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Enforcement and Removal
05/21/2018

South Texas ICE detainee from Honduras passes away in local hospital

HARLINGEN, Texas — A Honduran man in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) died Wednesday evening at Valley Baptist Medical Center (VBMC) in Harlingen, Texas. An autopsy is scheduled to determine his cause of death.

Ronald Cruz, 39, from Honduras, entered ICE custody at the Port Isabel Detention Center (PIDC) in Los Fresnos, Texas, on May 14, 2018. On May 16, ICE reported the death of Cruz at the Valley Baptist Medical Center (VBMC). He was pronounced deceased by hospital medical staff at 6:49 p.m. (CDT).

Medical staff identified the preliminary cause of death as cardiac arrest. Consistent with ICE policy, ERO San Antonio notified the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Inspector General and the ICE Office of Professional Responsibility. The Consulate of Honduras and the family of the deceased were also notified.

Following his May 2002 arrest after illegally entering the United States, he was issued a notice to appear before a federal immigration judge. On Sept. 25, 2002, a federal immigration judge ordered Cruz’s removal to Honduras in absentia. Following his Jan. 14, 2016, criminal conviction in Kansas City, Missouri, he was removed to Honduras Jan. 29, 2016. On May 9, 2018, he was arrested again trying to illegally enter the United States. He was transferred to ICE’s PIDC facility May 14. He was transferred to VBMC’s intensive care unit at 2:35 a.m. on May 16.

Cruz is the fifth detainee to pass away in ICE custody in fiscal year 2018, which began Oct. 1, 2017.

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 \$180 million on the spectrum of healthcare services provided to detainees.

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