Where Cities Help Detain Immigrants

The Atlantic Cities

July 10, 2018 Tuesday

Length: 2734 words

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Body

Taylor, Texas, is a suburb around 30 miles northeast of Austin that boasts its history as a railroad hub and small-town authenticity. ***In*** 2016, more than half of Williamson Countyâ(EURO)"where Taylor is seatedâ(EURO)" voted for Donald Trump. But recently, ***county*** officials decided not to help the president ***in*** his push to expand the ***detention*** of unauthorized migrants, including those seeking asylum.On June 26, ***in*** a regularly planned ***county*** court meeting, the future of Taylorâ(EURO)(TM)s T. Don Hutto ***detention center*** was first on the agenda. A ***county*** contractwith U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) requires it to oversee the 500-bed facility exclusively for migrant womenâ(EURO)"***in*** return for $8,000 per month and $1 daily for each detainee housed. Before the item was put to vote, Commissioner Terry Cook, the only Democrat on the Williamson ***County*** Court, made a passionate statement.â(EURO)oeIf the court does vote to terminate the contract, and I hope they do, no one should be celebrate or take credit for this termination. This does not solve that larger issue,â(EURO) she said to the audience, some of whom were holding up anti-Hutto signs. â(EURO)oeBut it does allow us to go back and perform core ***county*** functions of health, roads, safety, and all those other items that we are tasked with doing ***in*** Williamson ***County***, and every other ***county*** ***in*** the nation.â(EURO)When she finished, the council voted 4-1 to terminate the agreement, a decision that was greeted with a sharp eruption of claps and â(EURO)oewoo-hoos.â(EURO)Itâ(EURO)(TM)s not just Williamson ***County***, though.

In the last few weeks, a handful of localities have taken action to end contracts with federal immigration authorities to jail immigrants, as anti-***detention*** activists have long been pushing them to do, including Springfield, Oregon, and Sacramento, California. Even Atlanta, Georgia, is considering it. The Trump administrationâ(EURO)(TM)s practice of separating migrant families at the border, now suspended, has left localities scrambling to understand what role they play. And ***in*** some places, the crisis appears to have triggered a moral reckoning about the ways local governments participate ***in*** immigrant ***detention***.For those who are troubled by these relationships, take note: There are around 850 contracts between local and federal authorities to detain immigrants ***in*** 669 ***counties***, according to ICE data from November 2017.* Some of these facilities are primarily for immigrants. Many are local jails or ***county*** prisons that rent out beds to federal authorities for immigrant ***detention***.The majority of places where these contracts have sprung up voted for Trump ***in*** 2016, but there are several diverse, Democrat-leaning ***counties*** that have signed up to jail large numbers of immigrants, too. Some are even considered â(EURO)oesanctuary citiesâ(EURO) because they limit police cooperation with ICE.Hereâ(EURO)(TM)s what those relationships look like.Where have local governments contracted with the feds?CityLab and location intelligence company ESRI have mapped all the contracts local governments have with ICE and the U.S. Marshals Service (called intergovernmental service agreements) that can be used to detain immigrants, based on the most comprehensive dataset available. (Click through for the full-screen version.) Immigrantsâ(EURO)(TM) rights groups obtained this data, which goes up to November 2017, through a Freedom of Information (FOIA) request.The blue dots ***in*** the map above are facilities like local jails, operated by the city or ***county***; the green dots are facilities that might be owned or overseen by local governments, but are operated by private prison companies. The size of the dot corresponds with the average daily population ***in*** November 2017 at that facility, wherever that information was available.Clicking on a facility on the map above revealsdetails of its usage, contract terms (like the money itâ(EURO)(TM)s earning per day to take ***in*** immigrants), and results of its last government inspection, which

