

Migrant tents removed from Guantanamo bay, satellite images show

*** [bbc.com/news/articles/crm3x27vw70o](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/crm3x27vw70o)

Benedict Garman & Matt Murphy

April 17, 2025

Kristi Noem

An image posted by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem showing rows of tents at Guantanamo Bay in February.

The US has dismantled large parts of a camp built to house migrants at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, satellite images reviewed by BBC Verify show.

President Donald Trump ordered the existing facility in Cuba be expanded to hold 30,000 migrants shortly after taking office in January. However, only a small number were ever actually held at the base.

The Pentagon spent around \$38m (£28.7m) on deportation and detention operations at Guantanamo Bay in the first month of operations this year alone, a Department of Defense official said.

But new images now show that around two-thirds of the roughly 260 tents installed as part of the operation had been removed as of 16 April.

When asked about the removal of the tents, a US defence official said: "This force adjustment represents a deliberate and efficient use of resources - not a reduction in readiness."

The camp began construction just a day after President Trump announced the plan, with tents going up between 30 January and 12 February. Visible construction continued until 8 March, with scattered temporary structures appearing on satellite imagery.

The construction marked a significant expansion to the Guantanamo Migrant Operations Center - a facility long used to hold some migrants and distinct from the high-security military prison used to house detainees suspected by the US of terrorism offences.

The photos below show a mix of around 260 green and white military tents in an area to the south-west of the overall Guantanamo Bay base on 1 April. But by 10 April many had been removed.

Subsequent lower resolution images show that as of 16 April a total of around 175 tents appeared to have been taken down.

It's unclear how many migrants remain at the facility. Stephen Miller - the White House deputy chief of staff - insisted in an interview with Fox News last week that the base remained open and that "a large number of foreign terrorist aliens" were still there.

The White House failed to reply to a request for comment on whether removal of the tents represented a reversal of Trump's plans to expand the detention facility.

Despite Trump's pledge to send 30,000 migrants to the base, a US defence official indicated that the deployment to the island was to support a population of 2,500 detainees.

BBC Verify's analysis of likely tent capacity estimated it at less than 3,000 people, based on US military sleeping guidelines.

Trump said in January that the expansion would largely be used to hold undocumented migrants deemed to be dangerous criminals or national security risks.

"Some of them are so bad we don't even trust the countries to hold them, because we don't want them coming back," he said of migrants. "So we're going to send them to Guantanamo... it's a tough place to get out."

- [Migrants held at Guantanamo transferred to US](#)
- [Trump says US will send some migrants to Guantanamo Bay](#)

But since its inception two and a half months ago, around 400 migrants have reportedly been sent there, with more than half since returned to facilities in the US. Others have been deported, such as 177 people who were sent to Venezuela via Honduras on 20 February.

On 28 March, a group of five Democrat senators visited the base. In a statement, they said they were "outraged by the scale and wastefulness of the Trump Administration's misuse of our military", and described the camp as "seemingly designed to undermine due process and evade legal scrutiny".

The delegation of senators said the cost to fly immigrants out of the US and detain them at Guantanamo Bay came to "tens of millions of dollars a month" and called it "an insult to American taxpayers".

Additional reporting by Joshua Cheetham.



[What do you want BBC Verify to investigate?](#)