



Report of Observations  
of  
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of the  
Easterling Correctional Facility

Date of visit: July 6, 7 and 8, 1994

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EASTERLING CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

CLIO, ALABAMA

On July 6, 7 and 8, 1994, the writer, together with Senior Trial Attorney Andrew Barrick, of the Special Litigation Branch of the United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, toured the above referenced facility.

At all times during our visit, Dr. Leslie Thompson, Warden, Darrell Parker, Deputy Warden and Mr. Andrew W. Redd, Esq., General Counsel for the Department of Corrections, were very cooperative in answering questions posed by Mr. Barrick and the writer and in showing us areas of the institution in which we were interested. We were also permitted to initiate conversations with inmates and inmates were free to approach and converse with us.

The Easterling Correctional Facility is located in a rural area of southeastern Alabama. The facility opened in 1990 with a design capacity of 652, however, crowding throughout the Alabama Department of Corrections has required extensive "doubling up". In January of 1993, the population was 511, on January 1, 1994, 815 and on July 6, 1994, the first day of our visit, the inmate population was 1,018. Even with the crowding, we were told that

over 1400 state prisoners are "backed up" in local holding facilities throughout the states. Total staff at Easterling numbered 197 on July 6, 1994, 148 of whom were correctional officers. The facility is located on a two hundred acre plot of land. The thirty (30) acre site which is devoted to the prison is fenced and alarmed. There are no gun towers. Another fifteen (15) acres are farmed by the institution and the balance of the 200 acres is leased to local farmers. Other activity outside the security perimeter include the two (2) road crews which maintain local roads and highways. Supervision is provided by the jurisdiction for which the individual crew is working. Daily cost of care was reported to the American Correctional Association as being \$21.45 per man per day as of 6/30/93, which is significantly below the national average.

Medical care has been delivered by a private provider since the institution was opened. Numerous complaints were heard from inmates regarding health care. Most had to do with non-response to requests for medical attention, the short time allotted for sick call and the fact that there was no restroom available for those waiting in line for sick call.

The Easterling Correctional Facility is considered to be a mix of medium and minimum level security. The housing for inmates reflects this because all but one of the housing units are open

dormitories. The only single cell unit with a capacity of 52 houses primarily individuals who are classified as "protective custody", primarily for the safety of themselves, others or both. Most of the "protective custody" inmates requested such status.

The only industry at Easterling is a paint preparation plant. It can produce as much as 6,000 gallons per week but was operating at the 4,800 gallon level at the time of our visit. It has employed as many as fifteen (15) inmates but only nine on the day of our visit. Inmates start at \$.05 per hour and may earn \$.25 per hour after six months. The paint is sold to state agencies.

There is an active academic and vocational school at Easterling. This is operated with the assistance of a Pell grant and some 220 inmates are involved, 120 in academic training. Vocational areas taught include masonry, cabinet making, drafting, plumbing and electricity. The classrooms and shops and the instructors were very impressive.

The facility presents a clean, well-maintained appearance. Each housing unit is a free-standing building with two levels, medium and minimum, of housing in the two wings. The lack of covered walkway between the buildings is a design defect that we observed and experienced first hand. The hurricane that blew over southwest Georgia and the Florida panhandle while we were there

brought several inches of rain to Easterling. Not only did we and our escorts get soaked but at approximately 5:00 P.M. on July 7, 1994, some forty prisoners were lined up outside awaiting admission to the dining hall. None had any outer garments (raincoats, jackets or head coverings).

The weather conditions on July 7 also made us aware of the severe shortage of clothing and footwear at the Easterling facility. Most inmates had only one set of clothing (i.e., 1 pair of trousers, 1 shirt, 1 pair of shorts and one pair of footwear). The footwear ranged from oxfords and canvas shoes to work shoes which were 6 to 8 inches high. Some of the shoes being worn in the muddy fields and on road crews had soles which "flopped" because the sole was detached from the upper part of the shoe except for around the heel. Others simply had holes in the soles.

