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## **ICE's private prison in Calexico draws auditor's ire**

### **"Medical checks insufficient to ensure proper detainee care"**

A Calexico detention center run for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement by a controversial Utah contractor has received a blistering review from the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General, which found that inmates "were held in administrative segregation for prolonged periods of 22 to 23 hours a day, including two detainees who had been held in isolation for more than 300 days." "We also determined that parts of the facility were in poor condition, medical checks were insufficient to ensure proper detainee care, medical grievances and responses were not properly documented, and ICE communication with detainees was limited." "Until ICE takes corrective action to address these violations of detention standards, the facility will be unable to ensure an environment that protects the health, safety, and rights of detainees." The December 18 report, based on a surprise inspection by auditors to the Calexico facility in February, targets ICE's Imperial Regional Detention Facility, operated by Management and Training Corporation for the San Diego branch of ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations office. "At the time of our visit, [the Imperial Regional Detention Facility] housed 626 ICE detainees with a facility capacity of 704 detainees. The detainee population then comprised 559 males, 63 females, and 4 transgender individuals." Regarding costs, "ICE paid MTC \$155.65 per day for each detainee held at [Imperial Regional Detention Facility]," per the document. "During our visit, we inspected IRDF facilities, including detainee housing units, food service areas, medical care areas, and recreation and religious areas." According to the report, "Medical staff regularly conducted medical checks during detainee sleeping hours and spent only 10 to 15 minutes completing the checks and documenting visits to 20 or more detainees. Facility officials cited registered nurse staffing shortages as the reason for the short visits. "The facility staffing plan shows there should be nine full-time nurses and one part-time nurse, but there were only six full-time nurses on staff, covering three shifts. By not thoroughly and appropriately conducting medical checks, IRDF staff are not able to adequately identify and address mental health or other medical concerns affecting segregated detainees." Regarding a bevy of substandard physical conditions at the facility, the audit says, "we observed mold, rust, and peeling paint in showers in detainee housing areas." Standard issue jail garments and shoes were "ill-fitting, stained, and damaged," and "detainees told us they had complained of torn and deteriorating mattresses, but the facility had not replaced them." "In the food preparation and storage areas we found expired frozen tortillas and turkey bologna, and moldy zucchini." According to the report, ICE management has agreed to a list of six operational changes proposed by the Inspector General's office to improve conditions at the jail. A December 11 account published by USA Today reported that Mississippi officials "failed to enforce contractual penalties that punish short staffing" at a state prison operated by Management and Training Corporation. "Instead, they continued to pay MTC the salaries of absent employees, aka ghost workers." A company spokesman "attributed staff shortages to low pay resulting from a state law that requires private prisons to cost 10 percent less to operate than public facilities, as well as the small labor pools near the rural prisons." During the latest federal election cycle the MTC PAC made a total of \$94,000 in campaign contributions, divided 50-50 among Democratic and Republican lawmakers, according to the website OpenSecrets.org.