

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Our Conclusion

The July 2010 Kingman private prison escapes alerted the Department of Corrections (Department) to the need for improved oversight of its private prisons. The Department has implemented a new inspection program, revised its annual audit procedures, revised its Request for Proposals (RFP) for additional private prison beds, and began developing training for contract monitoring staff. The Department should carry out its plans to update its policies and procedures to reflect its revised annual audit approach and implement the contract monitor training. The Department should also improve officer compliance with security policies and procedures at state-run prisons. The Department should implement its plans to identify trends and systemic noncompliance and take appropriate system-wide action and should use this information to identify correctional officer training needs.



2011

Private prison oversight has improved, but additional actions needed to strengthen monitoring

Inmate escapes indicated need to improve oversight—On July 30, 2010, three inmates escaped from the Kingman private prison. The Department's investigation determined that several security deficiencies and policy violations contributed to the escapes. Notably, the prison's perimeter alarm system was not working properly and had not been serviced in 2 years. In addition, private prison staff sometimes ignored the alarms and would reset the alarms without first checking the perimeter. Although the Department had oversight procedures in place, it had not identified the security issues that contributed to the escapes.

Green Amber Red inspection program—In January 2011, to better assess security operations at all prisons, the Department implemented the Green Amber Red (GAR) inspection program. Under the program, various department security policies are tested monthly using a checklist. For example, one checklist question related to key policies asks whether keys are inventoried at the beginning and end of each shift.

Under the GAR, green means compliance, amber means corrective action is needed for minor issues, and red means immediate corrective action is needed to avoid threats to safety. Private prison wardens are responsible for developing corrective action plans to address amber and red findings.

Annual audit procedures—As part of an effort started prior to the escapes, the Department has also revised its annual audit procedures. Prior to the July 2010 escapes, the annual audits did not adequately assess compliance with

department policies. The new annual audit tool measures actual performance against department policies and procedures. Department contract monitoring staff are responsible for ensuring that the private prisons address findings. The Department plans to update its policies and procedures to reflect this process in January 2012.

Other improvements—In January 2011, the Department revised its RFP for 5,000 additional private prison beds to strengthen monitoring and security requirements. New requirements in the RFP include enhanced internal monitoring, performance measures, penalties for noncompliance, and regular testing and annual certification of security systems. The Department is also developing training for contract monitoring staff that is scheduled to begin in September 2011.

Prison services comparison—The Department reported that the new GAR inspections and revised annual audit procedures will help it to compare private and state-run prison services every 2 years as required by statute. Although the Department has not completed this comparison, it plans to do so by January 2012.

Recommendations:

The Department should implement its plans to:

- Revise its policies and procedures to reflect changes to the annual audit.
- Continue developing and implementing training for contract monitors.
- Compare private and state-run prison services every 2 years as required by statute.

Additional actions should be taken to improve compliance with security policies and procedures at state-run prisons

Policies and procedures help ensure security—The Department has adopted policies and procedures related to security operations at both private and state-run prisons, such as procedures for conducting inmate counts and tracking and securing keys and tools. Compliance with these policies and procedures is critical for ensuring prison security. Although written instructions, training, performance reviews, and inspections, such as the GAR inspection and annual audits, help to ensure that the Department's correctional officers comply with security policies and procedures, officers do not always comply. For example:

- Policy requires officers to conduct a daily tool inventory. However, department reviews have disclosed instances where tool inventories were not conducted.
- Personal property of staff and others entering the prisons must be inspected and cleared through metal detectors. However, department and auditors' reviews found several instances of inadequate personal property searches.
- Inmates are generally required to keep their identification cards visible on their chests when outside the housing area. However, auditors witnessed inmates who did not have visible identification when moving to meals or in the yard, and officers did not enforce the policies.

To further improve compliance, the Department should:

Implement plans to analyze monitoring data—The GAR inspections and annual audits provide a significant amount of information that could be analyzed to assess noncompliance trends. For example, department inspectors found that correctional officers failed to properly search employees' personal property, including food, as they reported to work at 12 of 17 prison units inspected. This suggests systemic noncompliance with this policy. By investigating

such trends, the Department may determine the underlying causes and address those throughout the prison system. The Department plans to analyze this data starting in 2012.

Assess training needs better—The Department can also use its GAR inspections and annual audits to assess training needs. The Department has a training bureau that, although informed of annual audit results through discussions, does not actually receive copies of the annual audit reports, which it could use to identify training needs. The training bureau also uses annual exams to test officers' knowledge of policies to assess training needs. However, the exams may not sufficiently cover areas where department audits have found systemic noncompliance.

Continue efforts to ensure adequacy and consistency of post orders—Post orders are written instructions that should describe the responsibilities, duties, and functions of a particular security post or work assignment. However, some post orders do not include instructions regarding department requirements. Further, some post orders are long and provide general instructions, while other post orders contain clear and concise instructions regarding duties. Clear and concise post orders can help officers who are temporarily assigned to an unfamiliar post to quickly understand the duties associated with the post.

The Department has begun efforts to streamline and standardize its post orders.

Recommendations

The Department should:

- Implement its plans to analyze monitoring data trends and take appropriate action throughout the prison system.
- Improve assessment of correctional officer training needs.
- Continue its efforts to improve its post orders.