determines whether or not it is â(EURO)oeauthorizedâ(EURO) for use. Not all of the facilities on the map are â(EURO)oeonlineâ(EURO)â(EURO)"meaning, either theyâ(EURO)(TM)re not authorized, or not readily being used to detain immigrants right now. But as long as they have live contracts, the federal government can hypothetically utilizethem within a short time frame. Some of these contracts were first used back ***in*** the 1980s, and many others have come up under both Republican and Democrat administrations; both parties played a role ***in*** developing the current immigrant ***detention*** system.There were around 110 publicly operated facilities actively taking ***in*** immigrants ***in*** November 2017, per this data. The ones with the highest average daily populations: York ***County*** Prison ***in*** Pennsylvania, Essex ***County*** Correctional Facility and Hudson ***County*** Correctional Facility ***in*** New Jersey, Theo Lacy Facility ***in*** California, ***Glades County Detention Center*** ***in*** Florida, and Etowah ***County*** Jail ***in*** Alabama.What is the oversight of these facilities?To be â(EURO)oeauthorized,â(EURO) a facility needs to have passed the requisite number of inspections. But when the National Immigrant Justice ***Center*** (NIJC) analyzed this dataset, it found that even facilities where multiple people had diedâ(EURO)"some as â(EURO)oea result of medical neglectâ(EURO)â(EURO)"had been passing inspections since 2012. A report released ***in*** June 2018 by the Department of Homeland Securityâ(EURO)(TM)s Office of Inspector General found other reasons to question the rigor of government oversight. It concludedthat the inspections of ICE ***detention*** facilities were too infrequent and too broad. The particular type of inspection the government conducts at the local facilities with which it has contracts were â(EURO)oeuseless,â(EURO) according to ICE employees interviewed by the OIG. They were â(EURO)oevery, very, very difficult to fail,â(EURO) the ICE employees said ***in*** the report.â(EURO)oeThis report confirms what the people behind bars ***in*** immigration jails already know: Migrants ***in*** ***detention*** suffer abuses, rights deprivations, and neglect, and ICE has no interest ***in*** investigating or remedying these harms,â(EURO) said Heidi Altman, NIJCâ(EURO)(TM)s director of policy ***in*** a statement about the OIG report. NIJCâ(EURO)(TM)s analysis of ICEâ(EURO)(TM)s dataset also revealed that ***in*** November 2017, the agency was detaining roughly 98 people a day ***in*** jails listed as â(EURO)oenot inspected.â(EURO)ICE responded by saying ***in*** an email to CityLab that its Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) division â(EURO)oehas already initiated several steps to bolsterâ(EURO) the quality of inspections at contract facilities and â(EURO)oewill re-evaluate the existing inspection scope and methodologyâ(EURO) for annual and biennial inspections.What kinds of places sign up for these contracts?The second map below allows a more detailed look. Toggling the firstcheck boxallows a â(EURO)oeclusterâ(EURO) view, where the bigger circles signal a larger concentration of contracts. Toggling the second check box for â(EURO)oepoint locationsâ(EURO) and one of the last four options on the right of the map pulls up the locations of these contracts against base maps showing the political, economic, and demographic characteristics of the ***counties***. (This map below doesnâ(EURO)(TM)t work well on all mobile devices, so click through here for a full-screen version.)Around 71 percent of these ***counties*** voted for Trump; ***in*** 73 percent, the white population was overrepresented (greater than the 60.3 percent national share per ESRIâ(EURO)(TM)s 2018 data); and ***in*** 66.5 percent, the median household income was below the national threshold based on ESRIâ(EURO)(TM)s data.***Detention*** contracts are not,however, a partisan practice: Some immigrant-rich, Democrat-leaning ***counties*** help detain very large numbers of immigrants. Among the top ten Democrat-voting jurisdictions within immigrant-friendly states with the highest numbers of detained immigrants: Orange and San Bernardino ***counties*** ***in*** California and Prince Edward ***County*** ***in*** Virginia. (Orange ***County*** voted for Hillary Clinton ***in*** 2016 but is among California ***counties*** pushing back against the stateâ(EURO)(TM)s â(EURO)oesanctuary law.â(EURO)) The list also includes Essex, Hudson, and Bergen ***counties*** ***in*** New Jersey, where the new governor campaigned on the promiseof following Californiaâ(EURO)(TM)s lead and enacting â(EURO)oesanctuaryâ(EURO) legislationâ(EURO)"limiting the cooperation of localities with federal immigration authorities.â(EURO)oeWhat the map does is highlight the entrepreneurial nature of ***detention***,â(EURO) writes Daniel Stageman, professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice at the City University of New York via email. â(EURO)oeThese facilities thrive on the borders where immigrant populations meet the political and economic conditions that make ***detention*** â(EURO)~marketsâ(EURO)(TM) profitable: voter support, a willing or eager (primarily white) labor force, the right infrastructure, etc.â(EURO)Does the cost-benefit tally add up for local jails?With its push to round up undocumented immigrants ***in*** the interior of the country, the Trump administration appears to have increased its reliance on its existing agreements with local governments. The federal government has been securing thousands of new beds, including ***in*** locally-run facilities, according to theWashington Post, and the demand for more is only expected to increaseas the government doubles down on the waves of asylum seekers at the border.â(EURO)oeWe're seeing these contracts come online ***in*** some places that you really

