

PRESS RELEASE

Incident Rates at CCA-run Prisons Higher than at Public Prisons in Tennessee

Private Corrections Institute

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For Immediate Release

Nashville, TN – According to an analysis of incidents involving assaults and disturbances at publicly-operated and privately-managed prisons in Tennessee from January 2009 to June 2011, incident rates were consistently higher at the state's three private prisons.

Data obtained from the Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) recorded incidents in 11 categories related to assaults on inmates, assaults on employees and institutional disturbances. Data was reported for the state's 11 prisons operated by the TDOC, as well as three facilities that house state prisoners run by Nashville-based Corrections Corporation of America (CCA).

The three CCA prisons (South Central Correctional Facility, Hardeman County Correctional Facility and Whiteville Correctional Facility) held between 25 and 27 percent of the state's prison population between January 2009 and June 2011 – slightly over 5,000 inmates.

While the average number of incidents per month per facility was 17.29 at the state-run prisons in 2009, the average number per month was 31.56 at each CCA facility. In 2010, the average number of incidents per month at each state prison was 19.58, and the average number was 31.69 at each CCA prison. During the first six months of 2011, the average number of incidents per month at state facilities was 20.38, while the average number per month at the CCA prisons was 29.56.

In terms of rates per 1,000 prisoner population, the privately-operated prisons had notably higher incident rates. For 2009, the average rate of incidents at the 11 state-run prisons was 13.92 per 1,000 population, while the average rate at the three CCA facilities was 18.68 – 34% higher than at TDOC prisons. The 2010 average rate of incidents at TDOC facilities was 14.51 per 1,000 population and the average rate at the CCA prisons was 18.68 – 28.7% higher than at the state-operated facilities. During the first six months of 2011, the average rate of incidents at TDOC prisons was 15.0 per 1,000 population while the average rate at the CCA facilities was 17.44 – 16.2% higher than at the TDOC prisons.

According to the TDOC's website, the 11 state-operated prison complexes all are rated either close or maximum security (not including minimum-security annexes), while two of the three CCA prisons are rated medium (a lower security designation) and one is rated close. Thus, even though more higher-security prisoners – close and maximum – were housed in state prisons, the CCA facilities still had higher average numbers of incidents per facility per month and higher average incident rates over the time period examined. In fact, during the 30-month period from January 2009 through June 2011, the average rate of incidents at TDOC prisons exceeded the rate at the privately-operated facilities only twice – in December 2009 and March 2011.

“This research confirms what other studies over the years have found – that privately-operated prisons have higher rates of assaults and other violent incidents than their public counterparts,” said Alex Friedmann, president of the Private Corrections Institute (PCI), who conducted the Tennessee research. “For example, according to an Associated Press report earlier this month, a CCA facility in Idaho had more assaults than all other Idaho state prisons *combined*, based on 2010 data,” Friedmann stated. CCA settled a class-action lawsuit involving the Idaho Correctional Center in September 2011, agreeing to make changes to reduce the high levels of violence at that facility.

“CCA will likely complain about the messenger, as the Private Corrections Institute is opposed to prison privatization,” said Friedmann, a former prisoner who served time at a CCA-operated prison in the 1990s. “But the message, which is based on data reported by the state’s Department of Correction for both public and private facilities, is very clear: privately-operated prisons in Tennessee have higher average numbers and rates of assaults and disturbances than public prisons, even though TDOC facilities house more prisoners with higher security levels. This indicates a serious problem with private prison management and also signifies a problem with the state’s oversight of the CCA-operated facilities.”

A copy of the statistical analysis is attached and the source data obtained from the TDOC is available upon request. While the higher rate of incidents at private prisons has been decreasing (from 34.2% higher in 2009 to 16.2% higher in June 2011), this seems to have more to do with a rise in incidents at state prisons rather than significantly fewer incidents at CCA facilities.

PCI’s Tennessee research mirrors other studies that have shown private prisons have higher rates of violence than their publicly-operated counterparts. According to a 2001 Bureau of Justice Assistance report, for example, private prisons had 65.8% more inmate assaults and 48.7% more assaults on staff than public prisons per 1,000 prisoner population. Further, a Tennessee study conducted by the Select Oversight Committee on Corrections in 1995 found that the CCA-operated South Central Correctional Facility “reported significantly more injuries to prisoners and staff,” with 214 injuries reported over a 15-month period compared with 21 and 51 injuries reported at two comparable state prisons.

