

Florida Department of Corrections



Office of the Inspector General

**CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION
INVESTIGATIVE ASSIST
CASE #15-17052**



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
INVESTIGATIVE ASSIST SUMMARY REPORT



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Case Number: 15-17052

OIG Inspector: Inspector Lorelei Anderson

Outside Agency: Florida Department of Law Enforcement

Outside Agency Investigator: Special Agent Brian Waid

Date Assigned or Initiated: 08-04-2015

Complaint Against: N/A

Location of Incident – Institution/Facility/Office: Charlotte Correctional Institution

Complainant: Inmate Quonta Howard (Deceased) #H00025

Outside Agency Case #: FM-37-0010

Use of Force Number: 15-17324

PREA Number: N/A

Classification of Incident: Death Investigation

Confidential Medical Information Included: Yes No

Whistle-Blower Investigation: Yes No

Chief Inspector General Case Number: N/A



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I. AUTHORITY

The Florida Department of Corrections, Office of the Inspector General, by designation of the Secretary and § 944.31, Florida Statutes, is authorized to conduct any criminal investigation that occurs on property owned or leased by the department or involves matters over which the department has jurisdiction.

The testimony references included in this report are summations of oral or written statements provided to inspectors. Statements contained herein do not necessarily represent complete or certified transcribed testimony, except as noted. Unless specifically indicated otherwise, all interviews with witnesses, complainants, and subjects were audio or video recorded.

II. METHODOLOGY

The investigation reviewed the derivations of the allegation advanced by the complainant. The scope of this investigation does not seek to specifically address tort(s), but violations of criminal statutes. The criterion used to evaluate each contention or allegation was limited to the following standard of analysis:

1. Did the subject's action or behavior violate Florida criminal statutes?

III. ANALYSIS

The standard and analysis in this investigation is predicated with the burden of proving any violation of law, established by probable cause. The evidence considered for analysis is confined to the facts and allegations stated or reasonably implied. The actions or behavior of the subject are presumed to be lawful and in compliance with the applicable Florida law, unless probable cause indicates the contrary.



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IV. DEFINITIONS

Unfounded:

Refers to a disposition of a criminal case for which probable cause does not exist to suggest the suspect's behavior or action occurred nor is an arrest or formal charge being initiated.

Closed by Arrest:

Refers to a disposition of a criminal case for which probable cause exists that an identified subject committed the offense and one for which an arrest or formal prosecution has been initiated.

Exceptionally Cleared:

Refers to a disposition of a criminal case for which probable cause exists that an identified suspect committed the offense, but one for which an arrest or formal charge is not initiated, or in the case of a death investigation, one for which no evidence exists that the death was the result of a crime or neglect.

Open-Inactive:

Refers to a disposition of a criminal case for which a criminal investigation commenced, but where evidence is insufficient to close as unfounded, closed by arrest, or exceptionally cleared.

Investigative Assist Closed

Refers to a disposition of an investigative assist, where the conduct being investigated by the outside agency did not concern allegations against a Department employee, contractor, inmate, offender, or other person either employed or under the supervision of the Department.



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V. PREDICATE

On or about August 4, 2015, the Office of the Inspector General received MINS #638725 indicating that on August 4, 2015, at approximately 5:35am, Inmate Quonta Howard, the sole occupant of cell C1110S, was found [REDACTED] by Correctional Officer Clinton Norris in C-dormitory at Charlotte Correctional Institution. Officer Norris initiated the Incident Command System (ICS) and alerted [REDACTED] and security. At approximately 5:38am, Sergeant Anthony Gardner, Sergeant Wesley Ward, Officer James Cotte, and Officer Kyle Black responded to cell C1110S along with [REDACTED]. Sergeant Gardner and Officer Cotte [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] arrived at approximately 6:03am, and [REDACTED]. At approximately 6:15am, Inmate Howard was pronounced deceased [REDACTED]. Senior Inspector Lorelei Anderson responded, FDLE was notified and responded. FDLE Special Agent Brian Waid is the lead investigator. This death investigation was assigned as an investigative assist to Senior Inspector Lorelei Anderson on August 4, 2015.

Investigator's notes:

On August 3, 2015, at approximately 2:30am, Correctional Officer Carlos Borges responded to cell A2106 where he observed Inmate Howard [REDACTED]. Officer Borges gave Inmate Howard several verbal orders to cease [REDACTED] however, it became necessary to utilize chemical agents in order to gain Inmate Howard's compliance. Subsequently, Inmate Howard and his roommate Inmate Mark Daigle DC #947660 submitted to hand restraints and Inmate Howard [REDACTED] and fell to the floor. At approximately 2:33am, the cell was breached and Inmate Howard [REDACTED].

