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DOJ OIG Releases Report on the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Contraband Interdiction Efforts

The Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) announced today the release of a report examining the Federal Bureau of Prisons' (BOP) efforts to prevent the introduction of contraband into federal prisons. The OIG found that while the BOP has taken steps to improve its contraband detection and interdiction efforts, it can take additional steps to further deter contraband introduction and make its institutions safer for inmates, staff, and the public.

Items classified as contraband by the BOP include weapons, drugs, currency, tobacco, telephones, and electronic devices. According to BOP data, the most common type of contraband recovered from fiscal years 2012 through 2014 was cell phones, with at least 8,700 recovered in federal prisons during this period. Using a cell phone, inmates can carry out criminal activities undetected, including threatening and intimidating witnesses, victims, and public officials, and coordinate escape attempts.

Today's report identifies several deficiencies that affect the BOP's ability to more effectively deter contraband introductions, including:

- **The BOP does not comprehensively and reliably track all contraband recovered within its institutions.** The BOP has made progress in automating its data collection on contraband recoveries, but it still uses multiple systems for different kinds of contraband, and the policies and guidance that govern its data collection efforts are insufficient. As a result, the BOP's data about contraband recoveries in its prisons are confusing and incomplete, and this impedes the BOP's ability to effectively track and analyze contraband trends that might help it improve its interdiction efforts.
- **The BOP has not implemented an effective staff search policy to deter the introduction of contraband by prison staff.** In a January 2003 report, the OIG recommended that the BOP revise its staff search policy to require searches of staff and their property when entering institutions. After more than 10 years of negotiation with its union, the BOP implemented a new staff search policy in 2013. That policy provided that when BOP staff entered a BOP prison, their belongings could be searched randomly or based on reasonable suspicion. However, we found that the policy contained significant deficiencies. For example, it did not prescribe any required frequency for

conducting random pat searches; it allowed staff to possess and use within institutions items that are prohibited for inmates, such as tobacco; and it contained no restrictions on the size or content of personal property that staff may bring into institutions. The 2013 policy, with minor changes not relevant to this review, is in place today. As a result, more than 13 years after our 2003 report, the BOP still has no comprehensive and effective staff search policy.

- **The BOP has deployed new technologies to detect contraband, but more operational guidance and training are needed to maximize security.** The BOP employs several contraband detection technologies to combat contraband, and it continues to research, test, and install new technologies. However, we found the BOP's guidance and training materials need improvement to ensure the technologies' efficacy, to ensure compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003, and to ensure that operators fully protect institutional security.
- **Deficiencies with the BOP's cellular telephone laboratory (Lab) reports may adversely affect the timeliness of proceedings against inmates.** The Lab conducts forensic examinations of recovered cell phones. While the BOP has improved the Lab's mission and worked to address a backlog of recovered phones, we found that the utility of the Lab's reports was often hampered by repetition and excessive jargon, and BOP managers and Lab analysts did not understand how institution investigators use the Lab's reports to further an investigation.
- **Deficiencies within the BOP's security camera system adversely affect administrative and criminal proceedings against staff and inmates.** We found deficiencies with the BOP's security video camera system, including blind spots that are known to inmates and staff, that significantly limit the effectiveness of the system and adversely affect the safety and security of staff and inmates.

The OIG's report makes 11 recommendations to the BOP to help improve its contraband interdiction efforts. The BOP agreed with all of the recommendations.

The public version of this report contains redactions requested by the BOP because it determined that public release of the redacted information would harm its law enforcement efforts or otherwise compromise the safety and security of its institutions. A version of this report that contains no redactions has been provided to DOJ and BOP leadership, and to relevant Congressional committees.

Report: Today's report is available on the OIG's website at the following link: <https://oig.justice.gov/reports/2016/e1605.pdf>.

Multimedia: To accompany today's report, the OIG has released a 2-minute video featuring the Inspector General summarizing the report's findings. The video and a downloadable transcript are available at the following link: <https://oig.justice.gov/multimedia/>.