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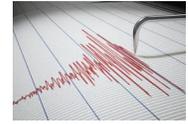
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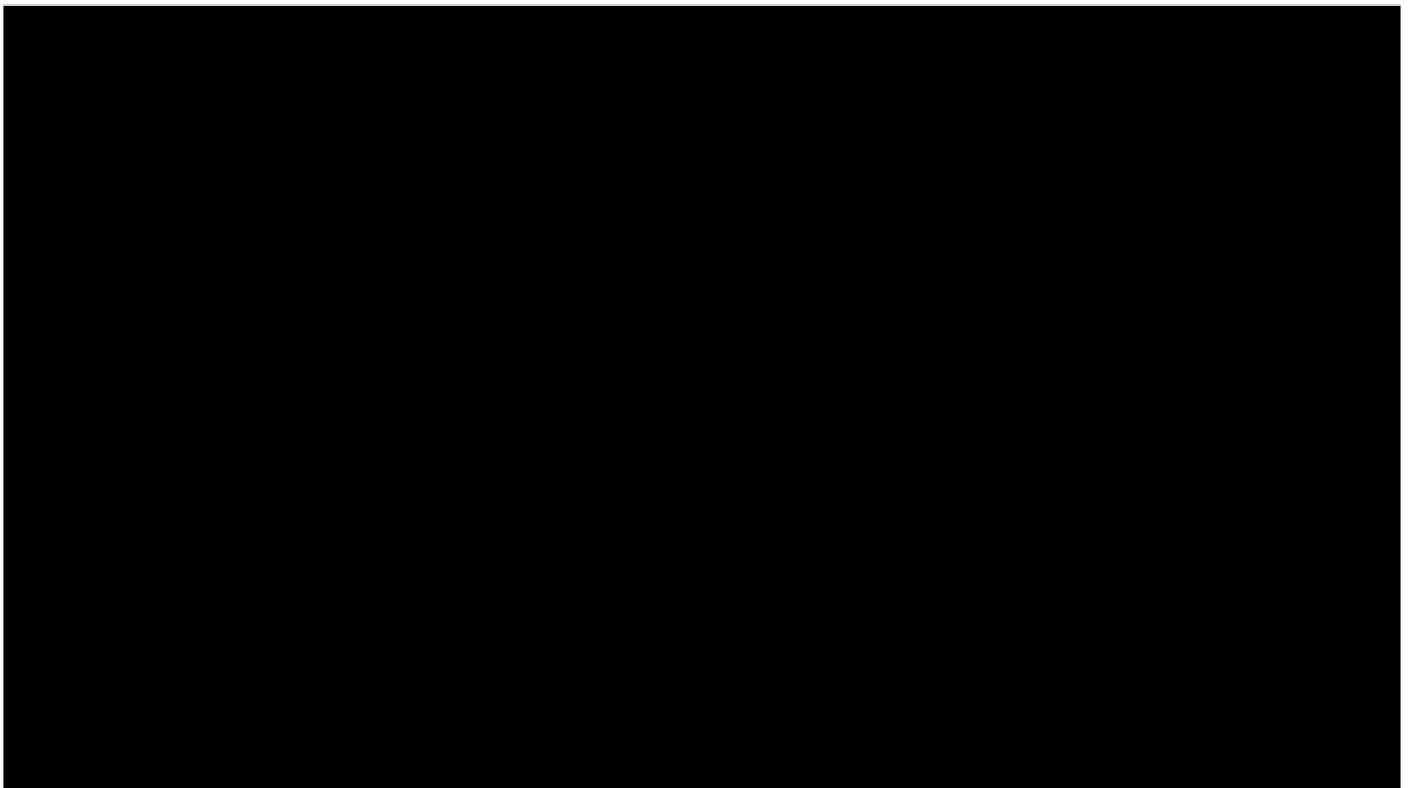
POLITICS

El Salvador president says deported Maryland man with alleged MS-13 ties can't be brought back to US despite Supreme Court ruling: 'Question is preposterous'

By **Ryan King**

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El Salvador President Nayib Bukele claimed Monday that he has no ability to send an alleged MS-13 member from **Maryland deported to the Central American country** back to the US despite a Supreme Court ruling directing the Trump administration to take “steps to facilitate” his return.

“I hope you are not suggesting that I smuggle terrorists into the United States,” Bukele told reporters while sitting alongside President Trump in the Oval Office. “Of course, I’m not going to do it.

“The question is preposterous,” Bukele added. “I don’t have the power to return him to the United States.”



President Trump meeting with El Salvador’s President Nayib Bukele in the Oval Office on April 14, 2025.

Photo by BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP via Getty Images

Kilmar Abrego García was removed last month to the **notoriously brutal and overcrowded Terrorism Confinement Center (CECOT)** alongside about 260 suspected gang members under the 18th-century Alien Enemies Act.

In court documents, the Trump administration has alleged that Abrego Garcia is “confirmed to be a ranking member of the MS-13 gang by a proven and reliable source,” something his family denies.

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“He was illegally in our country,” US Attorney General Pam Bondi told reporters about Abrego García, who entered the US in 2011, on Monday. “That’s up to El Salvador if they want to return him. That’s not up to us.”

“The Supreme Court ruled that if El Salvador wanted to return him,” she added, “we would facilitate it, meaning provide a plane.”

Bondi cited two immigration court decisions as evidence of Abrego Garcia’s tie to MS-13. The first ruling, on April 24, 2019, denied him bond in part because “the evidence shows that he is a verified member of MS-13.” That December, a Board of Immigration Appeals ruling upheld the denial of bond, but passed no judgement on the claim that Abrego Garcia was a member of MS-13.



Bukele claimed in the Oval Office that he doesn't have the power to send Kilmar Abrego García back to the United States from his country's notorious CECOT prison.

REUTERS/Kevin Lamarque

That October, an immigration judge barred the feds from removing Abrego Garcia while his asylum application — in which he argued he could face persecution from groups like the Barrio 18 gang — was under consideration.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio argued Monday that “the foreign policy of the United States is conducted by the president of the United States, not by a court.”

“I don't understand what the confusion is,” he added. “This individual is a citizen of El Salvador. He was illegally in the United States and was returned to his country. That's where you deport people — back to their country of origin.”



Secretary of State Marco Rubio speaking to the media during the Oval Office meeting with Bukele.

Photo by BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP via Getty Images

A Maryland federal judge had set an April 7 deadline for Abrego García's return to US soil.

In an order handed down April 10, the high court directed the administration “to ‘facilitate’ Abrego Garcia’s release from custody in El Salvador and to ensure that his case is handled as it would have been had he not been improperly sent to El Salvador” — though the deadline was no longer in effect.

The Supreme Court also ruled that the lower courts must show “deference owed to the Executive Branch in the conduct of foreign affairs.”



Kilmar Abrego García's legal team has denied allegations that he has ties to gangbangers.
via REUTERS



