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### **Oklahoma Ends Contract with Troubled Private Prison In Cushing**

The Oklahoma Department of Corrections is cutting ties with the Cimarron Correctional Facility, a private prison in Cushing where four inmates died in 2015 during the deadliest prison fight in state history. More than 1,400 medium-security inmates are housed at Cimarron, according to state data. CoreCivic, a multi-billion dollar private prison company, has owned and operated the facility since 1997. In a written statement, CoreCivic said the prison is closing “in order to help the Oklahoma Department of Corrections meet their budget needs.” During a Department of Corrections board meeting Wednesday, Chief Financial Officer Ashlee Clemons said the agency is expecting a multi-million dollar budget shortfall as the coronavirus pandemic impacts state funding. CoreCivic said it will work closely with Oklahoma officials to safely transfer inmates to other facilities. A Department of Corrections spokesperson did not immediately respond to requests for comment. The state’s imprisonment rate has dropped considerably since early March. But as criminal cases and county jail transfers resume, continuing the trend may be difficult. Cimarron Correctional Facility has a turbulent history of inmate fights and staff misconduct. On June 12, 2015, 11 inmates were hospitalized after a large scale gang fight broke out. Three months later, four inmates died and three others were hospitalized in the deadliest prison fight in state history. In June 2017, two female guards accused of sexual misconduct with male inmates were charged with sex crimes. One of the former guards pleaded guilty to a lesser computer crimes charge, while the other case is still pending, online court records show. CoreCivic says they will continue to offer Cimarron Correctional Facility as a “potential solution to meet the needs of other government partners.” Private prisons in Oklahoma have historically accepted inmates from across the country. Puerto Rico officials in 2012 sent 240 of their inmates to Cimarron. In June 2013, three months after a large-scale fight broke out at the prison, the Puerto Rico Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation brought its inmates back to the territory. In the late 1990s and 2000s, the now-closed Diamondback Correctional Facility in Watonga accepted inmates from Hawaii and Indiana. Hundreds of California inmates were housed at the North Fork Correctional Facility in Sayre in the 2000s and early 2010s.