSGB in Cuba. Since the first removal flight from the U.S. to NSGB on February 4, 2025, the Trump Administration has sent approximately 852 immigrant adult men from the U.S. to detention at NSGB, costing U.S. taxpayers over \$100 million.

Key Takeaways

- There were no immigrants in detention at NSGB during the Congressional staff visit, but a significant number of personnel remained stationed at NSGB in a constant state of readiness to receive additional immigrant detainees. This comes at a significant cost to taxpayers and undermines military readiness.
- Parts of the facilities did not appear to meet U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention standards; for example, at the time of the visit, Camp VI was not equipped to provide secure, confidential access to counsel for detained immigrants.
- ICE contractors and DoD officials often provided contradictory and unclear answers as to how the facilities met immigration detention standards and what standards applied, including government conditions of confinement, medical care, and access to counsel.
- Congressional staff did not have an opportunity to speak to immigrants to determine how the facilities implemented ICE detention standards because the government was not detaining immigrants there at the time of the staff visit. Some of the information provided conflicted with public reporting on immigration detention at NSGB.
- Longstanding law dictates that ICE maintain custody and control of immigrants, but DoD the number of DoD officials greatly outweighed the number of ICE or ICE-contracted officials.

Overview of Congressional Staff Visit

During the Congressional staff visit on August 10, staff observed that the Migrant Operations Center (MOC) was primarily run by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) contractor Akima Infrastructure Protection (AIP), a subsidiary of the contractor Akima. Historically, the government used the MOC to temporarily house migrants interdicted at sea who were undergoing the fear screening process. The MOC had never housed immigrants flown *from* the U.S. to NSGB. Immigrants from the U.S. have also been detained at Camp VI, a military prison

that was constructed for the purpose of detaining for law-of-war detainees. Until February 4, 2025, Camp VI had only been used for the detention of law-of-war detainees. Law-of-war detainees are individuals whom the U.S. detains in connection with the armed conflict with al-Qaeda and the Taliban following the 9/11 attacks.

During the Congressional staff visit, the government was not detaining any individuals for purposes of immigration detention, but numerous government personnel were stationed at NSGB for this mission, including 380 individuals from the Department of Defense Joint Task Force Southern Guard, 13 ICE personnel, 37 AIP contractors, and 15 individuals from ICE Health Service Corps. Due to the ratio of DoD to DHS personnel at Camp VI, it was the staff's observation that Camp VI appeared to be primarily run by DoD with the assistance of AIP and ICE. At its peak, roughly 178 immigrants were detained at NSGB. Although the Administration has claimed that NSGB is being used as a transfer point, staff were informed that the average length of stay is between 20 and 30 days, and the DoD OIG reported the longest recorded stay at NSGB was 101 days.

Migrant Operations Center

The MOC is located on the Leeward side of the base near the Leeward Airfield. Under the current detention operation, AIP contractors run the MOC, which has the capacity to detain 50 immigrants. Currently, the second floor of the MOC is not operational. As of August 10, 2026, according to the AIP contractors, the maximum number of detainees the government has held at the MOC was 51 people.

Staff viewed one of the rooms at the MOC that included four bunks, a bathroom, a shower, a television, and a refrigerator for water. Inside of the room was a laminated copy of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Naval Station Guantánamo Bay, Cuba "Illegal Alien Holding Operations" handbook ("ICE handbook") in English, which AIP contractors informed staff was also available in Spanish.¹ It was unclear to Congressional staff whether AIP employees affirmatively placed these handbooks inside of every room or if individuals who were detained at the MOC needed to affirmatively request these handbooks. According to AIP personnel, individuals detained at the MOC are provided with one hour minimum of recreation outdoors. Congressional staff did not see any recreation equipment available, and the space designated for recreation outdoors was a small plot of land with a picnic table.

- **Detention Standards.** AIP contractors informed staff that ICE is following the Performance-Based National Detention Standards (PBNDS) 2025 with some modifications. For example, there is no commissary or work program available to detained individuals.

¹ Notably, nationals from all over the world have been detained at NSGB, including many who are not from predominantly English- or Spanish-speaking countries. To date, nationals held at NSGB have been from the following countries: Venezuela, Honduras, Ecuador, Guatemala, Colombia, El Salvador, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Peru, Nicaragua, Cambodia, Egypt, Guinea, Senegal, Vietnam, Haiti, China, India, Romania, Great Britain, Liberia, Somalia, Micronesia, Kenya, Myanmar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Marshall Islands, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Russia, Sierra Leone, Iran, Nigeria, Eritrea, Cuba, and Somalia.

