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ICE Inspections
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**Office of Detention Oversight
Special Review
2023-003-162**

**Enforcement and Removal Operations
ERO Harlingen Field Office**

**East Hidalgo Detention Center
La Villa, Texas**

July 11-13, 2023

**SPECIAL REVIEW
of the
EAST HIDALGO DETENTION CENTER
La Villa, Texas**

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FACILITY OVERVIEW

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) Office of Detention Oversight (ODO) conducted a special review of the East Hidalgo Detention Center (EHDC) in La Villa, Texas, from July 11 to 13, 2023.¹ The facility opened in 2001 and is owned and operated by The GEO Group Inc. (GEO). The ICE Office of Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) began housing detainees at EHDC in 2012 under the oversight of ERO’s Field Office Director in Harlingen (ERO Harlingen). ICE is an authorized user of this facility under a United States Marshals Service intergovernmental agreement contract, which does not specify an ICE National Detention Standard (NDS), and ODO inspected to the NDS listed on the ERO Facility List as of July 10, 2023. EHDC was inspected against NDS 2000, and ODO’s assigned rating is for ERO’s informational purposes only. 2000.

[REDACTED] (The facility has not housed any detainees since 2016.) A facility administrator handles daily operations and manages [REDACTED] support personnel. GEO provides food services and medical care, and Union Supply Company provides commissary services at the facility. The American Correctional Association accredited the facility in December 2020.

Capacity and Population Statistics	Quantity
ICE Bed Capacity ²	[REDACTED]
Average ICE Population ³	[REDACTED]
Adult Male Population (as of July 11, 2023)	[REDACTED]
Adult Female Population (as of July 11, 2023)	[REDACTED]

During its last full inspection, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, ODO found eight deficiencies in the following areas: Admission and Release (1); Detainee Handbook (1); Medical Care (2); Staff-Detainee Communication (2); and Telephone Access (2).

¹ This facility holds male and female detainees with low, medium-low, medium, and high security classification levels for periods less than 72 hours.

² Data Source: ERO Facility List as of July 10, 2023.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ EHDC’s FY 2022 ADP was 2, meeting ODO’s criteria for a special review in FY 2023.

SPECIAL REVIEW PROCESS

ODO conducts oversight inspections of ICE detention facilities with an average daily population (ADP) of 10 or more detainees, and where detainees are housed for over 72 hours, to assess compliance with ICE NDS. These inspections focus solely on facility compliance with detention standards that directly affect detainee life, health, safety, and/or well-being.⁵

ODO identifies violations of ICE detention standards, ICE policies, or operational procedures as “deficiencies.” ODO highlights instances in which the facility resolves deficiencies prior to completion of the ODO inspection. Where applicable, these corrective actions are annotated with “C” under the *Special Review Inspection Findings* section of this report.

Beginning fiscal year (FY) 2022, ODO will conduct special reviews of under 72-hour ICE detention facilities with an ADP of 1 or more detainees and over 72-hour ICE detention facilities with an ADP of 1 to 9 detainees. Additionally, ODO will conduct unannounced inspections of ICE detention facilities, regardless of ADP of detainees, as well as reviews of ICE special/emerging detention facilities/programs. As such, these facility inspections will result in an ODO Inspection Compliance Rating. ODO will conduct a complete review of several core standards, which may include but are not limited to Medical Care/Health Care, Medical Care (Women)/Health Care (Females), Hunger Strikes, Suicide Prevention, Food Service, Environmental Health and Safety, Emergency Plans, Use of Force and Restraints/Use of Physical Control Measures and Restraints, Special Management Units, Educational Policy (Family Residential Standard (FRS) only), Behavior Management (FRS only), Admission and Release, Classification, and Funds and Personal Property.

Upon completion of each review, ODO conducts a closeout briefing with facility and local ERO officials to discuss preliminary findings. A summary of these findings is shared with ERO management officials. Thereafter, ODO provides ICE leadership with a final compliance inspection report to: (i) assist ERO in developing and initiating corrective action plans; and (ii) provide senior executives with an independent assessment of facility operations. ODO’s findings inform ICE executive management in its decision-making to better allocate resources across the agency’s entire detention inventory.

⁵ ODO reviews the facility’s compliance with selected standards in their entirety.