We were advised that this shortage was the result of a fiscal crisis, (i.e., there were no funds available with which to purchase clothing and shoes). At the time of our visit, it was not uncommon to see an inmate wearing a shirt with one or one and a half sleeves, or no sleeves. Many of the trousers were as badly torn as the shirts. Frequently, clothing was insufficient to achieve modesty; however, most had undershorts. To all intents and purposes, outer garments such as jackets, raincoats, hats and work shoes seem to be almost non-existent.

Each of the five open dorms currently houses about 185 inmates in approximately 10,000 square feet of space.

A significant reason for our visit was a report that the Easterling facility was using a "bar" for "punishment(s)". Actually, there are two parallel bars, one 57 inches high and the other 45 inches high for shorter inmates. On each bar are seven rings to which handcuffed inmates are secured. The bar is ostensibly used to punish inmates who refuse departure to their work detail and are handcuffed to one of the bars. According to inmates, however, it is used for all inmates on outside work crews who miss their transportation in the morning or after lunch. The inmates who are placed "on the bar" (handcuffed to it) do not have access to drinking water or toilet facilities. These are, we were told by staff, provided by the rear gate officer. The comments from these inmates were not as complimentary as were the comments from staff. Two obvious complaints were that the "bars" were about exposure to the elements, i.e., hot sun and rain. Another complaint was that an individual might be late for a work detail for reasons beyond his control.

In the opinion of the writer, use of the bars does constitute a violation of a nationally accepted standard of care and standards promulgated by the American Correctional Association:

ACA Standard 3-4268 reads: "Written policy, procedure and practice protect inmates from abuse, corporal punishment, personal injury, disease, property damage and harassment."

ACA Standard 3-4-185 reads as follows:

"Written policy, procedure and practice provide that instruments of restraint, such as handcuffs, irons and straight jackets, are never applied as punishment and are applied only with the approval of the warden/superintendent or designee."

Comment:

Instruments of restraint should be used only as a precaution against escape during transfer, for medical reasons, by direction of the medical officer, or to prevent self-injury, injury to others or property damage. Restraints should not be applied for more time than is absolutely necessary.

Mr. Barrick and I talked with over one hundred inmates; a list of the most frequent complaints follows:

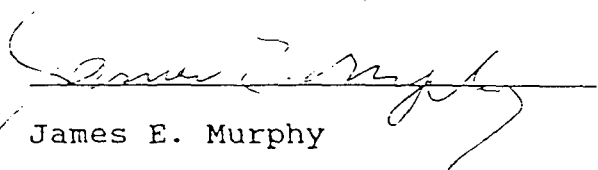
Most Common Complaints from Inmates  
at Easterling Correctional Facility

- 1) Not enough clothes to go around per inmate.
- 2) Not enough telephones per dorm. (There are only 2. Five is recommended for every one hundred inmates.)
- 3) Lack of officers for security when yard is open.
- 4) Officers striking inmates without being provoked physically.
- 5) Inmates cannot get medicine as needed for headaches. Inmates have to sign up a day before to get aspirin or Tylenol for a headache - we need it now!
- 6) Officers are passing mail out to inmates whether the inmate's name is on the envelope or not. All an inmate has to say is that is him, and the officers will pass it out to him without asking for an A.I.S. number.
- 7) Free world people are having keys, opening gates and doors for inmates and other officers, especially Sparks Tech employees - Ms. Shirley Jones, specifically.
- 8) Inmates are not getting proper hygiene items. One bar of soap to last 3 weeks is not enough. Toothpaste is not issued at all to all the inmates. They only pass out about 30 on both



sides of a dorm, and there is over 150 inmates in a dorm.

- 9) Fans are needed in each dorm.
- 10) Need toilet bowl brushes to clean toilets.
- 11) Officers are not staying on assigned posts. Free world people are walking around without escorts.
- 12) Not enough living space to walk at the same time. (?)
- 13) Can't get 8 hours of quiet due to institutional time to wake up for work. The T.V.'s never turn down until 10:30 P.M. Then they wake us up at 3 to prepare for breakfast. Never enough time to rest the mind.
- 14) There are 2 phones per dorm and there are at least 100 inmates. The phones are never monitored by officers; therefore, most inmates don't even get to use the phone. (See item #2 above.)
- 15) Inmates come into this 'camp Easterling' eligible for work release and honor camps, but classification won't put inmates in for these things due to educational reasons.

  
James E. Murphy