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Enforcement and Removal

09/01/2020

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Honduran man in ICE custody passes away at Houston-area hospital

HOUSTON — A 50-year-old Honduran man in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) passed away Aug. 28 at the Conroe Regional Medical Center (CRMC) in Conroe, Texas. The preliminary cause of death is respiratory failure due to complications from Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

On Aug. 28, Fernando Sabonger-Garcia, was pronounced dead at 11 a.m. (CDT) by medical professionals at CRMC. Sabonger-Garcia was transferred to CRMC on July 26 from the Joe Corley Processing Center after exhibiting COVID-19-related symptoms. A COVID-19 test was administered by CRMC medical staff on July 26 and came back positive the same day.

On July 7, Sabonger-Garcia first entered ICE custody after being transferred from the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS). He illegally entered the United States near Brownville, Texas, on or around Aug. 13, 2019. On Aug. 16, 2019, he was encountered by the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) at the Javier Vega Jr. Border Patrol Checkpoint in Sarita, Texas, and taken into custody.

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 Honduran Consulate of Sabonger-Garcia's death; Honduran consular officials have notified his next of kin.

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

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

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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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