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## As America's largest-ever mass federal inmate release begins, almost a third of prisoners will be immediately turned over to U.S. immigration authorities for deportation

- Many of roughly 1,780 foreign inmates will be turned over to authorities for deportation proceedings
- Around 6,000 federal prisoners are scheduled to be freed between Friday and Tuesday
- Final deportation orders are in effect for 763 of the foreign inmates, who could be deported within days
- Most of the foreign inmates are Mexicans, according to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- The mass release is a result of retroactive reductions to mandatory minimum sentence guidelines for certain non-violent drug offenses

By [Reuters](#) and [Dailymail.com Reporter](#)

Published: 15:07 EST, 30 October 2015 | Updated: 14:04 EST, 31 October 2015

Almost a third of 6,000 federal prisoners scheduled to be freed between Friday and Tuesday will immediately be turned over to U.S. immigration authorities for deportation proceedings.

The move comes as part of a push to reduce America's soaring incarceration rate.

While this weekend will be a happy occasion for the thousands of inmates who are U.S. citizens and will reunite with their families, many of the roughly 1,780 foreign inmates to be put on the deportation track will leave family members behind in the United States.

Despite Obama administration assurances that the transfer of ex-convicts into the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is a routine occurrence, immigrant advocates worry they may not receive due process as they leave.

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**Almost a third of 6,000 federal prisoners scheduled to be freed between Friday and Tuesday will immediately be turned over to U.S. immigration authorities for deportation proceedings (file photo of inmates in Bakersfield, California pictured)**

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**Despite Obama administration assurances that the transfer of ex-convicts into the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is a routine occurrence, immigrant advocates worry they may not receive due process as they leave (file photo above)**

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Most of the foreign inmates are Mexicans, according to ICE.

Final deportation orders are in effect for 763 of the foreign inmates, who could be deported within days. The rest will be transferred to immigrant detention centers to await orders.

The latest mass release, one of the largest in U.S. history, is a result of retroactive reductions to mandatory minimum sentence guidelines for certain non-violent drug offenses.

After those took effect last November, 23,000 prisoners applied for reduced sentences.

Judges granted three quarters of the requests, of which this weekend's releases are a portion, according to the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

Judges also granted the most petitions from inmates who were prosecuted in Texas' western judicial district, 1,048 in all.

[Fox News](#) reported that a Justice Department official explained that the department was conscious of public safety when granting prisoners early release.

The official said that each inmate who applied under the new guidelines underwent a public safety assessment.

A law enforcement official also told Fox News that a 'vast majority' of the soon-to-be-released inmates have also spent a significant amount of time in half-way houses or in home confinement.

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Around 50 per cent of the inmates to be released were convicted on offenses including crack and powder cocaine, along with methamphetamine, heroin and marijuana, according to [CNN](#).

About 2.7 per cent of the inmates were convicted of Oxycodone and Hydrocodone offenses.

About a quarter of western Texas inmates cleared for release are foreign nationals, primarily from Mexico, according to Edgar Holguin, a local public defender who has worked for many who are being turned over to ICE custody.

One of Holguin's clients is a 48-year-old Mexican man who has been living in the United States since he was a child.

For him, 'the Mexico he is going back to is completely different than the one he remembers,' Holguin said.

Ricardo Hinojosa, a judge in Texas and ex-vice chair of the sentencing commission, said last year at a public hearing that many of the deportees 'will be tempted to come back, and maybe quicker,' because many have families in the United States.

As a result, Hinojosa said at the hearing, 'We will see them as illegal reentry cases, to some extent, sooner than one would normally see them.'

ICE said its handling of the inmates will be no different than the thousands of deportations it oversees weekly.

Under Democratic President Barack Obama, the federal government has deported more immigrants than under any previous administration, more than two million in total.



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**The latest mass release, one of the largest in U.S. history, is a result of retroactive reductions to mandatory minimum sentence guidelines for certain non-violent drug offenses (file photo above)**

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The American Civil Liberties Union on Thursday wrote to ICE chief Sarah Saldaña, urging the agency to ensure that each inmate entering ICE custody in the current release wave gets due process - including the opportunity to consult an immigration attorney and contest their removal in court.

The 'stark contrast' between the fates of inmates who are U.S. citizens and immigrant inmates suggests 'a schism between DOJ and ICE policies,' said the letter.

In a statement, ICE said it will ensure all immigrants subject to deportation 'receive the full process they are due while in removal proceedings and ICE custody,' including access to phones to contact attorneys, consulates and legal aid groups.

That 'stark contrast' in the fates of inmates can be seen in Ronald Rogers.

Rogers, 56, was 13 years from finishing a 40-year sentence for dealing PCP when a judge last year granted him early release under the new guidelines.

In May, Rogers entered a halfway facility in San Diego, and on Friday, he'll be a free man.

'I'm thrilled that for the first Thanksgiving in 28 years we'll be able to sit at the table together,' said his sister, Nicole Jackson-Gray.

Most U.S. citizens being released have already moved to halfway houses or home confinement, said the Justice

Department, which said those getting early release are a small fraction of the 70,000 federal inmates released annually.

Read more:

- [Justice Department to begin release of over 6,000 federal inmates under new guidelines | Fox News](#)
- [6,600 federal inmates to be released this weekend - CNN.com](#)



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