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United Kingdom man in ICE custody passes away in Florida

TAMPA, Fla. – A United Kingdom man in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Enforcement (ICE) at the Baker County Detention Center in Macclenny, Florida, passed away Saturday evening at the facility.

Ben James Owen, 39, was pronounced dead at 7:52 p.m. local time January 25, 2020, after he was found unresponsive in his cell and efforts by facility staff and emergency personnel to revive him were unsuccessful. The preliminary cause of death appears to be self-inflicted strangulation; however, the case is currently under investigation.

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 United Kingdom consulate and Mr. Owen's 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.

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 Mr. Owen January 12, 2020, following his arrest that same day by the Port Orange Police Department for felony aggravated stalking after injunction, felony false imprisonment, domestic assault, and violating the conditions of his pre-trial release. At the time of his arrest, Mr. Owen was awaiting trial on a separate pending domestic battery charge pursuant to a November 17, 2019 arrest by the Daytona Beach Police Department.

He entered ICE custody January 15, 2020, following his release from Volusia County criminal custody and was served a Notice to Appear placing him into removal proceedings before the federal immigration courts.

Mr. Owen entered the U.S. lawfully on a non-immigrant visa July 23, 2019, with authorization to remain in the U.S. until December 10, 2019. At the time of his death, Mr. Owen was in removal proceedings before the federal immigration courts.

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