

Re: OT – Sheriff in Maricopa County, Arizona.

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"Ron Recer" <ron48@xxxxxxx> wrote

He stopped smoking and porno magazines in the jails. Took away their weights. Cut off all but "G" movies.

Many/most prisons and jails no longer allow tobacco products or smoking inside the facility.

I know that's true in jails. Is it also true in prisons? For example, both the city and county jails in Las Vegas have banned smoking, but the last I knew, the state prison still permitted it. I left the Arizona Prison system 20 years ago, so things have probably changed a lot, but there was smoking there at that time.

He started chain gangs so the inmates could do free work on county and city projects.

Chain gangs are perhaps the biggest farce perpetuated on the public by politicians. It costs a fortune to run a 'chain gang'. Referred to in the business as working inmates 'under the gun'. Inmates are basically free labor, but you have to provide transportation to the work site, security officers to guard them, people knowledgeable with the task at hand to supervise the work and inspect the finished product. The work day is generally very short because the inmates have to be searched going in and out of the prison and all tools have to be checked in and out at the work site.

The system I retired from finally gave in to political pressure and created a 'chain gang' to clear brush encroaching on highways.

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First, you really can't chain inmates together and do much of anything, so you have to guard them. They may try running to escape and you need to be able to catch/shoot them. Thus we had to obtain horses for guards with shotguns. Then we needed a horse trailer to transport the horses and a pickup to tow the trailer. Next came a bus to transport the inmates. Then a trailer for the tools and port-a-potty (you don't want indecent exposure incidents along the highway). When you add up the costs for horses, vehicles, trailers, tools and the ongoing salary and benefits for the guards and supervisors you have an expensive operation. And remember, inmates are NOT the most motivated workers!

We did have success using minimum/community security level inmates for trash pickup crews along highways. Due to the security level these crews only require one staff person to drive the vehicle and supervise the crew. Often the staff person was a Department of Transportation employee using a DOT vehicle and cost us nothing.

I suspect that Maricopa County jail (Arpaio's jail), they only use people that have been convicted and then, since its a county jail, they will all be misdemeanor convictions. I would guess that means a minimum of security. However, I agree with all you said about "chain gangs". I worked for the AZ State Prison at Florence for 11 years. We had several gangs from both maximum and medium security. (They were known as "gun gangs" because of the mounted guards with shotguns and .308 rifles.) Everything you mentioned (horse trailers, buses, tool trailers, port a johns, etc) fit the situation in Florence to a tee. Minimum security inmates that might have been gang workers ended up working on the farms.

In Nevada, the only gangs were minimum security crews that worked for the Division of Forestry. They did road clean up on state highways and also did maintenance and cleanup in state parks. Being Minimum security, they went out with only one or two supervision people and they were from Division of Forestry.

In prisons, TV/cable isn't provided for the enjoyment of inmates. It is an aid to staff in that it occupies the inmates and they spend less time plotting against the prison staff.

Well Said

If you were to check, the jail inmates he puts in tents are the very lowest security level and is done for PR. It isn't that most

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prison's don't want to put inmates in tents because it might be uncomfortable, it is that you can't do a 'lock down' when you have them in tents. If there is a problem you have a gang of hundreds of inmates with no way of controlling them. Remember, staff inside the fence don't carry weapons of any kind because it is too dangerous.

At Florence, for a few years (maybe still, I haven't been back in 20 years) we had both minimum and medium security inmates living in tents.

Bruce