

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
STATE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION
CAMP HILL, PA. 17011
November 12, 1989

SUBJECT: SCI-CAMP HILL EVENTS LEADING
UP TO THE OCTOBER 25 - 26, 1989 RIOTS

TO: [REDACTED]

FROM: Richard C. Smith
Deputy Superintendent for Operations

From July 1989 to the time of the riots, this institution was experiencing constant problems with the Nation of Islam (F.O.I.) religious sect within the institution as outlined in the attached report regarding [REDACTED]. F.O.I. members constantly assaulted staff in the RHU to such an extent that we were forced in June 1989 to create a Disciplinary Maximum Custody Unit in the Lower Level of the RHU (D-block).

To add to our problems in the institution, we received an inmate from SCI-Dallas as an Administrative Transfer who was a self-proclaimed F.O.I. Minister, [REDACTED]. This inmate managed to stir up and organize the F.O.I. that were housed in the R.H.U. creating many of the problems previously referenced in this report. This inmate was transferred May 31, 1989.

In April or May 1989, I received information that inmates [REDACTED] (F.O.I. Leader) and [REDACTED] (F.O.I. Lieutenant) assaulted another inmate in front of kitchen II. I directed an investigation into the matter, had them placed in the RHU and eventually transferred, in an attempt to stay the recruitment drive these inmates were mounting with the young, impressionable inmates from Philadelphia. In addition to these inmates, we were given authorization to transfer [REDACTED], [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

Inmates [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were immediately replaced in the F.O.I. hierarchy by inmate [REDACTED], a LIFER from SCI-Camp Hill.

In June 1989, several Muslim F.O.I. inmates threw "Mule Kick" acid on the RHU staff which caused us to totally re-think our procedures in the RHU. We met with staff and discussed instituting a number of new procedures in the RHU (see attached).

One (1) F.O.I. inmate, [REDACTED], that we transferred to SCI-Huntingdon, stabbed an Officer there repeatedly in June 1989.

This inmate began organizing the inmates on the exercise fields marching, saluting, etc. I was shown a video tape that had been recorded by Officers in the Security Office in July of 1989 where F.O.I. inmates were organized in a group (larger than 10) on Field #2 (Main Stockade). These inmates were being addressed by an F.O.I. inmate who had two (2) guards or sentinels at his side standing at attention facing away from the group.

On October 19, 1989, I reviewed a Daily Incident Report filed by [REDACTED] which stated Inmates [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] along with six (6) other inmates were making subversive comments in the vicinity of the Control Desk such as "they can only do what we let them do" or something to that effect. I had both inmates placed in the RHU since they had extensive histories of attempting to organize inmates against the institution. [REDACTED] was a MOVE member out of Philadelphia that had been continuously confined in the Dallas RHU for years. He was sent to Camp Hill for a fresh start since Camp Hill had two (2) other MOVE inmates that were functioning without problems in the population. [REDACTED] had been continuously confined in the SCI-Pittsburgh, SCI-Huntingdon, and SCI-Camp Hill RHU's, due to his involvement in an attempted take over of the Lifer's Association at SCI-Pittsburgh and other serious incidents at SCI-Huntingdon. I interviewed [REDACTED] in my office and attempted to ascertain whether he could identify other inmates that were present in the group other than [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] or if he could recall further conversations that he heard. He informed me that he did not know the other inmates present, and only heard what was in his report. I discussed this information with [REDACTED] in the Department regarding possible misconduct charges and was advised that no charges were feasible. I was due to see these inmates at Program Review Committee on Wednesday afternoon, October 25, 1989. Since I was unable to attend, due to the asbestos meeting with [REDACTED] I called either [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] and informed them they were to place these inmates on Administrative Custody due to their past prison history's. I believe when I had these two (2) inmates placed in the RHU, I had this announced on the Daily Dissemination of Information Sheet to be read to on-coming shifts of Corrections Officers, Tradesmen, Culinary Staff, Superintendent Freeman and Deputy Henry. I also discussed this RHU placement with Superintendent Freeman personally.

I had [REDACTED] brought to my office by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I, along with [REDACTED] (Security Officer) and the Sergeants, informed [REDACTED] that we would not tolerate any inmate gathering larger than ten (10), and that inmates were not to salute or wear military insignias, and that there would be no guards or sentinels utilized anywhere in the institution.

Following this meeting, these inmates were informed by the staff, but we continued to have problems in the RHU and the institution. In an attempt to improve communications between staff and inmates in the RHU, I assigned [REDACTED] who is a strong leader and respected Officer in the institution, to the RHU. In addition, he was black and I thought his assignment along with the assignment of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] would provide a racial mix among staff and improve staff/inmate relations.

