



*Maricopa County Sheriff's Office*  
*Joe Arpaio, Sheriff*

# **NEWSRelease**

**For Release:** August 3, 2016

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## **Tent City Jail: 23 Years and Counting**

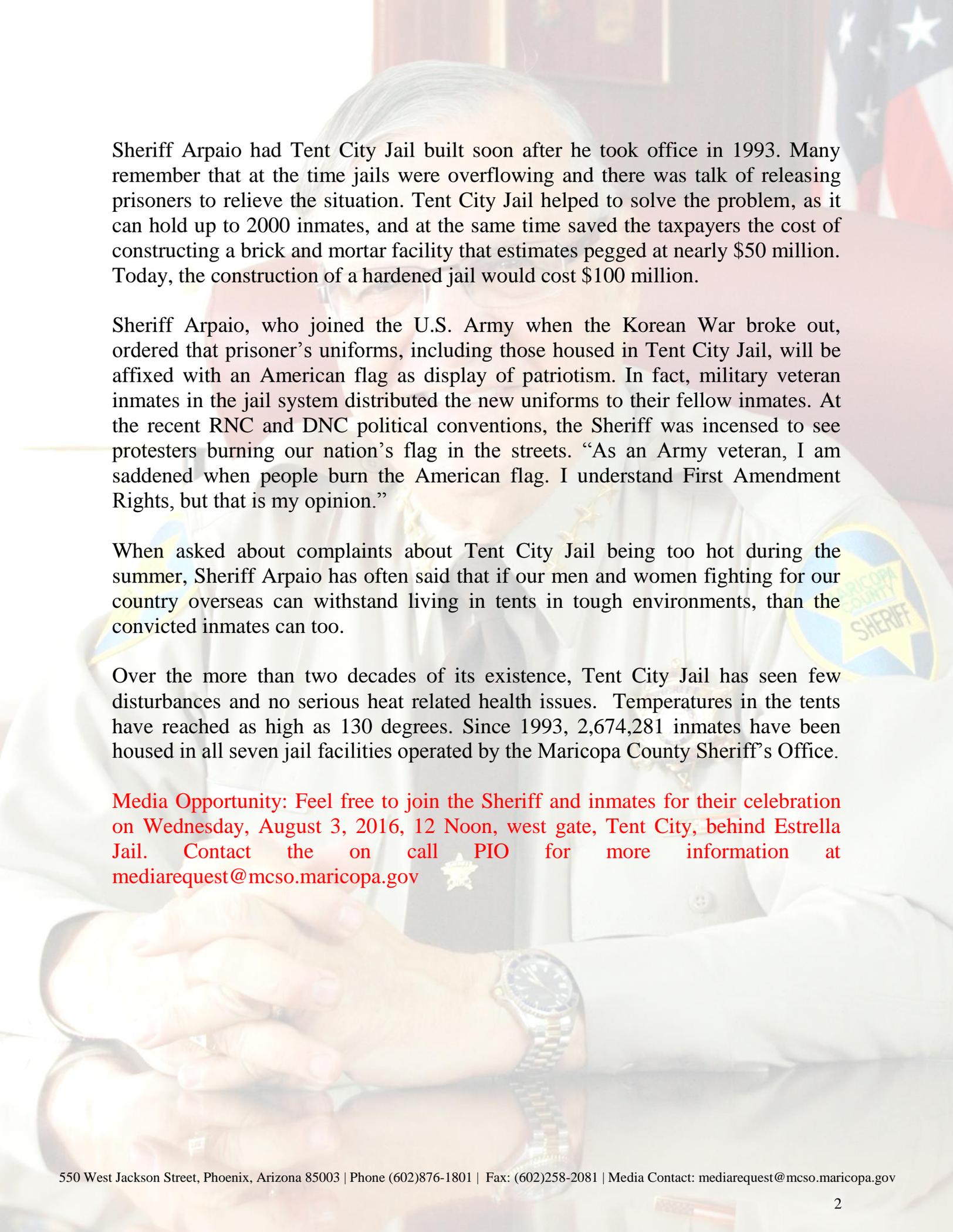
**Sheriff Arpaio to celebrate anniversary of opening on August 3<sup>rd</sup> at outdoor jail facility where 4 presidential candidates have visited**

### **Looking forward to 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in two years**

(Maricopa County, AZ) What was going on in August of 1993? The Fugitive was a summer blockbuster movie; Nolan Ryan won his 324<sup>th</sup> and final baseball game of his Hall of Fame career; and Alec Baldwin and Kim Basinger were wed. Meanwhile, in Maricopa County, Arizona, a newly sworn-in Sheriff Joe Arpaio was making good on a pledge by opening Tent City Jail at high noon on August 3, 1993. And so, Sheriff Arpaio will be standing on familiar ground this Wednesday, August 3<sup>rd</sup> as he celebrates the 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of Tent City Jail. At high noon, he will host a gathering in the midst of the canvas compound, which has housed over half-a-million inmates since its opening, where a new addition to the "vacancy" sign – first introduced in 1994, will be unveiled: a neon "23 Yrs".

"23 years and counting," said Sheriff Arpaio. "I am looking forward, in a couple of years, to our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. But this one is special too, because they said it would never pass scrutiny and here we are, all these years later, still going strong."

Through the years, four presidential candidates have visited the facility: Kansas Senator Bob Dole, California Governor Pete Wilson, Texas Senator Phil Graham and Arizona Senator John McCain. Just a few months ago, the wife of another presidential candidate paid a visit. Bernie Sanders, U.S. Senator from Vermont, made national news while speaking of Jane Sanders' visit in March, which included Sheriff Arpaio being her personal tour guide.

A background image of Sheriff Joe Arpaio in his white uniform, wearing a badge and a watch, with his hands clasped. An American flag is visible in the upper right corner.

Sheriff Arpaio had Tent City Jail built soon after he took office in 1993. Many remember that at the time jails were overflowing and there was talk of releasing prisoners to relieve the situation. Tent City Jail helped to solve the problem, as it can hold up to 2000 inmates, and at the same time saved the taxpayers the cost of constructing a brick and mortar facility that estimates pegged at nearly \$50 million. Today, the construction of a hardened jail would cost \$100 million.

Sheriff Arpaio, who joined the U.S. Army when the Korean War broke out, ordered that prisoner's uniforms, including those housed in Tent City Jail, will be affixed with an American flag as display of patriotism. In fact, military veteran inmates in the jail system distributed the new uniforms to their fellow inmates. At the recent RNC and DNC political conventions, the Sheriff was incensed to see protesters burning our nation's flag in the streets. "As an Army veteran, I am saddened when people burn the American flag. I understand First Amendment Rights, but that is my opinion."

When asked about complaints about Tent City Jail being too hot during the summer, Sheriff Arpaio has often said that if our men and women fighting for our country overseas can withstand living in tents in tough environments, than the convicted inmates can too.

Over the more than two decades of its existence, Tent City Jail has seen few disturbances and no serious heat related health issues. Temperatures in the tents have reached as high as 130 degrees. Since 1993, 2,674,281 inmates have been housed in all seven jail facilities operated by the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.

**Media Opportunity: Feel free to join the Sheriff and inmates for their celebration on Wednesday, August 3, 2016, 12 Noon, west gate, Tent City, behind Estrella Jail. Contact the on call PIO for more information at [mediarequest@mcs.maricopa.gov](mailto:mediarequest@mcs.maricopa.gov)**