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Two men escaped from Clinton Correctional Facility in New York.

By Matt Rocheleau

GLOBE STAFF JUNE 25, 2015

The improbable circumstances surrounding this month's prison break in upstate New York have placed it among the highest-profile escapes in recent US history.

Authorities say a prison guard hid saws and other tools inside frozen meat to deliver them to the two inmates, who then cut their way out of the maximum-security facility, launching a massive, ongoing manhunt.

The two men, both convicted murderers, have managed to evade capture for an unusually lengthy stretch, 19 days and counting, as police have scoured areas of New York, Vermont, and Pennsylvania.

But the incident is just the latest in a long history of improbable and alarming escapes, even as US prison breaks have become increasingly rare.

Escape of Kevin Patrick Stoeser

Kevin Patrick Stoeser was dishonorably discharged from the Army in 2003 after pleading guilty to child rape and child pornography charges related to acts he committed while stationed at Fort Hood in Texas. In 2013, just weeks before completing his 10-year prison sentence, Stoeser, 41, ran away from a halfway house in Austin where he was in custody.

The US Marshals Service named him to its top 15 most-wanted list, and there was no sign of Stoeser's whereabouts for 342 days.

It is unclear exactly how long he was free and precisely how far he traveled, but on Sept. 8, 2014, a skull was found about two miles from the facility he escaped from, and the skeletal remains were later confirmed to be his. It is also not clear what killed Stoeser.

2010 escape from Arizona State Prison

On July 30, 2010, three inmates broke out of a state prison in Arizona by cutting a hole through a prison fence using a tool that an accomplice threw over a barrier. Two of them hijacked an 18-wheeler while trying to evade capture.

One of the inmates was apprehended within two days, another was caught after 10 days, and the third prisoner was arrested after 20 days on the run. Each of the three men were captured hundreds of miles from the Arizona prison, including two who made it to other states.

Texas Seven

In December 2000, seven inmates who would become known collectively as the Texas Seven, overpowered a group of prison guards and staff, stealing clothing, guns, and a vehicle to escape. While on the run, the men committed several robberies and murdered a police officer at the scene of one holdup.

Six of the seven were captured the following month in Colorado, while one of the inmates committed suicide after being surrounded by police.

Norman A. Porter Jr.

A convicted murderer, Porter in December 1985 walked away from custody of a correctional facility in Norfolk, Mass., and remained free until March 2005, when he was arrested in Chicago.

He had been living there under the alias Jacob “J.J.” Jameson, and had become known for his poetry.

It wasn't the first time Porter escaped from a Massachusetts prison. In May 1961, Porter, then 21, and fellow Middlesex County Jail inmate and murderer Edgar Cook overpowered a jail master, shooting him to death with a smuggled gun before they fled from the Cambridge prison.

Cook was captured three days later in Boston. Porter made it to Keene, N.H., before he was found one week after escaping.

Alcatraz

On July 11, 1962, a trio of bank robbers escaped from Alcatraz, a prison located on an island in San Francisco Bay.

The inmates spent months planning and preparing.

They used crude tools to chip away at air vents in the back of their cells, which they eventually loosened and could slip through. They would take turns scurrying away to an unguarded utility corridor, climbing to a roof above their cell block, and using a secret workshop they had set up, they would craft supplies for their escape, including a makeshift raft, life preservers, and paddles.

They also made dummies of themselves, which they would tuck into their beds to fool guards into thinking they were in their cells.

The three prisoners climbed down a smokestack and over a fence on the night of their escape before launching their raft into San Francisco Bay.

What happened next remains a mystery, but on Dec. 31, 1979, the FBI closed its investigation ruling that the men had died while trying to get away from the island prison.

John Dillinger

In March 1934, Dillinger, a bank robber who had escaped custody before, pointed a gun at prison officials in Crown Point Jail in Indiana. The guards obeyed demands by Dillinger to unlock his cell before he locked up the guards and grabbed a pair of machine guns.

Dillinger later claimed that he was not actually armed — he had actually just used a piece of wood that he had whittled to look like a gun.

Several months later, Dillinger was shot to death by FBI agents in Chicago.

There are many similar stories. The chart below lists details about 20 of the most well-known escapes from American prisons in recent memory:

20 of the most high-profile prison escapes

A detailed look at some of the more memorable breaks from prisons in the US in recent decades. The list features 20 escapes involving 53 inmates prior to this month's prison break in upstate New York. For cases in which escapees are still loose, the details listed are what was known as of June 25.

Search:

Prisoner	Days on lam	Miles from prison	Crime(s)	Age when escaped	Facility	Prison location
David Sweat	19	Unknown	murder	35	Clinton Correctional Facility	Dannemora, New York
Richard Matt	19	Unknown	murder	48	Clinton Correctional Facility	Dannemora, New York
T.J. Lane	0	less than 1	murder	19	Allen Oakwood Correctional Institution	Lima, Ohio
Clifford E. Opperud	0	less than 1	kidnapping, robbery	45	Allen Oakwood Correctional Institution	Lima, Ohio
Lindsey Bruce	0	less than 1	murder	33	Allen Oakwood Correctional Institution	Lima, Ohio

Showing 1 to 53 of 53 entries

DATA: News reports, public records

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