

Trump orders reopening of Alcatraz as a maximum-security federal prison

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Washington, May 6 (RHC)-- U.S. President Donald Trump wrote in a Truth Social post that his administration would “reopen a substantially enlarged and rebuilt Alcatraz to house America’s most ruthless and violent offenders.”

Posts sharing a screenshot of a purported Truth Social post by U.S. President Donald Trump in which he said he was directing various agencies to reopen the federal prison on Alcatraz Island in California's San Francisco Bay circulated online in early May 2025.

Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary was a maximum-security prison situated on an island over a mile from the mainland that operated from 1934 to 1963.

The claim spread widely across social media, circulating heavily on platforms like Facebook (archived), X (archived), Instagram (archived) and Threads (archived).

Trump posted the message about reopening Alcatraz as a prison to his Truth Social account (archived) on May 4, 2025.

The post reads in full:

REBUILD, AND OPEN ALCATRAZ! For too long, America has been plagued by vicious, violent, and repeat Criminal Offenders, the dregs of society, who will never contribute anything other than Misery and Suffering. When we were a more serious Nation, in times past, we did not hesitate to lock up the most dangerous criminals, and keep them far away from anyone they could harm. That's the way it's supposed to be. No longer will we tolerate these Serial Offenders who spread filth, bloodshed, and mayhem on our streets. That is why, today, I am directing the Bureau of Prisons, together with the Department of Justice, FBI, and Homeland Security, to reopen a substantially enlarged and rebuilt ALCATRAZ, to house America's most ruthless and violent Offenders. We will no longer be held hostage to criminals, thugs, and Judges that are afraid to do their job and allow us to remove criminals, who came into our Country illegally. The reopening of ALCATRAZ will serve as a symbol of Law, Order, and JUSTICE. We will, MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!

Trump made the claim in the midst of his administration's ongoing mass deportation efforts, which they allege is focused on "violent criminals" such as purported MS-13 gang members.

However, Trump's plan would likely face an uphill battle, given that Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary was closed on March 21, 1963, specifically because it was "nearly three times more expensive to operate than any other Federal prison" and was in need of millions of dollars in repairs, according to the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP).

According to a July 6, 1981, report from Attorney General William French Smith, if the Reagan administration wanted to pursue a proposed "policy of detaining illegal aliens pending deportation ... facilities with additional capacity of up to 10,000 will be required."

The same report filed Alcatraz under "facilities considered and found inadequate," citing "essentially no utilities; historic site; popular tourist attraction." In addition, the BOP said that during its operation as a penitentiary, the prison had a maximum capacity of 336 and typically held "260 - 275" prisoners and noted that "at any given time, Alcatraz held less than 1 percent of the total Federal prison population."

Following its closure as a federal prison, the island opened to the public in 1973 operating under the National Park Service. As of 2025, Alcatraz has been a national park longer (52 years) than it was a federal prison (29 years). It brings in approximately 1.2 million visitors a year, according to CNN and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1986.

[SOURCE: ASSOCIATED PRESS]

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