

Transcript: “A Message from IG Michael E. Horowitz: Review of the Federal Bureau of Prisons’ Monitoring of Contract Prisons” August 2016

Hello. I'm Michael Horowitz, Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Justice.

Today our office issued a report about the safety and security of federal contract prisons.

We found that, in most key areas we looked at, these contract prisons had a higher rate of safety and security incidents than prisons that are run by the Federal Bureau of Prisons, or BOP. We also found that the BOP needs to improve how it monitors the contractors who run these private prisons.

The BOP currently uses 14 contract prisons to hold about 22,000 federal inmates, at a cost of more than \$600 million per year. Most of the inmates in these contract prisons are foreign nationals who have been classified as low security.

In recent years, disturbances in several contract prisons resulted in extensive property damage, bodily injury, and even the death of a Correctional Officer. Last year, we audited one of these contract prisons and found that it was regularly understaffed in crucial areas, including correctional officers and health services workers.

Today's report focuses on what the BOP needs to do to make sure its contract prisons are safe and secure.

We made four primary findings that led us to conclude that the BOP must continue – and improve – its efforts to monitor contract prisons:

- First, contract prisons had a higher rate of safety and security incidents in many important areas. These included contraband, assaults, uses of force, and lockdowns, among others.
- Second, the BOP has identified, and the contractors subsequently corrected, some serious deficiencies at contract prisons. For example, one contract prison failed to initiate discipline in response to more than half of its safety and security incidents during a 6-month period.
- Third, some contract prisons we visited were improperly housing new inmates in a unit meant for discipline or segregation, without a sufficient justification.
- Fourth, the BOP's onsite monitors need to look more closely at the prisons' health and correctional services, and they need to coordinate better with BOP's headquarters staff.

Our report makes four recommendations to the BOP to help ensure that contract prisons are, and remain, a safe place to house federal inmates.

To learn more, visit our website, oig.justice.gov, where you can read the full report and learn about our other work on private contract prisons.

Thank you for joining us.