FINDINGS BY NATIONAL DETENTION STANDARDS 2000 MAJOR CATEGORIES

NDS 2000 Standards Inspected ^{6,7}	Deficiencies
Part 1 - Detainee Services	
Food Service	1
Staff-Detainee Communication	0
Sub-Total	1
Part 2 - Security and Control	
Environmental Health and Safety	3
Special Management Unit (Administrative Segregation)	0
Special Management Unit (Disciplinary Segregation)	0
Use of Force	0
Sub-Total	3
Part 3 - Health Services	
Hunger Strikes	0
Medical Care	0
Suicide Prevention and Intervention	0
Sub-Total	0
Other Standards Reviewed	
NDS 2019 Sexual Abuse and Assault Prevention and Intervention	0
Sub-Total	0
Total Deficiencies	4

⁶ For greater detail on ODO's findings, see the *Special Review Inspection Findings* section of this report.

⁷ Beginning in FY 2022, ODO instituted a process of rotating all standards on a 3-year basis. As a result, some standard components may not be present in all standards.

DETAINEE RELATIONS

ODO conducted no detainee interviews since the facility detainee population remained zero throughout the inspection. Despite a zero-detainee population count, the facility had an active contract to house ICE detainees with an ADP of 2 ICE detainees for FY 2022, meeting ODO's inspection criteria to conduct special reviews of under 72-hour ICE detention facilities with an ADP of 1 or more detainees.

SPECIAL REVIEW INSPECTION FINDINGS

DETAINEE SERVICES

FOOD SERVICE (FS)

ODO interviewed the food service and fire safety managers, reviewed the facility's FS policy, observed the fire-suppression system with audible alarm and the annunciator panel in the facility's control room, and found no connection between the fire-suppression system and annunciator panel (**Deficiency FS-410⁸**).

SECURITY AND CONTROL

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (EHS)

ODO interviewed the fire safety manager, reviewed the facility's EHS policy and material safety data sheet master binder, and found no documentation of semiannual reviews of all hazardous substances the facility maintained (**Deficiency EHS-12⁹**).

ODO interviewed the fire safety manager, reviewed the facility's EHS policy and 14 fire drill reports, and found the facility conducted all 14 fire drills quarterly instead of monthly (**Deficiency EHS-65¹⁰**).

ODO interviewed the fire safety manager, reviewed the facility's EHS policy and 12 fire evacuation exit diagrams, and found in 2 out of 12 diagrams, no emergency equipment locations. Additionally, the fire evacuation diagrams at the front entrance of the facility and in a unit control center in one of the housing units did not specify the locations of three fire alarm pull stations and one fire extinguisher (**Deficiency EHS-71¹¹**).

⁸ "The fire-suppression system shall be equipped with a locally audible alarm and connected to the control room's annunciator panel." *See* ICE NDS 2000, Standard, Food Service, Section (III)(H)(12)(f).

⁹ "Documentation of the semi-annual reviews will be maintained in the MSDS master file." *See* ICE NDS 2000, Standard, Environmental Health and Safety, Section (III)(C).

¹⁰ "Monthly fire drills will be conducted and documented separately in each department." *See* ICE NDS 2000, Standard, Environmental Health and Safety, Section (III)(L)(4).

¹¹ "In addition to a general area diagram, the following information must be provided on existing signs: ...

c. Emergency equipment locations."

See ICE NDS 2000, Standard, Environmental Health and Safety, Section (III)(L)(5)(c).

CONCLUSION

During this special review, ODO assessed the facility's compliance with 9 standards under NDS 2000 and 1 standard under NDS 2019 and found the facility in compliance with 8 of those standards. ODO found four deficiencies in the remaining two standards. Since EHDC's last full inspection in August 2016, the facility has demonstrated improvement. EHDC went from five deficient standards and eight deficiencies in August 2016 to two deficient standards and four deficiencies during special review. However, the standards ODO found deficient were the food service and environmental health and safety standards, which were not deficient in 2016. ODO has not received a UCAP for ODO's last inspection of EHDC in August 2016. ODO recommends ERO Harlingen continue to work with the facility to resolve the remaining deficiencies in accordance with contractual obligations.

Compliance Inspection Results Compared	FY 2016 Full Inspection (NDS 2000)	FY 2023 Special Review (NDS 2000)
Standards Reviewed	15	10
Deficient Standards	5	2
Overall Number of Deficiencies	8	4
Priority Component Deficiencies	N/A	0
Repeat Deficiencies	N/A	N/A
Areas Of Concern	0	0
Corrective Actions	4	0
Facility Rating	N/A	Superior