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News Releases



MAY 2, 2013 PHOENIX, AZ

ICE detainee under criminal investigation passes away at Eloy Detention Center

PHOENIX – A Guatemalan man in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and under criminal investigation by local authorities, passed away Tuesday at the Eloy Detention Center of an apparent suicide.

Jorge Garcia-Mejia, aka Jorge Garcia-Maldonado, 40, was found unresponsive in his cell Tuesday afternoon by staff conducting security checks. Detention facility personnel immediately called 911, emergency medical technicians responded to the scene, but were unable to revive Garcia-Mejia. He was pronounced dead at 2:45 p.m.

ICE is committed to ensuring the safety of immigration detainees in its custody. As such, ICE Health Service Corps (IHSC) is conducting a thorough assessment of this incident.

Garcia-Mejia came into ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations custody March 22 after he was encountered at the Maricopa County Jail following an arrest for assault. He had been detained at the Eloy Detention Center since March 23, awaiting immigration hearings related to his removal case. While at Eloy, Garcia-Mejia received two routine medical screenings, but did not seek any medical or mental health treatment.

Garcia-Mejia was the subject of an ongoing investigation by the Phoenix Police Department into suspected sexual conduct with a minor.

Consistent with ICE protocol, the appropriate state health and local law enforcement agencies have been informed and ICE has notified the Guatemalan consulate.

As part of the agency's ongoing efforts to ensure the safety of individuals in its custody, IHSC mental health professionals and the facility chaplain are conducting group counseling sessions for detainees. In addition, the deployed IHSC mental health personnel will work with the facility administrator at the Eloy Detention Center to provide further suicide prevention and awareness training for detainees and facility staff. Finally, IHSC plans to conduct a thorough assessment of this incident and the April 28 suicide of a Guatemalan woman at the facility to identify the underlying causes.

In addition to these steps, ICE is sending a team of specialists to review the Eloy facility's compliance with ICE standards on suicide prevention and intervention. The agency is also assessing Correction Corporation of America's (CCA) staffing model to ensure it provides appropriate supervision and monitoring of detainees at the facility. CCA will also conduct an internal review of its suicide prevention policies and practices. ICE contracts with CCA for the operation of the Eloy Detention Center, under ICE oversight.

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