

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

Hawaii Area Program Office

CONFIDENTIAL

DATE: December 21, 1981

TO: Mr. Randy Kalahiki
Native Hawaiian Legal Project,
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SUBJECT: EVENTS DURING "SHAKEDOWN" AND CURRENT SITUATION AT O.C.C.C.

As was explained in our phone conversation this morning, we have gathered this information in conversations with the families of a number of prisoners who visited the facility during yesterday's visiting hours. In addition, we have subsequently been able to confirm much of the information--and to add additional details--through contacts with correctional staff both at Halawa and at O.C.C.C. who were present during these events.

We now believe--based on these multiple reports--that the events of this past week are unparalleled in the history of corrections in Hawaii. It is urgent that they be responded to immediately and with the encouragement of the state's highest authorities. We would be glad to provide further details or to attempt to arrange contacts with our sources if that proves necessary.

1) Violence during the "shakedown" of this past week.

It is now clear that extensive violence occurred at O.C.C.C. during the shakedown. Families reported seeing "many" inmates with signs of physical abuse--black eyes, body bruises, abrasions, etc. They also reported being told of other inmates who received more serious injuries. Inmates reported to have been beaten most severely are now being denied any visitors or other contacts with people outside, including their attorneys. One attorney who spoke with inmates after the events stated that "I haven't talked to anyone who did not get some roughing up." Those reported to us by name are listed in section (2) below.

Inmates report that in some dormitories of the cell block and in certain modules, most residents were beaten. Beatings apparently ranged from single blows with fists or night-sticks to full-scale assaults in which inmates were punched, kicked in various parts of the body, bloodied, and rendered unconscious.

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Reports from staff indicated that the number of inmates beaten may be higher than we previously believed. One estimate was that perhaps 250 inmates were struck or beaten during the events of the week. Physical abuse apparently began with correctional officers from Halawa, but later spread to include OCCC officers. Administrative staff of the Corrections Division and staff of the Attorney General's office were reported to have been present for at least some of these incidents and either failed to--or were unable to--maintain control and stop the violence. One staff member described the spreading violence as like "a shark frenzy."

Not all correctional officers participated in the violence. Some staff--both those from Halawa and OCCC--intervened in attempts to stop beatings or to protect individual inmates. It has been reported that these staff may now be subject to surveillance and other forms of pressure from their colleagues to prevent them from describing the events.

2) Available names of inmates subject to physical abuse.

It has been difficult to obtain detailed reports of injuries suffered by individual inmates due to the limited contact being allowed by OCCC administration. However, the following names have been collected during the past 24 hours from their families. They are at best only fragmentary but indicate that physical abuse was not confined to isolated instances. There is considerable fear among families that adequate medical treatment has not been available for those suffering injuries.

Roy Kuhia -- beaten badly, reportedly suffered a crushed testicle which is now swollen "as big as a ball."

Norma Flores -- beaten.

Allan Von Trip -- "beaten real bad", held in "the hole".

Tatuna Tanavasa -- hit in the jaw, reportedly after being ordered to first stick his tongue out (apparent effort to make him bite-- or sever--his tongue).

Stuart Silva -- "head cracked open", possible fractured skull.

Ben Matsuo -- bitten by police dog; later beaten and sustained possible internal injuries.

Eric Alfonso -- beaten

Wayne Kama -- kicked in neck and hit with butt of a rifle; large bruise on left shoulder.

Robert Dillard -- beaten.

Peter Phillips -- "beaten up real bad", held "in the hole".

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_____ Hatori -- beaten, may have suffered eye injury.

_____ Matautia -- body bruises.

_____ Asami -- beaten.

_____ Paia -- beaten.

Joe Akepa -- beaten, "busted ribs".

Residents of Module 2 -- black inmates in this module were reportedly singled out for beatings.

In most cases which have come to our attention, beatings occurred while inmates were stripped naked and surrounded by groups of heavily armed correctional officers.

3) Current situation at O.C.C.C. and recommended action.

The atmosphere at O.C.C.C. today is extremely tense. Unfortunately, the situation is complicated by a series of factors:

- a high level of tension which pre-existed the shakedown
- the anger and resentment over beatings and other forms of abuse experienced by inmates
- the lack of "objective" information available to inmates and their families, which encourages the spread of rumors
- the failure to account for inmates removed from their dormitories or modules
- threatened cancellation of the Christmas "field day" and other holiday activities, which are major events looked forward to long in advance
- the reported tacit approval or possible witnessing by Corrections Division administrators and Attorney General's staff of instances of physical violence against inmates, which renders these officials largely incapable of defusing the situation
- finally, the danger of inmates perceiving no legitimate recourse or channel for redressing grievances.

The immediate need is to defuse the potential for significant violence that is inherent in this situation. We feel it necessary to stress that no comparable circumstances have ever been faced in Hawaii and, to avoid unnecessary violence and bloodshed, official action must be taken.

It is our feeling, given the widespread belief among inmates and their families that officials of the system were implicated in the violent events of the week, that it seems imperative to initiate an investigation by competent and respected third parties in order to clear the air by dispelling rumors and gathering factual accounts of events. There is precedent for this within Hawaii's correctional system. In the early 1970's, a "Citizen's Inspection

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Team" headed by Fr. Robert Mackey helped to deal with earlier troubles at the facility. A comparable team today might include representation from the Hawaii Council of Churches, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, the American Civil Liberties Union, Hawaii Bar Association, and similar groups.

4) Possible consequences of a failure to act.

The situation at O.C.C.C. is already unstable and will get worse as the full extent of the week's events becomes known to inmates, their families, and the public. Inmates believe--correctly or not--that delay in responding to the situation is a function of an administrative desire to have injuries heal before full contact with the outside world is restored. This widespread sense is reinforced by the refusal to allow attorneys to visit clients or to allow the news media to interview inmates.

Without hope of legitimate outlets for their grievances, and without the removal of those correctional officers most responsible for incidents of violence, there is sure to be some form of "retaliation" by inmates. As one source put it, "something big is gonna come down if they don't change guards". Another stated, "pretty soon going be one riot unless something happen". The possibility of a large-scale disturbance cannot be discounted. Action must be taken so that inmates can see directly that there are other avenues than simple recourse to violence.

There is an additional danger which is at least as serious. If such widespread acts of violence are allowed to go unsanctioned, those staff who refused to participate will be driven from the system. A few, apparently, have already left.

In conclusion, it appears that corrections in Hawaii is at a crossroads. We can choose, as a system and as a community, to go the route of mainland prisons with their routinely high levels of violence or to maintain Hawaii's unique history as a state which has pursued an innovative and humane prison system. But we may not have the choice for long.

We look to you for help and stand ready to do whatever we can as well.