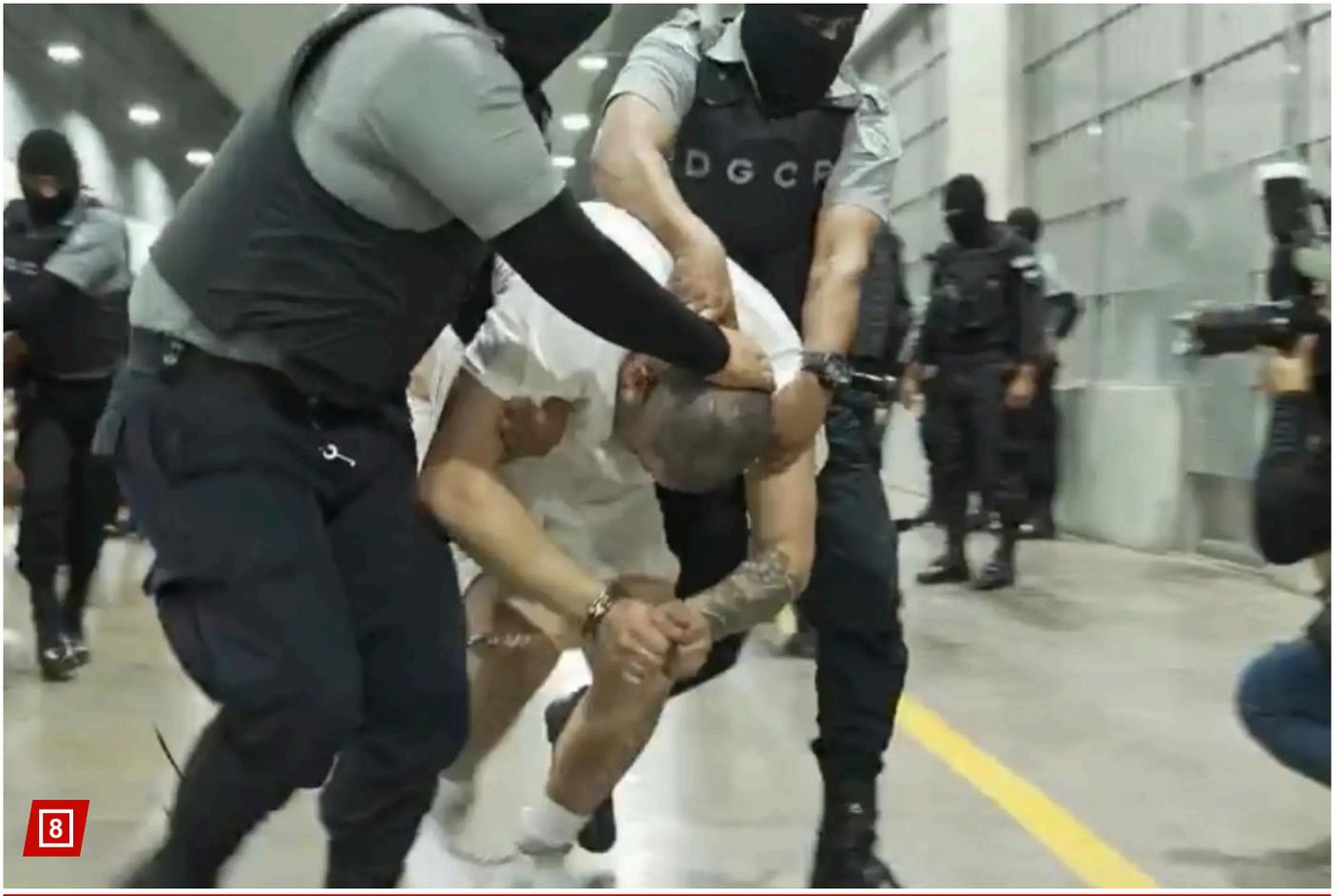
President Trump welcomed El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele to the White House on Monday.

AFP via Getty Images

White House deputy chief of staff for policy Stephen Miller chided Monday that it was “very arrogant, even for American media, to suggest that [Trump] would even tell El Salvador how to handle their own citizens.”

Trump himself indicated he would be interested in expanding the deportation efforts with El Salvador, but did not publicly address the Abrego Garcia case.

In an initial March 31 filing, the Trump administration stated that Abrego Garcia's removal was due to an **“administrative error”** and a **“clerical error,”** since the October 2019 order was still in effect.



El Salvador's Terrorism Confinement Center is notorious for its tough conditions.

AP



Garcia's wife Jennifer Vasquez Sura at a press conference on her husband's deportation at the Cannon House Office Building on April 9, 2025.

Getty Images

Miller denied that claim Monday, stating that the error rested with the Justice Department lawyer who submitted the filing and was **later removed from the case by Bondi**.

"That's a big fact that all of you, most of you, have gotten wrong," Miller told reporters ahead of Bukele's meeting with Trump. "No one was mistakenly sent anywhere."

"The only mistake that was made is a [Justice Department] lawyer put an incorrect line in a legal filing [and has] since been relieved," he said. "[Abrego Garcia] is an illegal alien. He was deported to El Salvador."

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wrongly deported.
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In a Sunday filing, the administration argued that the Supreme Court's ruling did not mean that the **NYPOST** US is obligated to press El Salvador for Abrego Garcia's release.

"Taking 'all available steps to facilitate' the return of Abrego Garcia is thus best read as taking all available steps to remove any domestic obstacles that would otherwise impede the alien's ability to return here," **DOJ lawyers wrote in a court filing** Sunday.

"Indeed, no other reading of 'facilitate' is tenable — or constitutional — here."

Bukele became the first Latin American leader Monday to score a White House visit with Trump during his second term.



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