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Trump would deport American citizens to El Salvador ‘if it’s legal’

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President Donald Trump speaks during a meeting with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the Oval Office of the White House, Monday,, April 7, 2025, in Washington. (Pool via AP) AP



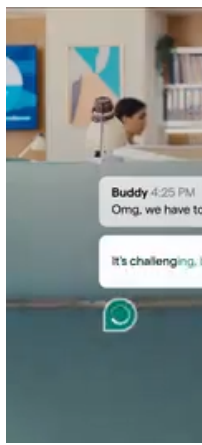
By **Howard Koplowitz** | hkoplowitz@al.com

President Donald Trump is considering the idea of deporting American citizens who are violent criminals to El Salvador, the White House press secretary confirmed Tuesday.

“So the president has discussed this idea quite a few times publicly. He’s also discussed it privately,” said White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt during her daily briefing.

“These would be heinous, violent criminals who have broken our nation’s laws repeatedly, and these are violent repeat offenders in American streets.” Leavitt said.

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The press secretary said the deportations would only go forward if the law allows, adding that Trump and his administration is doubtful it would pass legal scrutiny.

“The president has said, ‘if it’s legal,’ right? If there is a legal pathway to do that, he’s not sure. We are not sure if there is,” she said. “It’s an idea that he has simply floated and has discussed very publicly in the effort of transparency.”

Over the weekend, Trump said he would “love to” send violent American citizens to El Salvador after President Nayib Bukele said he would accept them.



“Well, I love that,” Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One, according to the [Hill](#). “If we could take some of our 20-time wise guys that push people into subways and that hit people over the back of the head and that purposely run people over in cars — if he would take them, I would be honored to give them.”

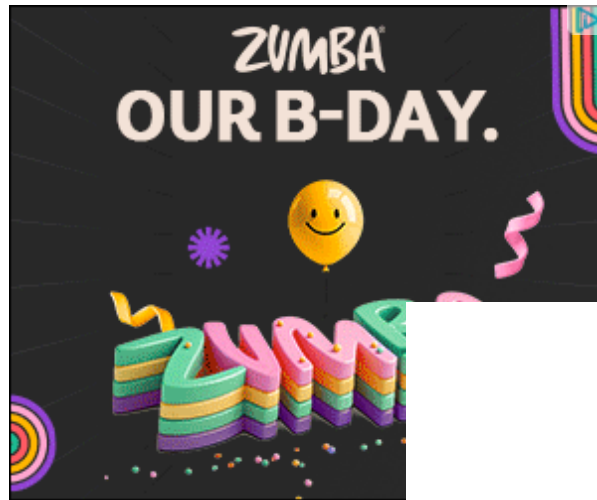
“I don’t know what the law says on that, but I can’t imagine the law would say anything different,” he said. “If they can house these horrible criminals for a lot less money than it costs us, I’m all for it, but I would only do according to the law.”

“I think if we could get El Salvador or somebody to take them I’d be very happy with it. But I have to see what the law says,” Trump said.

Earlier on Tuesday, a divided U.S. Supreme Court found that President Donald Trump can use the 18th century [wartime law](#) to deport [Venezuelan migrants](#) accused of being gang members to the notorious Terrorism Confinement Center prison in El Salvador, a finding Trump called a “GREAT DAY FOR JUSTICE IN AMERICA!” in a social media post, according to the Associated Press.

But the justices also decided people accused of being members of the [Tren de Aragua gang](#) have to get a chance to challenge their removals — a finding their lawyers called an “important victory.”

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The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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