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Cuban man in ICE custody passes away at Florida hospital

MIAMI – A Cuban man in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Enforcement (ICE) passed away Monday morning at Larkin Community Hospital in Miami where he had been receiving inpatient medical treatment since January 23.

The 63-year-old Cuban man, whose identity is being withheld pending notification of next of kin, was pronounced dead by a hospital physician at 9:32 a.m. local time January 27, 2020. The preliminary cause of death was ruled to be cardiac arrest.

Consistent with the agency's protocols, the appropriate agencies have been notified about the death, including the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General, and the ICE Office of Professional Responsibility. Additionally, ICE has notified the Cuban consulate.

ICE is firmly committed to the health and welfare of all those in its custody and is undertaking a comprehensive agency-wide review of this incident, as it does in all such cases. Fatalities in ICE custody, statistically, are exceedingly rare and occur at a fraction of the national average for the U.S. detained population.

This agency's comprehensive review will be conducted by ICE senior leadership to include Enforcement and Removal Operations, the Office of Professional Responsibility and the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor.

ICE lodged an immigration detainer against the individual January 2, 2020, after encountering him at the Turner Gilford Knight Correctional Center in Miami where he was in criminal custody for theft. He was convicted of theft January 3, 2020, and sentenced to 15 days in jail. He entered ICE custody January 14, 2020, following his release from local criminal custody.

He was initially paroled into the U.S. in May 1980 in Key West, Florida, as a Cuban national arriving in the U.S. He was subsequently convicted on felony heroin charges and aggravated assault with a weapon in Mercer County Superior Court in Trenton, New Jersey, in February 1984, and sentenced to ten years in prison.

He was subsequently convicted of unlawful possession of a weapon in Mercer County Superior Court in November 2009 and sentenced to 18 months incarceration. In June 2014 he was convicted in Mercer County Superior Court for possession of a controlled substance and sentenced to three years of probation.

At the time of his death, the individual was pending removal to Cuba in accordance with a final order of removal issued by a federal immigration judge in July 2000.

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