

CENTRAL INSTITUTION AND CITY: IMPERIAL REGIONAL DETENTION FACILITY, CALEXICO



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Asylum Seekers: During the past several years, US Customs and Border Patrol and, sometimes, MTC, have daily dropped off asylum seekers in downtown Calexico. In 2023, **the city secured \$2 million** from the state for a migrant assistance center. But in April of 2024, a recall campaign culminated in **ousting two young, progressive city councilmembers**, and in May, the new city council **sent the \$2 million back to the state**. Calexico remains with a facility to detain migrants, but few resources to welcome them.

Retaliation: There is a lengthy history of retaliatory solitary confinement being weaponized by MTC against detained organizers at Imperial. In October 2021, following California's passage of the Accountability in Detention Act, MTC was the first private prison company to be sued for damages in the state. **Carlos Murillo, who grew up in Imperial County, was held in solitary confinement at Imperial for more than a year.**

Power & Influence: MTC, the private prison company that operates Imperial, bills itself as the more "caring" or "humane" private incarcerator to CoreCivic/CCA or GEO. MTC's motto, posted around Imperial's walls and on staff uniform pins, is "BIONIC," which stands for "Believe It Or Not, I Care." MTC also has strong relationships with governments and organizations with power and influence around the area through an established "**Community Council**". However, MTC has its own lengthy track records of abuse and impunity, both in Imperial as well as **many other notorious ICE detention facilities across the country.**

Environmental Hazard: In early 2022, nine organizers at Imperial filed a **civil rights complaint about hazardous air, dust, mold, and drinking water contamination.** In April 2023, the Environmental Protection Agency investigated IRDF and interviewed individuals formerly detained as part of their follow-up, focusing on the misuse of pesticides and cleaning chemicals at the facility. On July 19, 2023, the EPA's Toxic Enforcement Section issued a **Notice of Warning** to MTC, the private prison operator. The following day, staff at IRDF removed all cleaning chemicals.

CONTEXT

Imperial County is a diverse and vibrant community characterized by our unique geographical position along the U.S.-Mexico border. Imperial County thrives on agriculture, with a significant portion of its population engaged in farm work, contributing to the region's rich agricultural heritage, supplying $\frac{3}{5}$ of the entire nation's vegetables during the winter months. !Tierra y Libertad! Average income per household is \$49,079 with a 17.3% unemployment rate (more than twice the state average) with a total population of 178,713 people.

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CONTEXT (CONTINUED)

Imperial County has a complex labor and environmental justice history dating back to the late 19th century. It has been a focal point for labor activism, notably during the early 20th-century labor strikes in the agricultural sector. Additionally, the region has grappled with environmental challenges due to intensive farming and proximity to the Salton Sea, such as water scarcity and air quality issues.

The Imperial Valley is perennially ranked at the top of California's most polluted places. Water and air contamination are serious issues for the residents of the Imperial Valley. Imperial County's children visit emergency rooms and are hospitalized for asthma at double the rate of the state average, as well as double the state rate of active asthma among adults older than 65. These issues continue to shape Imperial's social and environmental justice movements as residents work towards equitable labor practices and sustainable environmental solutions. Recently, as plans for large-scale lithium extraction in the Valley are taking shape, the community is organizing for environmental safeguards and accountability, and for the economic benefits of mining to stay in the county.

QUICK FACTS

- **Contract parties:** Management and Training Corporation (MTC) holds a contract with ICE.
- **Contract terms:** The current end date is 12/19/2034 with 5-year renewal review options, next one up is December 2024.
- **Contract paid each year for Imperial = \$45Million**
- The land is owned by Imperial Valley Gateway Center, LLC, a company owned by Timothy Kelly, cousin of Imperial County Board of Supervisor Ryan Kelly.
- The City of Calexico or Imperial County has power to discontinue land use permit of this carceral facility.

MANAGEMENT & TRAINING CORPORATION (MTC)



Guaranteed minimum
payment by ICE

640 BEDS

(Regardless of occupancy)



Total Capacity

782 BEDS



Paid annually
by ICE

\$45M

As of August 19, 2024, the average daily population at this facility is **615 people**.

LINKS TO FURTHER READING

- **Rest in Power, Ramón**, honoring the life of an organizer formerly detained at IRDF who passed away on July 10
- <https://www.ccijustice.org/post/rest-in-power-ram%C3%B3n>
- "Our Fight for Freedom is a Fight for Humanity," by Ramón Dominguez and Erik Mercado
- <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/2022/10/17/our-fight-for-freedom-is-a-fight-for-humanity/>
- *The Shadow of El Centro: A History of Migrant Incarceration and Solidarity* by Jessica Ordaz

TAKE ACTION



Imperial Valley Community Accompaniment Project (IVCAP) is a volunteer-based community project based in Imperial County invested in the safety & well-being of both our long-residing community members and individuals seeking asylum detained by ICE at the Imperial Regional Detention Facility (IRDF). Imperial County is an im/migrant community, and IVCAP seeks to fight for im/migrants to be treated with compassion and dignity instead of detention as they seek asylum or defend their right to stay with their loved ones in the United States. **For more information, contact IVCAP at <https://bit.ly/ivacompany>.**

