

# IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **MDOC contracts with private prison company to house Parchman inmates**

JACKSON, MISS. – Moving some inmates from the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman to nearby Tallahatchie County Correctional Facility in Tutwiler is among the steps the Mississippi Department of Corrections is taking to maintain order in the wake of the recent unrest in the state prison system.

The department has contracted with CoreCivic Inc. to immediately house up to 375 maximum security inmates initially for 90 days.

“The Tutwiler facility was chosen because it is the only location that can immediately take on this population,” Commissioner Pelicia E. Hall said. “The facility is already operational and sufficiently staffed to manage close custody inmates. The department acted swiftly because of the violence at MSP and a lack of manpower to restore and maintain order. We also cannot staff any other facility.”

Unit 29, where the inmates were initially housed, has a failing infrastructure at Parchman, which has the capacity for 3,560 inmates. Cleaning continues there from the recent acts of vandalism. The unit has been plagued with vandalism over the years and needs major repair and renovation.

While Unit 32, a maximum security unit, is structurally sound and not condemned, it has been a temporary housing location to separate rival security threat groups, or rival gang members, from further acts of violence.

During the entire process, the inmates’ needs have been met. They have received food, bottled water, and necessary medical attention. Additionally, the Tutwiler facility was inspected Wednesday by the State Department of Health and approved.

“All of the cells passed a sanitation inspection which includes running water, hot and cold temperature availability, and proper lighting,” said Mississippi State Department of Health Environmentalist Rayford Horton. “We also inspected the water quality and kitchen facilities. I am pleased with what I found out there.”

Details of inmates’ movement are usually confidential for security reasons. Department plans call for notification of family members once movement is completed. The prison has about 3,100 inmates today.

The initial plan is to house up to 375 inmates at Tutwiler, which is less than 10 minutes from Parchman, at a cost of more than \$2 million. The contract with the Tennessee-based company may be extended for two more 90-day terms.

Walnut Grove Correctional Facility in Leake County, a vacant prison, can house the type of inmates in question, but the MDOC does not have the staff to operate it.

“While the department has challenges, keeping staff and the inmates safe is always our priority,” Commissioner Hall said. “We do not want to see any more loss of life.”