- **Language Access.** AIP contractors reported that they have personnel who speak English, Spanish, and Kreyòl to communicate with the individuals detained at the MOC. AIP contractors also said that they have access to a language line to communicate with detained immigrants who speak other languages.
- **Signs.** The following signs were posted on the walls of the general areas of the MOC, including the entrance and the hallways:
 - ICE Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Poster (*English version*)
 - ICE PREA Pamphlet (*English version*)
 - Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) Complaint Poster (*English/Spanish*)
 - ICE Windward Housing Facility, Religious Services Program (*English*)
 - MOC Detainee Request Form (*English*)
 - Health Request Form (*English*)
 - Legal Calls NSGB Poster (*English*)
 - American Bar Association (ABA) Detention Information Line Poster (*English and Spanish explanation*)
- **Access to Counsel and Phone Calls.** Unlike other ICE detention facilities, attorneys are not permitted to visit their detained clients in person at NSGB. At the MOC, AIP contractors showed Congressional staff a separate room with a door where detained individuals are permitted to make phone calls to counsel. The room appeared to be a storage room that had been equipped with eight phones, with no separation between the phones. This room has a glass window for guards to observe the room. AIP said that these calls are confidential and unmonitored, but it was unclear to staff whether the room was soundproof.

There were a few signs on the walls of the room, including the ABA Detention Information Line (*English and Spanish explanation*) and the DHS Office of Inspector General Complaint poster (*English/Spanish*). Unlike other ICE detention centers, there were no signs or speed dial numbers available for government agencies (such as the Board of Immigration Appeals, Executive Office for Immigration Review, or DHS OIG) and embassy and/or consulate speed dials. For non-legal calls, there was a separate room with 22 phones available for individuals to call their families.

Camp VI

Camp VI is on the Windward side of the island, and this facility was built and used for law-of-war detainees. Due to this Administration's immigration operations at NSGB, the government transferred the law-of-war detainees to Camp V. Now, DoD, AIP contractors, and ICE jointly run immigration detention operations at Camp VI. DoD personnel escort immigrants via ferry from the Leeward Side of the island where the airfield is located to Camp VI. There are 350 detention beds at Camp VI, but during the time of our visit, only 270-280 detention beds were available due to maintenance. Each cell has one bunk with two beds. For each pod that is in use at Camp VI, DoD and AIP contractors told Congressional staff there will be 23 DoD servicemembers on duty per shift, along with two AIP contractors and one ICE officer. There are also four to six individuals available from ICE Health Service Corps.

During the visit on August 10, 2026, staff did not see any informational signs *at all* in Camp VI, including ICE PREA signage, the ABA Detention Information Line, the Legal Calls NSGB signage, or the DHS OIG complaint poster. In addition, there was no ICE handbook available in Camp VI, though AIP contractors indicated that the government uses the same handbook for the MOC and Camp VI.

- **Detention Standards.** Despite several requests to the DoD, ICE, and API personnel present during the visit, none of the personnel seemed to know which detention standards were in place at Camp VI. When asked which standards applied, DoD personnel stated that they adhered to Army Regulation 190-47, which establishes the core policies, procedures, and institutional standards for managing U.S. military prisoners, correctional facilities, and associated temporary detention areas. The API contractor quickly added that they adhere to ICE detention standards (Performance Based National Detention Standards or PBNDS 2025). When asked how they handled differences between the two standards, DoD personnel and contractors stated that there were a series of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) governing the disagreements. The government personnel present did not provide congressional staff with SOPs.
- **Access to Counsel and Phone Calls.** As of the publication date of this fact sheet, no attorneys representing immigrants detained at NSGB have been able to visit their clients in person, unlike detainees in the U.S. As of August 10, 2026, there was no ability to make confidential legal calls from Camp VI. DoD personnel informed Congressional staff that they had just built a new structure for phone calls approximately two to three weeks prior to the staff visit, which while constructed, was not yet operational. The new structure was a modular building. Staff toured this modular building, which consisted of one large room. No informational signs were posted in the room. There were four phones for family calls that did not have any working connection. In this same room, there were four booths made of plywood that were designated for confidential legal calls. Inside of the booths, there were four additional phones that also did not have a working connection. These phone booths were not soundproof—the walls were extremely thin, the phone booths did not extend all the way up to the ceiling, and there were large holes in the phone booths for wiring the phones, which had not yet been completed. DoD personnel walked staff over to the location that they said was previously used for detainees to make calls. Whatever structure was previously there had been removed; all that remained was a concrete slab.

Recent Updates

After eight consecutive weeks of detaining zero immigrants at NSGB, on August 27, 2026, the U.S. sent eight Somali immigrants with final orders of removal to NSGB. Media reports indicate that, as of September 15, 2026, ICE deleted information pertaining to all individuals with final orders of removal from its online detainee locator system, including these eight individuals detained at NSGB. On Thursday, September 24, 2026, ICE reportedly removed these individuals to Nairobi, where they were transferred to a Somali airline for the final flight to Mogadishu, Somalia. Congressional staff understand that the Administration is continuing to detain immigrants at NSGB.