With the D.C. Max concept implemented and shake up of the RHU staff, there appeared to be an improvement in the RHU atmosphere.

Through the summer we began to receive information that a demonstration was planned by the F.O.I. during the Annual Track and Field Meet scheduled for September 2, 1989. Superintendent Freeman briefed Commissioner Owens, [REDACTED], and all Superintendents about the information at the Superintendents Meeting held in August 1989.

The day prior to the Track Meet, a FAX was received in the field from [redacted] explaining that the Track and Field Meet was cancelled due to inclement weather.

All staff in the institution were aware of the expected problems by the F.O.I. because prior to the event being cancelled, we ordered that only participants would attend, the event would be video taped and shown on the dedicated movie channel in the Housing Unit dayrooms at a later date.

In 1987, we issued a policy restricting what food could be brought into the institution by staff. This caused a great deal of controversy among the staff since they were searched entering the gate, then would look to their right seeing inmates and their visitors eating from picnic cooler upon picnic cooler of food brought into the institution through the Guest House. Everyone in the institution knew that the practice of picnic visits had to be stopped at some point since it was virtually impossible for security staff to check the food for contraband. I felt that we would at some point, have a weapon or serious narcotic brought in causing an event such as I experienced as a Lieutenant at SCI-Pittsburgh in 1983 (hostage crisis). This policy was openly discussed both with the Union and all management staff in the institution for months regarding how to implement this policy change, and when to implement the change.

On August 1989, [redacted] entered the institution Infirmary and found numerous medical staff eating expensive food that [redacted] had brought in on a Family Day Visit. This inmate was an Infirmary patient and had no right to a Family Day Visit by policy, but the most critical aspect of this impropriety was that the numerous picnic coolers of food by-passed the Strip and Search area and came directly into the institution. To this date, I along with other ranking security staff feel that serious contraband entered our facility on that date. An investigation was started and [redacted] the Hospital Administrator, was given a Written Reprimand for his actions in this incident.

At this point, Administrative Staff decided that the policy must be implemented. Various drafts were concluded and discussed and finally a decision was made on a final policy which added one Family Day Visit, permitted Family Day Visits year round instead of May through September only, and it was decided to expand the types of foods available through the vending machines in the Visiting Area.

The policy was copied and ready for issue to all inmates on Friday, October 13, 1989, but was held at the direction of the Superintendent until Monday evening October 16, 1989, since he intended to avoid any problems over a weekend when less staff are present in the institution should a problem develop.

In the interim, while this was transpiring, Deputy Henry had met for a Labor/Management Meeting with PNA (Pennsylvania Nurses Association). They had requested a policy change in the way inmate morning Sick Line was handled. The existing practice was to have a sign-up sheet in the front of all Housing Units. When inmates went to morning breakfast they could sign up for Sick Line then through the morning, each Housing Unit would be called down either to the satellite Dispensary in Groups

II and III, or at the Infirmary I in Group I. As I understand it, they complained that there was too much traffic in the Dispensary's while attempting to run Sick Line and distributing medication at the same time. It should be noted that between January 1989 and September 1989, the unit doses of medication increased from 70,968 doses per inmate to 156,312 doses per inmate.

This policy was discussed at the Superintendent's Staff Meeting and I, along with [REDACTED], opposed the policy since we felt that the Officers would be put in a position of screening out whether an inmate was legitimately ill or not. We felt this situation was not feasible due to the ongoing problems we were experiencing between the Officers and medical staff on this very type of issue in the evenings and on weekends.

After a great deal of discussion, the Superintendent decided to implement the policy on a trial basis for ninety (90) days.

On October 19, 1989, I met with AFSCME Local 2495 for our regular monthly Labor/Management Meeting. At this meeting, the Union (representing the Corrections Officers) expressed their concern over the two (2) recently issued policies on Family Days and Sick Line. They especially voiced considerable concern over the Sick Line Policy since they felt that PNA (nurses union) had managed to switch their problems onto the Officers in the Housing Units, who already had their hands full. They stated that Officers are in no way qualified to make a medical diagnosis and they cited a recent incident where an RN had refused to see an inmate and the inmate ended up being rushed to a community hospital a short time later because he was seriously ill.

I called the Superintendent and passed their concerns along to him on these matters and at Administrative Staff, I again made my argument and voiced my concerns over the Sick Line Policy. I argued at Administrative Staff that an exception be requested from the Commissioner since I felt this local policy was in conflict with Department of Corrections Policy. When the Superintendent agreed to request an exception to the policy, Deputy Henry questioned whether we should cancel the policy until the Commissioner's Office responded to the exception. The Superintendent made the decision to continue the policy while an exception was requested.