On August 3, 2015, at approximately [REDACTED], Sergeant Daniel Kelly was [REDACTED] in wing 1 of C-Dormitory when he observed Inmate Howard in cell C1104 [REDACTED]. Sergeant Kelly remained cell front and utilized Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training in a fruitless attempt to place Inmate Howard in hand restraints. Sergeant Kelly notified [REDACTED] Lieutenant Angela Sanzalone who responded at approximately 7:45pm. Lieutenant Sanzalone employed CIT training in an effort to gain Inmate Howard's compliance, however, Inmate Howard appeared unresponsive. Lieutenant Sanzalone, Sergeant Peter Finnerty, and Officer Jesse Demello entered the cell, [REDACTED] where Inmate Howard [REDACTED]. Subsequently, Inmate Howard was returned to C-Dormitory, cell C1110S.

VI. SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS

Based on the exhibits, witnesses' testimony, subject officer's statements, and the record as a whole, presented or available to the primary inspector, the following findings of facts were determined:



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On August 4, 2015, the following documentation was provided to FDLE Agents Shane Pollard, Brian Waid, and Daniel Mehler:

- Charlotte CI Critical Incident Memo
- Visitation records
- Disciplinary History
- Inmate Trust Fund Account records
- Corrections Offender Information Network information

On August 4, 2015, Inspector Anderson along with FDLE Special Agent Bryan Waid attended the autopsy on Inmate Howard by Riazul Imami, MD. No initial cause of death was mentioned however, Dr. Imami indicated there was nothing extraordinary discovered during the examination other than [REDACTED]. Dr. Imami requested a copy of the August 3, 2015, post use of force handheld video in an effort to determine the [REDACTED].

The following documentation was provided to Medical Examiner's Office Investigator Gregory Sharf:

- Charlotte CI Critical Incident Memo
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- Post use of force handheld video
- Medical Examiner's Exemption Notification

On August 4, 2015, Senior Inspector Janene McLaughlin assisted Senior Inspector Lorelei Anderson, FDLE Special Agent Supervisor Vaden Pollard, Special Agent Bryan Waid, and Special Agent Daniel Mehler as follows:

- Formulated informational packet for Inspector Anderson for distribution.
- Escorted the Agents to C Dormitory, quad one to examine the crime scene and the body of Inmate Quonta Howard, DC#H00025.
- Remained with the body until the arrival of the Medical Examiner's Office Investigator and removal of Inmate Howard's body. Inspector McLaughlin sealed cell C1-110 per the direction of FDLE and it was to remain secured until the release by FDLE.
- Obtained [REDACTED] Inmate Howard per the request of the Medical Examiner's Office Investigator.
 - [REDACTED] Inmate Howard for the dates of August 3 and August 4, 2015, were provided as requested.
- Arranged for escort of inmates for interview by FDLE Agents.
- Copied August 3, 2015, Use of Force (UOF) video involving Inmate Howard for FDLE and the Medical Examiner's Office.
- Downloaded and copied [REDACTED] fixed wing video for UOF for FDLE.
- Downloaded [REDACTED] for FDLE.
 - There was an issue with the [REDACTED]. Therefore, [REDACTED] were not provided at this time.



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On August 5, 2015, Inspector McLaughlin assisted FDLE as follows:

- Downloaded [REDACTED] video and provided DVD to FDLE Special Agent Daniel Mehler.
- Escorted FDLE Special Agents to C1-110 for final examination. FDLE Special Agent Mehler advised cell C1-110 can be released back to normal operations. This was relayed to Senior Inspector Lorelei Anderson, C-Dormitory staff, and the administration at Charlotte CI.
- Downloaded [REDACTED] video and provided DVD to Special Agent Daniel Mehler. (C-Dormitory still not provided at this time)
- An inquiry was made by property room Officer John Fox asking about the release of Inmate Howard's personal property to his family, per their request. An email was sent to FDLE Special Agent Mehler asking if Inmate Howard's personal property can be released.
- Met with Warden John Willis, Assistant Warden Darryl Collins, Special Agent Supervisor Vaden Pollard, and Senior Inspector Lorelei Anderson per Warden Willis's request. Warden Willis had concerns regarding the [REDACTED] prior to the discovery of Inmate Howard's deceased body.

On August 6, 2015, Inspector McLaughlin assisted FDLE as follows:

- Reviewed and copied [REDACTED] from Inmate Howard's [REDACTED] per request of FDLE and subpoena.

