

March 13, 2012

Karnes City, TX

ICE opens its first-ever designed-and-built civil detention center

New facility in Texas opens today for low-risk, minimum security adult male detainees

KARNES CITY, Texas — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) announced Tuesday the opening of its first-ever designed-and-built civil detention center, as part of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) overall detention reform program.

The Karnes County Civil Detention Center is a 608-bed civil immigration detention facility, designed to house adult male, low-risk, minimum security detainees. The detainees who will be housed at Karnes will first be carefully screened to ensure that they do not pose a threat to themselves or others, and are not a flight risk.

"This civil detention center represents a first in the entire history of immigration detention," said ICE Director John Morton. "Karnes and others like it are one part of an ICE detention reform program that is sensible, sustainable and attentive to the unique needs of the individuals in our custody."

The civil detention facility model allows for greater unescorted movement, enhanced recreational opportunities and contact visitation, while maintaining a safe and secure atmosphere for detainees and staff.

In December 2010, ICE entered into an intergovernmental service agreement with Karnes County. The GEO Group Inc. was responsible for developing the center, in addition to operating the center as it opens its doors. This contract represents a significant milestone in the agency's long-term effort to reform the immigration detention system, prioritizing the health and safety of detainees in our custody while increasing federal oversight and improving the conditions of confinement within the system.

ICE's detention reform efforts call for putting detention centers in strategic locations that maximize detainee access to local consulates and pro-bono legal services, reduce detainee transfers within the detention system and increase overall operational efficiencies, allowing for a reduction in detainees' average length of stay in ICE custody.

<http://www.ice.gov/news/releases/1203/120313karnescity.htm>