

IMMIGRATION

CBP Burritos Are Making Immigrants Sick, Because Of Course They Are

Doctors believe the problem is that CBP does not bother defrosting the burritos properly.

By LORELEI LAIRD

at 11:18 AM



(Image via Getty)

Ed. note: Please welcome Lorelei Laird to the pages of Above the Law. She'll be writing about the current state of immigration law in America.

From the moment Donald Trump descended that gilded escalator in 2015, he's made it clear that [he believes](#) Latin American immigrants are criminals.

“When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best,” said [the least racist person you've ever met](#). “They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists.”

Customs and Border Protection holding cells around Tucson is making a disproportionate number of people sick. (These are not the longer-term ICE jails that people arrested within the U.S. go to, but the concrete and chain-link cells that you're probably familiar with from the summer of [family separation](#).)

According to Dr. Timothy Dorner, who sees recently released immigrant families at the Catholic Community Services shelter Casa Alitas, about 80 percent of people who eat the burrito report abdominal pain. "Luckily," however, a significant number of immigrants say they couldn't eat in CBP custody because the food was so bad. The problem is so widespread that Casa Alitas director Teresa Cavendish says her clients regularly declare, "No more burritos!"

The burritos come from a local company, but doctors who work with the just-released migrants believe the problem is not the source so much as the fact that CBP doesn't bother reheating them. Dr. Stephen Thompson told the Phoenix New Times that migrants tell him the burritos are "still frozen or cold." His colleague, Dr. Susan Thompson, added, "And who knows where they're storing them once they're thawed?" (Very few people, because [CBP rarely permits](#) lawyers, volunteers, or the press inside.)

As the alt-weekly notes, the burritos are just the latest in a long line of accusations that CBP holds immigrants in subhuman conditions. This is not the first allegation that the food provided is [frequently half-frozen](#), and the immigrants themselves are also frequently half-frozen because of a CBP policy of [air-conditioning the cells to frigid temperatures](#). To ensure that this is as punitive as possible, CBP [takes away](#) any outerwear they may have, along with their medications, money, identification, and any other personal property they're not actually wearing.

[According to a 2015 lawsuit](#) from the ACLU of Arizona, CBP also keeps the lights on 24 hours a day and does not consistently provide medical care or diapers. There are no showers, no soap, and sometimes no running water; a woman in a Texas CBP holding cell [told lawmakers last summer](#) that a CBP officer told her to drink from the toilet.

have directly experienced it — “we will work to make things better.” Fortunately, trial in the ACLU lawsuit [wrapped up this week](#), suggesting that immigrants may eventually have something more substantial to enforce their rights.

Lorelei Laird is a freelance writer specializing in the law, and the only person you know who still has an “I Believe Anita Hill” bumper sticker. Find her at wordofthelaird.com.



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