

PRESS RELEASE



Private Corrections Institute (www.privateci.org)

October 25, 2013

For Immediate Release

Gun Found in Segregation Cell at Privately-operated Mississippi Prison

Natchez, Miss. – According to documents recently produced by the Mississippi Department of Corrections pursuant to a public records request, a semi-automatic pistol and other contraband was found at the Wilkinson County Correctional Facility in Woodville on September 13. The prison is operated by Management & Training Corporation (MTC), a for-profit company.

According to emails from MTC officials, an anonymous phone call to the facility indicated that contraband was going to be “thrown over the fence on the south end of the prison which house [sic] Long Term Segregation offenders and there was to be a gun in the package.” The fence line was “walked twice” before a package with contraband was located, which contained three cell phones and tobacco but no firearm.

Based on the anonymous call, staff located a broken cell window in G Pod. A search of the cell resulted in the discovery of a semi-automatic Model MP .25 pistol in the possession of a prisoner. Other contraband found in the cell included tobacco, a cell phone charger and a “6 in. sharpened weapon made of the cell light fixture.”

There was no indication how the firearm ended up inside the segregation cell. The gun was found in the cell of Isaac Garner; another prisoner, Gary Long, was reportedly implicated in the incident. Both were transferred to other prisons.

The south end of the Wilkinson County Correctional Facility was placed on lockdown after the firearm was found. MTC did not publicly announce that a gun had been brought into the facility and MTC spokesperson Issa Arnita declined to comment about the incident, citing an ongoing investigation.

According to Mississippi Department of Corrections Communications Director Grace Simmons Fisher, no firearms were found in state-run secure correctional facilities last year and thus far in 2013; the only gun discovered was at the Wilkinson County prison.

“The introduction of a firearm into a correctional facility is a serious security breach,” said Alex Friedmann, president of the Private Corrections Institute (PCI), a non-profit watchdog group that opposes the privatization of correctional services. “It’s telling that since 2012, the only gun found in a Mississippi prison was at a privately-operated facility, and that the contractor, MTC, decided not to publicly disclose that incident.

“Why didn’t MTC’s perimeter guards detect the introduction of contraband over the fence? How did the gun end up inside a prisoner’s segregation cell? And why did it take an anonymous phone call to alert prison staff? The public deserves answers to those questions,” he added.

MTC assumed management of the 1,000-bed Wilkinson County Correctional Facility in July 2013 after the state declined to renew its contract with the former operator, Corrections Corporation of America. The prison had a history of violence during CCA’s tenure, including an April 20, 2013 riot that resulted in the stabbing death of prisoner Demond Flowers, 21.

For more information, please contact:

Alex Friedmann, President
Private Corrections Institute
www.privateci.org
(615) 495-6568
afriedmann@prisonlegalnews.org

The Private Corrections Institute (www.privateci.org) 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.