

# BOP Celebrates Restoration of Estill

A Rebuilt Institution and a Reaffirmed Commitment to South Carolina





Image 8/14

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**(BOP)** - Six years after a tornado tore through Hampton County and left FCI Estill heavily damaged, more than 200 attendees, including Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) staff, agency

leadership, community partners, former wardens, and inmates who contributed to the restoration work, gathered on April 14 to mark the institution's renewal.

Chief of Facilities Management and Acting Warden Justin Thornton opened the ceremony by welcoming guests, including representatives from the U.S. House of Representatives for South Carolina's First District and the Hampton County Sheriff's Office. The Presentation of Colors and the National Anthem set a solemn tone for the event.

Thornton reflected on the impact of the April 2020 tornado and the long recovery that followed. He highlighted the creation of the Facilities Management Strike Teams in 2025 and noted that a rotating 25-person team, supported by inmate workers, completed the restoration. "This institution stands today not just rebuilt, but renewed," he said. "It stands as a powerful example of what can be achieved when people come together with purpose."

Southeast Regional Director John Bartlett placed Estill's recovery within the broader regional context and recognized the strong support provided by staff and Strike Team volunteers. "The dedication shown here reflects the strength of [the BOP] workforce," he said. Bartlett also reaffirmed the BOP's commitment to South Carolina and noted Estill's upcoming transition to a low security female facility with a Care Level 2 mission.

Deputy Director Joshua J. Smith expanded the focus to national priorities, emphasizing that Estill's restoration reflects BOP's broader efforts to strengthen accountability, streamline processes, and address the longstanding facilities backlog. He highlighted the Strike Teams as a central part of that progress, noting that hundreds of skilled BOP professionals volunteered on short notice. "The Strike Teams give us a capability we have needed for a long time," Smith said. He pointed to Estill as a clear example of their impact and thanked staff, inmates, and Strike Team members for their commitment.

Director William K. Marshall III placed Estill's restoration within the BOP's long-term strategic direction, emphasizing stronger infrastructure, greater accountability, and renewed commitment to staff and community. He noted that the Strike Team initiative has become a key part of strengthening operational readiness. "This is a good day for Estill and a good day for the Federal Bureau of Prisons," Marshall said. He reaffirmed the BOP's commitment to South Carolina and thanked staff, inmates, Strike Team members, and the Hampton County community for their partnership.

Following the Director's remarks, the Chaplain offered a blessing, and the Honor Guard retired the colors. Thornton returned to close the ceremony, recognizing the many employees whose behind-the-scenes work made both the restoration and the event possible. "FCI Estill now stands renewed," he said. "It stands stronger than before, and it stands as a testament to what can be accomplished when people come together with purpose and a shared commitment to service."

A BBQ reception followed, along with a tour of key areas of the facility, including newly renovated housing units and the Satellite Camp, where visitors were greeted by a gospel choir. The Camp showcased improvements, including a renovated kitchen, movie room, computer room, and meditation space. The tour concluded at the new Facilities Management Emergency Operations Command Center.

FCI Estill's renewal marks more than the end of a long recovery. It signals the beginning of a new chapter, supported by strengthened partnerships and a resilient workforce.