The Private Corrections Institute (PCI) is a non-profit citizen watchdog organization that works to educate the public about the significant dangers and pitfalls associated with the privatization of correctional services. PCI maintains an online collection of news reports and other resources related to the private prison industry, and holds the position that for-profit prisons have no place in a free and democratic society. www.privateci.org.

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TDOC INCIDENTS REPORTED, JANUARY 2009 THROUGH JUNE 2011

2009		Total Incidents	Public Prisons	Private Prisons	Total Prison Population	Private Population	% Private Population	Public rate per 1000	Private rate per 1000
January	2009	278	188	90	19147	5079	0.2653	13.3637	17.7200
Feb	2009	267	188	79	19184	5073	0.2644	13.3229	15.5726
March	2009	306	204	102	19240	5076	0.2638	14.4027	20.0946
April	2009	278	182	96	19245	5073	0.2636	12.8422	18.9237
May	2009	268	168	100	19227	5077	0.2641	11.8728	19.6967
June **	2009	300	205	95	19153	5081	0.2653	14.5679	18.6971
July	2009	292	198	94	19156	5069	0.2646	14.0555	18.5441
August	2009	309	216	93	19306	5074	0.2628	15.1771	18.3287
Sept	2009	279	173	106	19416	5055	0.2604	12.0465	20.9693
Oct	2009	329	224	105	19564	5057	0.2585	15.4408	20.7633
Nov	2009	278	183	95	19724	5040	0.2555	12.4625	18.8492
Dec	2009	338	257	81	19763	5063	0.2562	17.4830	15.9984
TOTAL		3522	2386	1136				13.9198	18.6798
AVG # / MONTH		293.5	198.8333	94.66667				Average	Average
AVG # / FACILITY *		20.24138	17.28986	31.55556					

* Based on 11.5 state prisons and 3 private prisons, per month

** Brushy Mt. state prison phased out in June 2009; number of state facilities for 2009 is calculated at 11.5

1.3420 Higher rate of incidents in private prisons (private rate / public rate)

2010		Total Incidents	Public Prisons	Private Prisons	Total Prison Population	Private Population	% Private Population	Public rate per 1000	Private rate per 1000
January	2010	297	205	92	19800	5046	0.2548	13.8945	18.2323
Feb	2010	266	189	77	19949	5062	0.2537	12.6956	15.2114
March	2010	303	220	83	20020	5074	0.2534	14.7197	16.3579
April	2010	282	202	80	20032	5073	0.2532	13.5036	15.7698
May	2010	337	228	109	19907	5106	0.2565	15.4044	21.3474
June	2010	339	239	100	19855	5085	0.2561	16.1814	19.6657
July	2010	350	232	118	19920	5089	0.2555	15.6429	23.1873
August	2010	345	235	110	19945	5089	0.2552	15.8185	21.6152
Sept	2010	296	202	94	19893	5087	0.2557	13.6431	18.4785
Oct	2010	347	242	105	19961	5090	0.2550	16.2733	20.6287
Nov	2010	294	197	97	20016	5081	0.2538	13.1905	19.0907
Dec	2010	269	195	74	19903	5079	0.2552	13.1543	14.5698
TOTAL		3725	2586	1139				14.5102	18.6796
AVG # / MONTH		310.4167	215.5	94.91667				Average	Average
AVG # / FACILITY *		22.17262	19.59091	31.63889					

* Based on 11 state prisons and 3 private prisons, per month

1.287343 Higher rate of incidents in private prisons (private rate / public rate)

2011		Total Incidents	Public Prisons	Private Prisons	Total Prison Population	Private Population	% Private Population	Public rate per 1000	Private rate per 1000
January	2011	267	178	89	19838	5072	0.2557	12.0547	17.5473
Feb	2011	295	219	76	19894	5071	0.2549	14.7743	14.9872
March	2011	294	221	73	19915	5078	0.2550	14.8952	14.3757
April	2011	313	213	100	20135	5094	0.2530	14.1613	19.6309
May	2011	371	277	94	20132	5093	0.2530	18.4188	18.4567
June	2011	337	237	100	20176	5098	0.2527	15.7183	19.6155
TOTAL		1877	1345	532				15.0038	17.4356
AVG # / MONTH		312.8333	224.1667	88.66667				Average	Average
AVG # / FACILITY *		22.34524	20.37879	29.55556					

* Based on 11 state prisons and 3 private prisons, per month

1.16208 Higher rate of incidents in private prisons (private rate / public rate)