

Transcript: “A Message from the Deputy Inspector General: Audit of the United States Marshals Service Contract with CoreCivic, Inc. to Operate the Leavenworth Detention Center, Leavenworth, Kansas” April 2017

Hello. I’m Rob Storch, Deputy Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Justice.

Our office conducts oversight of Justice Department private contract prisons and facilities, and today we released a report examining the Leavenworth Detention Center in Kansas, which holds detainees of the U.S. Marshals Service.

We identified several significant concerns at the facility.

For example, we found that understaffing at Leavenworth potentially placed the security of staff and detainees at risk. During one year we examined, the average staff vacancy rate climbed to 11 percent. The vacancy rate among correctional officers reached as high as 23 percent.

To compensate for the understaffing, Leavenworth managers closed numerous posts that the contractor, a company called CoreCivic, had identified as necessary to ensure the safety and security of the detention center. Leavenworth managers also had to reassign staff who were not correctional officers to cover security posts, sometimes to the detriment of detainee services.

We also found that in 2011, without the knowledge of the Marshals Service, Leavenworth officials intentionally concealed from the American Correctional Association -- an organization that conducts audits of correctional facilities -- Leavenworth’s practice of triple bunking detainees in cells designed for two. A subsequent CoreCivic internal investigation revealed that this may have also occurred during other ACA audits of Leavenworth.

These and other issues went undetected -- often for long periods of time -- because the Marshals Service failed to provide sufficient oversight of the contractor. For example, we found that the employee who was assigned responsibility by the Marshals Service for monitoring Leavenworth on a day-to-day basis was stationed offsite, visited Leavenworth infrequently, and lacked adequate training, experience, and guidance. We also found that inspection activities at Leavenworth were not documented, and neither an inspection program nor monitoring procedures were developed for the facility.

As we state in today’s report, we are concerned that the lack of effective monitoring at Leavenworth may also be a problem at other facilities that hold Marshals Service detainees.

The findings in today’s report underscore the challenges of ensuring that facilities holding federal inmates and detainees -- including those operated by contractors -- are well run, and safe and secure for all staff, inmates, and detainees. We will continue to do our part in helping the Justice Department identify and address those challenges.

To learn more about these and other findings in our report, and to see our 24 recommendations, please visit our website, oig.justice.gov.

Thank you for joining us.