

ALIEN DETENTION CENTER ERECTED IN TEXAS

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Body

Alien Detention Center Erected In Texas (REST) Associated Press BAYVIEW, **Texas** (AP) - The Immigration and Naturalization Service **erected** tents inside a fence topped with barbed wire Tuesday at a minimum-security prison, under a plan to speed processing of **aliens** and to jail those denied political asylum. The Catholic bishops of **Texas** charged that they foresaw "the creation of the largest concentration camp on U.S. soil." State Department officials began making recommendations on asylum applications under a plan announced Monday to deal with an influx of Central American immigrants and to speed up the weeding out of "frivolous" claims. Under the plan, applicants will get an answer as early as the same day and will be subject to immediate arrest and **detention** if denied asylum. Before Tuesday, applications could take weeks to process; **aliens** were released on their own recognizance while they awaited appeals or deportation. The INS began **erecting** tents at its rural Port Isabel Service Processing **Center** in Bayview, just north of Brownsville, in case the number of detainees at the **center** exceeded its 1,100-bed capacity. Officials said they could detain as many as 5,000 in the large circus-size tents within the 315 acres. A 7-foot fence topped with barbed wire surrounds the compound. The **Texas** Catholic Conference said the new policy "ignores the facts of life in Central America that are causing the massive influx of refugees to our country." It added: "The INS statement speaks of 'frivolous' applications.

Apparently any applications by people who have suffered dreadfully from civil war are frivolous. Obviously, we are about to witness the creation of the largest concentration camp on U.S. soil since the incarceration of Japanese-Americans during World War II - a shameful page in our history." The Catholic church has been helping **aliens** through several organizations and operates a shelter for newly arrived Central Americans. Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, D-**Texas**, called the new policy a "real step forward." "The old policy simply dumped the Central American immigration problem into the laps of citizens and local governments in South **Texas**, and now the INS has stepped forward to take some responsibility for the immigrants," Bentsen said. Delia Combs, assistant INS commissioner for refugees, asylum and parole, said Tuesday that two State Department officers were reviewing the applications and making recommendations on the refugees' status. Only immigrants who can show persecution are entitled to asylum; those who come to better themselves economically can be deported. The INS maintains that most Central Americans arriving in southern **Texas** do not qualify for refugee status. A group of 45 Central Americans, half of them from Nicaragua, was under review Tuesday afternoon. An additional 200 people were waiting to be processed. INS spokesman Mario Ortiz said 25 of those processed had been denied political asylum; no one was approved. The stricter policy began the same day the INS was allowed to reimpose a policy limiting asylum-seekers to southern **Texas** while they await decisions on their cases. The INS estimates that 100,000 Central Americans will pass through the Brownsville area this year. The area is the main entry point for asylum-seekers from that region.

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