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Enforcement and Removal

11/26/2018

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ICE detainee passes away at local hospital

TACOMA, Wash. – Mergensana Amar, 40, a Russian national in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was removed from life support Saturday afternoon, after attempting to take his own life on Nov. 15.

After finding Amar unresponsive in his cell at the Northwest Detention Center on Nov. 15, medical staff at the detention center immediately called 911 and began efforts to resuscitate him. Amar was rushed to Saint Joseph's Medical Center in Tacoma, admitted to the hospital's intensive care unit, and placed on life support. While Amar remained on life support through Nov. 24, medical records will mark his official date of passing as Nov. 18, as brain activity ceased on that day. The preliminary cause of death has been identified as anoxic brain injury due to asphyxiation.

Despite his previous participation in a hunger strike, Amar remained in good physical health prior to this incident and was monitored daily by ICE Health Service Corps medical professionals. While he refused meals provided by the detention center for a number of days, he began consuming fresh fruit, electrolytes and meal replacement shakes on Sep. 19, consuming sufficient calories to be removed from hunger strike status on October 16. ICE has not previously released the timeline of his hunger strike status due to Amar's repeated threats to resume the hunger strike should its end be made public.

Consistent with the agency's protocols, the appropriate state health and local law enforcement agencies have been notified about the death, as have the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General and the ICE Office of Professional Responsibility. Additionally, ICE has advised Russian consular representatives. Since Amar's hospitalization last week, ICE, through the assistance of the Russian Embassy, successfully contacted his next of kin. Pursuant to policy, a thorough investigation of this incident will be conducted by the appropriate parties.

ICE Health Service Corps (IHSC) ensures the provision of necessary medical care services as required by [ICE Performance-Based National Detention Standards](#) and based on the medical needs of the detainee. Comprehensive medical care is provided from the moment detainees arrive and throughout the entirety of their stay. All ICE detainees receive medical, dental and mental health intake screening within 12 hours of arriving at each detention facility, a full health assessment within 14 days of entering ICE custody or arrival at a facility, and access to daily sick call and 24-hour emergency care. Pursuant to our commitment to the welfare of those in the agency's custody, ICE annually spends more than \$250 million on the spectrum of healthcare services provided to detainees.

Amar was placed in ICE custody after he sought admission at a U.S. port of entry without the proper documentation to enter or remain in the United States. He was afforded due process and was subject to an executable final order of removal on November 5, 2018. Amar was scheduled for removal in the month of November.

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Amar is the second detainee to pass away in ICE custody in fiscal year 2019.

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