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Enforcement and Removal

08/07/2020

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Canadian man in ICE custody passes away in Virginia

WASHINGTON – A 72-year-old Canadian national subject to mandatory detention under federal law in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement at the Immigration Centers of America (ICA) Farmville Detention Center in Farmville, Virginia, died Wednesday night at a Virginia hospital, where he had been receiving treatment for several weeks. The preliminary cause of death is undetermined at this time.

James Thomas Hill, 72, was pronounced dead at 11:42 p.m. local time by hospital medical staff at Lynchburg General Hospital in Virginia. After reporting shortness of breath to facility staff at ICA Farmville July 10, he was admitted to Centra Southside Community Hospital in Farmville, Virginia, before being transferred to Lynchburg General Hospital July 11.

A COVID-19 test administered by medical staff at Lynchburg General Hospital came back positive July 11.

Hill entered ICE custody April 15 following his release from the Rivers Federal Correctional Institute in Winton, North Carolina, after serving more than 13 years of a 26-year prison sentence. He was convicted in March 2007 for health care fraud and distributing a controlled substance. An immigration judge ordered his removal May 12.

As an aggravated felon, Hill was subject to mandatory detention by ICE under federal law. At the time of his death, Hill was in ICE custody pending removal to Canada.

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.

Consistent with the agency's protocols, the appropriate agencies have been notified about the death, including the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG), and the ICE Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR). Additionally, ICE has notified the Canadian consulate and Hill's next of kin.

The agency's review will be conducted by ICE senior leadership, including Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) and the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor (OPLA).

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Specific to Coronavirus, ICE has taken extensive precautions to limit the potential spread of COVID-19. An extensive listing of all the precautions and procedures this agency has taken to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19 at ice.gov/coronavirus. ICE makes arrest and custody determinations on a case-by-case basis given the totality of circumstances in each case. Since March, the agency's detained population has declined by more than 40 percent.

ICE's 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 \$269 million on the spectrum of healthcare services provided to detainees.

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