don't think of as having large immigrant populations, like you have the Kenosha Jail **in** Wisconsin,â(EURO) says Sharita Gruberg, an immigration law and policy expert at the **Center** for American Progress.Why? It typically costs the federal government less to house immigrants **in** these types of facilities than **in** private **detention centers**, and unlike private **detention centers** that have to be built from scratch, this infrastructure already exists. Plus, these contracts can be coupled with other types of collaborations to strengthen the local crackdown on undocumented immigrants. **In** various **counties in** Texas, for example, 287(g) agreements through which jail officers can be deputized as ICE agents are being sought **in** conjunction with jail contractsâ(EURO)"incentivizing local governments to create their own pipelines for deportation, critics say. According to *TheNew York Times*, the administration has also been planning to lower standards required for local jail facilities to detain immigrants, so they can be available more quickly. That would mean even less stringent medical and language requirements, among other changes.The conditions at these facilities are by no means up to scratch right now. Margo Schlanger, now a law professor at the University of Michigan, testified to the Homeland Security Advisory Council on immigrant **detention** **in** 2016 that chaotic local jails are even less equipped to deal with immigration populations than even the â(EURO)oeprison-likeâ(EURO) dedicated private **detention centers**. Many of the ones housing immigrants are **in** remote areasâ(EURO)"far from legal counsel and medical amenities.Medical negligence, abuse, and maltreatment of immigrant detainees is already well-documented **in** **county** jails. An OIG report from 2017 found that detainees **in** some jails were strip-searched, inappropriately segregated, andkept **in** unhealthy conditions. Another from the same year found that detainees were fed soiled food. A Southern Poverty Law **Center** (SPLC) report from 2016 found cases of brutal assaults, denial of due process, and gross medical negligence. Freedom For Immigrants recently released a study documenting complaints about immigrants being called â(EURO)oedogsâ(EURO) and â(EURO)oebaboons,â(EURO) and told to â(EURO)oego fetchâ(EURO) their food. **In** extreme cases, **detention** at these types of facilities has been fatal: Most recently, a Honduran man who was separated from his wife and 3-year-old at the border killed himself **in** the Starr **County** Sheriffâ(EURO)(TM)s office.â(EURO)oeWhen a bona fide asylum seeker who's fleeing violence and recent trauma arrives at the United States, expresses the fear of return and then is transferred to a **county** jail, it's very disorienting,â(EURO) Altman told CityLab. â(EURO)oeIt's traumatizing.â(EURO)From the perspective of the local government, renting out empty jail beds to federal authorities can still be appealing. Politically, it can feed into the tough-on-crime stance,if that is what the voters are looking for. But often the biggest sell is the economic value: These contracts are presented as revenue generators, even **in** places that are immigrant-friendly.Â Â â(EURO)oeThe [immigrant] jail becomes a job-creation program that's not being funded by taxpayers **in** the **county** or even **in** your state, but rather by the federal government,â(EURO) says CÃ©sar CuauhtÃ©moc GarcÃ-a HernÃ¡ndez, an expert **in** immigration and criminal law at the University of Denver. â(EURO)oeIt becomes free money.â(EURO)But hidden economic costs can arise. When abuses are discovered, the **county** may face lawsuits, or the federal authorities may be pressured to dissolve the contract altogether. The fear of that economic risk and the moral case against these contracts seems to have convinced the officials **in** Williamson **County**.â(EURO)oeWith commissioners, we used a lot of messaging around liability, the fact that they werenâ(EURO)(TM)t receiving proper information about incidents from ICE and CoreCivic, economic messaging around being perceived as a prison town, as well as speaking to family and Christian values,â(EURO) said Bethany Carson, from Grassroots Leadership, an anti-**detention** advocacy group. â(EURO)oeSome combination of those did it.â(EURO)Other local governments, however, have proven much more resistant to anti-**detention** messages. Willacy **County**, Texas, for example, had contracted with private company MT&C and the Federal Bureau of Prisons to house non-citizen inmates **in** the past. This prison had such a bad reputation that it came to be known as â(EURO)oeRitmo,â(EURO) Raymondville cityâ(EURO)(TM)s very own â(EURO)oeGitmo.â(EURO) **In** 2015, riots broke out and the prison shut down. The **county** was riddled with debt as a result and sued MT&C. Now, the *Texas Observer* reports that the **county** is re-entering into an agreement with ICE and the same private company to rent out bed space for immigrants **in** civil **detention**. The mayor of Raymondville, Gilbert Gonzalez, is hopeful that this new deal will bring the â(EURO)oebest-paid jobs **in** [the] area,â(EURO) he told *The Observer*â(EURO)(TM)s Gus Bova. And while heopposes family separation, he is not against immigrant **detention** overall.â(EURO)oePeople were getting put **in** facilities like this one under Bush and Obama, too,â(EURO) he told *The Observer*. â(EURO)oeItâ(EURO)(TM)s not really my place to take sides on that.â(EURO)The Democratic sheriff of Albany, New York, which considers itself a â(EURO)oesanctuary city,â(EURO) also recently signed up to let ICE house immigrants **in** his half-empty **county** jail for $119 per person per day. His argument: the facility will provide free legal counsel, international

