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ICE NEWSROOM

AUGUST 3, 2021 • HARLINGEN, TX • DETAINEE DEATH NOTIFICATIONS

Nicaraguan woman in ICE custody passes away in South Texas Hospital

A Nicaraguan woman in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) passed away, Aug. 3, at Valley Baptist Medical Center (VBMC) in Harlingen, Texas. She was pronounced dead at 2:03 p.m. CST by medical professionals at the South Texas hospital.

Elba Maria Centeno Briones, 37, entered ICE custody July 27, and was taken to the El Valle Detention Center in Raymondville, Texas. Upon arrival to an ICE facility, all detainees are medically screened and administered a COVID-19 test by ICE Health Service Corps (IHSC) personnel. Centeno Briones' test results came back positive that same day, she began to exhibit COVID-19 symptoms and was taken to the hospital.

On July 26, U.S. Border Patrol apprehended Centeno Briones after she entered the United States illegally near Brownsville, Texas. On July 27, U.S. Border Patrol turned over Centeno Briones to ICE.

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 notified the Nicaraguan consulate and Centeno Briones’ next of kin. 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 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.

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 individual. Comprehensive medical care is provided from the moment individuals arrive and throughout the entirety of their stay. All people in ICE custody 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 \$315 million on the spectrum of healthcare services provided to people in ICE custody.

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