



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE | OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

June 13, 2022

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
152 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth
United States Senate
524 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Cheri Bustos
U.S. House of Representatives
1233 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Durbin, Senator Duckworth, and Representative Bustos:

I am writing in response to your letter dated June 1, 2022, in which you requested that the Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) investigate allegations against Federal Bureau of Prison (BOP) personnel at United States Penitentiary (USP) Thomson in Illinois. In your letter, you also requested that the OIG investigate the circumstances surrounding the deaths of seven inmates at USP Thomson. I thank you for raising these issues with me, and I appreciate Chairman Durbin speaking to me about them last week.

As I noted in my conversation with Chairman Durbin, the OIG has an ongoing review on deaths that have occurred in BOP custody. The primary goal of this review is to assess the circumstances surrounding inmate deaths and evaluate how the BOP seeks to prevent future inmate deaths, and to make recommendations to improve the BOP's efforts to protect the lives and safety of its inmate population. Despite this review being delayed by the pandemic, the review team has already conducted site visits at FCC Hazelton and FTC Oklahoma City, and conducted interviews with over 100 staff and inmates at these institutions. These interviews confirmed my office's longstanding concerns about chronic staffing issues and its relationship to safety at all BOP institutions. In addition, we received further confirmation of the need to better prevent contraband, such as guns, illegal drugs, and cell phones, from being introduced by staff and through other means at BOP facilities. In light of the inmate deaths at USP Thomson, we have added USP Thomson as a facility at which our review team will conduct a site visit. We expect that to occur in the near future. We will incorporate our findings from that visit into our broader report on deaths that have occurred in BOP custody.

Additionally, as you requested, my office is gathering information about the circumstances surrounding each of the recent inmate deaths at USP Thomson, including whether any allegations of staff misconduct were improperly withheld from my office.

Thank you for your continued support of the OIG. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact me, or Adam Miles, Senior Counselor to the Inspector General, at (202) 514-3435.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Horowitz
Inspector General

cc: The Honorable Charles Grassley, Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate