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Enforcement and Removal

08/12/2020

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Costa Rican man in ICE custody passes away in Georgia

LUMPKIN, GA — A Costa Rican man in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement at the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia, died late Monday at an area hospital. Jose Guillen-Vega, 70, was pronounced dead at 11:37 p.m. local time by medical professionals at the Piedmont Columbus Regional Hospital, in Columbus, Georgia, where he had been hospitalized since Aug. 1, 2020. The preliminary cause of death by hospital medical staff was determined to be cardiopulmonary arrest, secondary to complications of coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

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 Costa Rican consulate and Guillen-Vega's next of kin.

On Dec. 16, 1999, Guillen-Vega was admitted to the United States at El Paso, Texas, on a nonimmigrant B-2 visa with authorization to remain in the United States until June 15, 2000. Guillen-Vega subsequently remained in the United States beyond June 15, 2000, and became unlawfully present at that time.

On March 15, 2001, Guillen-Vega was convicted of statutory rape and indecent liberties with a child in Lincoln County Superior Court in Lincolnton, North Carolina, for which he was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

On July 10, 2020, ERO Atlanta took custody of Guillen-Vega following his release from state prison in North Carolina. On the same date, ERO Atlanta served him with an administrative removal order as an alien convicted of an aggravated felony. He was subsequently transferred to Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia, July 15, 2020. At the time of his death, Guillen-Vega was awaiting removal to his country of citizenship.

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

ICE's Health Service Corps 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.

AILA Doc. No. 16050900. (Posted 8/12/20)

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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