On August 5, 2015, at 8:06pm, an inmate identifying himself as John Pavao DC #X72742 called the TIPS line from C-Dormitory at Charlotte Correctional Institution. The caller described what he allegedly observed in the hours leading up to the death of Inmate Howard. The caller gave specific times and locations in his description of events. According to the caller, "The Warden" subsequently made rounds in the unit, at which time he (caller) told "The Warden" he wished to make an official statement regarding what he observed. According to the caller, "The Warden" directed him to write to the Inspector General and ask to be interviewed. The caller stated he did as instructed. The caller stated he contacted the TIPS line, to ensure his message was received.

On August 6, 2015, FDLE Special Agent Vaden Pollard was notified about the TIPS call. Agent Pollard indicated he had spoken to Inmate Pavao at the cell front and had no intention to interview Inmate Pavao further.

On August 7, 2015, Inspector McLaughlin assisted FDLE as follows:

- Inmate Howard's personal property was reviewed by FDLE Special Agents. Inmate Howard's personal property was released by FDLE per Special Agent Daniel Mehler. Facility administration and property room staff were advised Inmate Howard's personal property could be released to appropriate family members per their request. Inspector Anderson was advised.
- [REDACTED] to Special Agents Daniel Mehler and Bryan Waid per their request and after receiving copy of the court order for such release. Inspector Anderson was advised a subpoena had been obtained by FDLE.



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- Assisted FDLE in arranging interview for [REDACTED]
- Warden Willis met with Special Agent Supervisor Vaden Pollard, Special Agent Bryan Waid, Special Agent Daniel Mehler, and Inspector McLaughlin concerning [REDACTED].
- Escorted FDLE Special Agents Daniel Mehler and Bryan Waid to C-Dormitory quad one to view the evidence seal on cell C1-110. The evidence seal was still intact. FDLE Special Agents released the cell back to normal operations. Facility administration and dormitory staff were advised the cell was released and could be placed back on line for normal use. Inspector Anderson was advised.
- Copied [REDACTED] video from the [REDACTED].
- Provided FDLE Special Agents the work schedule for staff involved in the following incidents involving Inmate Howard:
 - Staff involved in the use of force involving Inmate Howard on 8-3-15
 - Staff involved in the [REDACTED] by Inmate Howard on 8-3-15
 - Staff involved in the discovery of Inmate Howard on 8-4-15

On August 8, 2015, Inspector McLaughlin assisted FDLE as follows:

- Copied [REDACTED] video footage to DVD for FDLE Special Agents. This is the last of the video footage to provide to FDLE. DVD was given to Inspector Anderson for delivery to FDLE Special Agent Waid.

On August 10, 2015, Inspector McLaughlin assisted FDLE as follows:

- I provided FDLE Special Agents Bryan Waid and Daniel Mehler and Senior Inspector Lorelei Anderson with incident reports concerning Inmate Howard in reference to the use of force, the [REDACTED], and the discovery of Inmate Howard's deceased body.

On August, 10, 2015, the following information was provided to FDLE Special Agent Bryan Waid:

- [REDACTED] footage
- Main control room log for August 4, 2015, for day shift (5:00am to 5:00pm)

On September 8, 2015, District 22 Medical Examiner Dr. R. H. Imami issued the autopsy report for Inmate Quonta Howard. Dr. Imami's opinion is as follows:

Inmate Howard died [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Inmate Howard
[REDACTED] There were [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] . No evidence of [REDACTED] was
noticed, [REDACTED]. The manner of death was
classified as a suicide.

On October 12, 2015, Inspector McLaughlin assisted FDLE Special Agents Andrew Vass and Gary Negrinelli with the following staff interviews:



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- Sergeant Peter Finnerty
- Sergeant Daniel Kelly
- Officer Jesse Demello

On February 22, 2016, FDLE Special Agent Daniel Mehler provided a digital copy of the completed case file which indicated:

At the conclusion of this investigation it has been determined that Inmate Quonta Howard's manner of death was suicide [REDACTED]

Copies of FDLE's investigative reports are attached to investigative report. Due to the death was ruled as suicide, there will not be an investigative summary or final case report provided by FDLE.

According to Medical Examiner's case #15-A-83 and FDLE case #FM-37-0010, [REDACTED] The manner of death was suicide.

An administrative violation was discovered during the course of this investigation.

VII. CHARGES

List alleged violations of Florida Law:

N/A

VIII. CONCLUSION

Based on the information gathered during their investigation by FDLE Special Agent Daniel Mehler the death of Inmate Quonta Howard was determined to be a Suicide.

- **Investigative Assist Closed**

Inspector Anderson reviewed the investigation completed by FDLE. An administrative issue was identified and will be addressed in an administrative investigation.