



“A Message from the Inspector General: Investigation and Review on the BOP’s Custody, Care, and Supervision of Jeffrey Epstein at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York, New York,” June 2023

Hello, I’m Michael Horowitz, Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Justice.

Today my office released a report on the Federal Bureau of Prisons, or BOP’s, custody, care, and supervision of inmate Jeffrey Epstein at the MCC New York. On August 10, 2019, Epstein was found hanged in his locked cell within the prison’s secure Special Housing Unit. The New York City’s Office of the Chief Medical Examiner determined that Epstein died by suicide.

Today’s report follows numerous other OIG reports, unrelated to Epstein, that have repeatedly identified long-standing operational challenges at the BOP that negatively affect its ability to operate institutions safely and securely. Today’s report identified many of these same operational challenges, including significant job performance and management failures on the part of BOP personnel; widespread disregard of BOP policies; and deficiencies with the BOP’s staffing levels; security camera systems; and custody and care of inmates at risk for suicide.

For example, we determined that MCC New York staff failed to ensure Epstein was assigned a cellmate as instructed by MCC New York’s Psychology Department following an incident on July 23rd where Epstein was found unresponsive in his cell with a cloth wrapped around his neck. In addition, we concluded that MCC New York staff failed to undertake required measures designed to ensure Epstein and other inmates were accounted for and safe in their cells, such as inmate counts and rounds, and searches of cells. Had Epstein’s cell been searched as required, it would have revealed that Epstein had excess prison blankets, linens, and clothing in his cell. MCC New York staff also failed to ensure that the institution’s security camera system was fully functional, resulting in limited recorded video evidence.

While we determined MCC New York staff engaged in significant misconduct, we did not uncover evidence contradicting the FBI’s determination that there was no criminality in connection with how Epstein died.

The combination of negligence, misconduct, and outright job performance failures documented in today’s report all contributed to an environment in which arguably one of the most notorious inmates in BOP’s custody was left unmonitored and alone in his cell with an excess of prison linens, thereby providing him with the opportunity to take his own life. The BOP’s failures are troubling not only because the BOP did not adequately safeguard an individual in its custody, but also because they led to questions about the circumstances surrounding Epstein’s death and effectively deprived Epstein’s numerous victims of the opportunity to seek justice through the criminal justice system.

The fact that these chronic problems and failures have been recurring ones does not excuse them, and gives additional urgency to the need for DOJ and BOP leadership to address them.

To read our report and our 8 recommendations, please visit our website oig.justice.gov, or go to oversight.gov.

Thank you for joining me today.

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