Late Tuesday afternoon, the Operations Administrative Officer, [REDACTED] red flagged a Daily Incident Report which was from an Officer in J-block which stated that ninety-three (93) inmates had signed up for Sick Line on Tuesday, October 24, 1989. I recognized that this number was way out of line by nearly 50% of the Housing Unit, and I called [REDACTED] to investigate the matter further. I discovered that thirty (30) of the ninety-three (93) inmates had received medical lay-ins. Medical lay-ins is a practice that has been in existence for at least the 3½ years that I have been assigned to SCI-Camp Hill. At other institutions, to my knowledge, a medical lay-in was simply an excuse for an inmate to miss work for the day. At SCI-Camp Hill, a medical lay-in meant the inmate was confined to his cell, except for meals. I had argued against this practice on numerous occasions, and to my knowledge, the practice was under review by the Superintendent and Deputy Henry.

I instructed [REDACTED] to check with the Infirmary which inmates were medically laid-in and why. [REDACTED] called me back and informed me that the Infirmary had no record of the inmates being laid-in. I then asked him to check who had laid them in and he responded that the lay-in forms in the Housing Unit were pre-printed and pre-stamped, all identical with [REDACTED] name on them.

I then called [REDACTED] since the 10-6 Shift was now ON DUTY, and had him research all Housing Units to ascertain how many inmates were on medical lay-ins in the institution. At this point, I realized that "F" and "J" blocks were scheduled for Sick line the next morning and I feared that if a large number of inmates would be signed up for Sick Line and were "forced" to lay-in, that we could have an incident on the spot with the inmates refusing to "lock up".

I called Deputy Henry and spoke with his son [REDACTED] and asked him to have his father call me when he arrived home. I then called Superintendent Freeman at his home and briefed him on the entire scenario and expressed my concerns that we could have a problem in the morning. I informed the Superintendent that I had the 10-6 Shift researching medical lay-ins for the entire institution and that I would report my findings in the morning. I asked him to issue an order that stated that a medical lay-in was only to be used in excusing an inmate from work and that inmates were permitted to go to yard, activities, etc. while on medical lay-in. He stated he would review my findings in the morning and deal with the problem. I stayed up the remainder of the night reviewing reports that had backed up in my office which was typical, as busy as we are.

On Tuesday evening, October 24, 1989, while I had the 2-10 Shift researching the medical lay-ins of thirty (30) inmates in J-block, I had [REDACTED] brought to my office. As previously mentioned, I had ordered [REDACTED] to cease such practices as gathering in groups of ten (10) or more, saluting, wearing of military insignias, and placement of inmate guards or sentinels outside the group when they gathered. [REDACTED] had sent me a letter stating that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were misinterpreting my orders regarding guards or sentinels. I discussed the issue of inmate guards with him and he informed me this was part of his religious belief. I informed him if he could show me a copy of that in an official religious doctrine, that I would consider his request. [REDACTED] responded that I could check with [REDACTED] since he had been an F.O.I. follower all his life and could verify this as a legitimate religious practice. I was appalled to hear that our Chaplain was an F.O.I. follower, but responded to [REDACTED] that I would discuss this issue with the Chaplain. I then asked [REDACTED] about the mood of the institution regarding the two (2) recently issued policies (Family Days and Sick Line). He responded that Family Days never should have been started at this institution, and that some inmates were disgruntled over the policies but it wasn't that much of an issue. I ended the conversation by telling [REDACTED] that we were about to place twenty (20) additional inmate phones on Field #1 to improve communications between inmates and their families. In addition, I informed him that \$147,000.00 had been approved to convert the unused Main Auditorium into a Sports Complex. [REDACTED] then left my office, as did [REDACTED] the Superintendent's Administrative Assistant who had been present for the entire conversation.

The first thing in the morning, I called [REDACTED] to attempt to ascertain the number of inmates that had signed up for Sick Line. [REDACTED] informed me that there were roughly fifty (50) inmates from each block that were to go to Sick Line. This number was still excessive, but not as serious as expected.

I reported all my findings in the morning to the Superintendent and as I understand it, he sent Deputy Henry an order to research the 30 medical lay-ins and report back to him on his findings.

I was extremely busy on Wednesday, preparing for a meeting Wednesday morning with [REDACTED] and other staff. The preparation was for a meeting with [REDACTED] who was representing the institution on a "conditions of confinement suit" involving asbestos in the institution that had been filed by [REDACTED] from the Dickinson Law School, in behalf of the inmates of the institution.

At approximately 1:00 p.m., I met with [REDACTED], Superintendent Freeman, [REDACTED] and others in the Superintendent's Office about the suit. Following that meeting, I took [REDACTED] into B-block to show him the asbestos that existed there. My involvement once the incident began, is outlined in my report dated November 9, 1989.

RGS/clf

cc: Deputy Henry

[REDACTED]
File