



## The Justice Department Will No Longer Use Private Prisons

Kevin Daley

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The U.S. Department of Justice has announced it will no longer use of private prisons, in response to an Inspector General finding that the facilities do not maintain adequate levels of safety and security.

DOJ will terminate or decline to renew its contracts with privately operated prisons, indicates a memo circulated by Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates to officials at the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

“They simply do not provide the same level of correctional services, programs, and resources; they do not save substantially on costs; and as noted in a recent report by the Department’s Office of Inspector General, they do not maintain the same level of safety and security,” she wrote of the private facilities.

The probe found significantly higher instances of violence, lockdowns, possession of contraband, and systemic failure to implement best disciplinary practices.”We found that in a majority of the categories we examined, contract prisons incurred more safety and security incidents per capita than comparable BOP institutions,” the report states.

The probe also documented four prison riots directly attributable to poor conditions in the facilities.

**December 2008:** “the Reeves County Detention Center had a riot on its Compound III and Compounds I and II, respectively. A 2015 Office of the Inspector General (OIG) audit of the Reeves Detention Center Compounds I and II cited a BOP After-Action Report from the 2009 riot: “While low staffing levels alone were not the direct cause of the disturbances, they directly affected Security and Health Services functions.”

**February 2011:** “inmates at the Big Springs Correctional Center physically assaulted prison staff. The contractor reported that the inmates were dissatisfied with the staff’s response to a medical emergency on the compound that resulted in the death of an inmate.”

**May 2012:** “a Correctional Officer was killed and 20 people were injured during a riot at the Adams County Correctional Center. The disturbance involved approximately 250 inmates who, according to contemporaneous media reports, were angry about low-quality food and medical care, as well as about Correctional Officers the inmates believed were disrespectful.”

**February 2015:** “at the Willacy County Correctional Center, inmates set fires and caused extensive damage to the prison. As a result of the damage to the prison and the BOP’s determination that the contractor could no longer perform the required services, the BOP terminated its contract for this facility.”

The announcement comes shortly after Mother Jones published a damning 35,000-word review of their investigation into a private prison in Louisiana.

Tim Lynch, director of the Cato Institute’s Project on Criminal Justice, says that private prisons are problematic, but that today’s development may be of limited impact, given the current state of the penitential system. Lynch is a critic of private prisons.

“This move is just a short term blow to the private prison industry, but it remains to be seen what the long term impact is going to be because the overwhelming number of prisons in the United States are administered by state and local government,” he told The Daily Caller News Foundation.

“It remains to be seen what state and local policy makers will do, whether this is a bellwether for decision-making at the state level,” he added. Lynch also said the directive could be undone by a future administration.

Lynch also said that the federal prison system is itself troubled. “I think the comparison should be a fair one,” he told TheDCNF of the juxtaposition between public and private facilities. “A lot of our government-run prisons are nothing to write home about. There definitely have been abuses at private prisons, but we have to keep the criticisms in perspective.”

“MTC is disappointed to learn that the Department of Justice (DOJ) is planning to end the use of contract prisons within the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) system,” Management and Training Corporation, one of the private corrections company contracted with BOP said of the announcement. “Contract prisons have long provided valuable, cost efficient, and effective services to the BOP. If the DOJ’s decision to end the use of contract prisons were based solely on declining inmate populations, there may be some justification, but to base this decision on cost, safety and security, and programming is wrong.”

Shares of Corporation Co. of America, one of the largest private corrections companies in the country, were down more than 40 percent at midday trade.