callsâ(EURO)"and therefore will be more humane than elsewhere ***in*** the country. But some immigration experts question whether even this argument can be morally justified.â(EURO)oeThe idea that immigrant ***detention*** can be â(EURO)~just businessâ(EURO)(TM) overlooks the fact that it is a fundamentally unjust business,â(EURO) Stageman says, â(EURO)oeone that, by its very nature, profits off of human suffering.â(EURO)***Methodology note:*** *The maps are based on ICEâ(EURO)(TM)s record-keeping, which may not be comprehensive. They do not show privately owned facilities, and also do not include facilities listed* ***in*** *the dataset for which the ownership and operations information was missingâ(EURO)"so some local governments, like Lubbock* ***County****, Texas, that have signed up for these contracts are not shown. Some of the contacts depicted may have ended or been terminated since November 2017. We have requested information for 2018 and will update the maps when we receive it. If you have information about your local governmentâ(EURO)(TM)s* ***detention*** *contract with ICE, drop us a line at tmisra@theatlantic.com*

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Magazine

Subject: ***COUNTY*** GOVERNMENT (90%); IMMIGRATION (89%); CORRECTIONS (89%); POLITICAL DETAINEES (89%); PRISONS (89%); PUBLIC CONTRACTING (89%); ***COUNTIES*** (89%); IMMIGRANT ***DETENTION CENTERS*** (89%); SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE FORCES (89%); REGIONAL & LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (78%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2012 (77%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2016 (77%); LAW COURTS & TRIBUNALS (76%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (76%); IMMIGRATION LAW (76%); AGREEMENTS (75%); POLITICAL ASYLUM (71%)

Organization: US IMMIGRATION & CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT (57%)

Person: DONALD TRUMP (79%)

Geographic: ATLANTA, GA, USA (79%); SACRAMENTO, CA, USA (79%); AUSTIN, TX, USA (78%); GEORGIA, USA (79%); TEXAS, USA (79%); CALIFORNIA, USA (79%)

Load-Date: August 3, 2018