

Law Enforcement Investigation and Detection Needs: Panel Discussion

by

Phil Arnold
Senior Correctional Security Specialist
Federal Bureau of Prisons

I have spent my entire career with the Bureau of Prisons, which is part of the Department of Justice. Each of my state tours was done in a federal institution.

I believe your schedule shows that Jim Man, the chief of my shop, was to be here. It's kind of ironic that he couldn't make it, because he had to go to one of our prisons in Jessup, Georgia, just north of Jacksonville. We are in the process of implementing an access control system. It's a pilot program that we intend to network throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. It will allow us to track our entire population of inmates through video-imaging, biometrics, and a number of other methods. It will also track visitors, contractors, and anyone that enters into all federal government prisons. This will be available to other law enforcement agencies for intelligence purposes. We are really excited about this technology, and that is why he can't be here today.

When I came to the Bureau of Prisons, we had fewer inmates than we have staff members today. We've really grown in the last 22 years. Our budget is extremely large, based on our population, and I'll give you a little information about that.

We currently house about 79,000 inmates. Of these, about 60 percent are

serving time for related federal felony drug charges. We have 71 active operational federal prisons throughout the United States today. We currently have 30 new construction projects for buildings. This would equate to about 30,000 beds from institutions for developments in one phase or another. These should all be completed by 1995. At that time, we'll have in excess of 100,000 federal prisoners.

One of the unique things, I think, as a result of detection technology and things in society, is that we reap benefits, because we get the majority of the people who attempt to beat those systems. To think they come to federal prison and stop that activity is not accurate at all. We have tremendous problems monitoring and controlling contraband flow with drug-type materials and paraphernalia. We have certain restrictions and conditions that are not realized by the public that we can hold over the inmates' heads. We have the ability to, and quite frequently do, search inmates, their personal belongings or housing, and anywhere they work, to try to control this. We operate a telephone monitoring system for intelligence purposes. It allows us to monitor and record every single phone call that is placed by an inmate. All this information goes into a system where we can retrieve

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numbers, call up numbers, call up names, and do different things which greatly help us. We monitor these phones constantly. The FBI also uses the same tapes for prosecution.

We also have a drug testing program that is quite extensive. During fiscal year 1992, our average population was about 72,000 inmates. During that period, we collected urine samples and tested over 83,000. This cost the taxpayers approximately \$656,000. There is one bright side to that: of these 83,000 urine samples, we had less than 5 percent which were positive. If we could have thrown out our prisons in California, we could have reduced the rate even below that point. It seems like a low level. A lot of people figure that there are certainly drug problems with prisons. You do have drug problems within prisons, but it is not really something that is a runaway problem. We do control it. The bottom line is: Our director feels we should have 0 positive tests; and, quite frankly, we're working to do that.

Undetected smuggling, possession of drugs, and narcotics within a federal institution often results in extreme violence. One of the reasons it does, is that drugs are so difficult to obtain that the demand greatly outweighs the supply. If a person does have drugs in their possession, it gives them tremendous control. Not only financial benefit comes to them, but many other benefits. They can have any other

positive/negative thing you can think of within a federal prison. The other problem with drugs and attempted interdiction of drugs is that it causes corruption on the part of staff occasionally. It also causes threats to the staff and their families.

There have been many attempts by those involved in this drug smuggling process to intimidate, threaten, and actually put contracts out on our staff and their families. Another problem is that we process very large quantities of mail. That may not seem very important, but last year, on any given day, we processed 67,000 pieces of mail, including packages, normal correspondence, and newspapers. We've also had people manipulate our procedures on occasion. I was a Captain in a federal facility in upstate New York when we discovered that we had purchased tremendous numbers of pants for the inmates from a very large clothing manufacturer, a wholesale operation out of Phoenix, Arizona. What had happened is that one of the inmate's wives got a job in the factory, and was sewing narcotics into the seams and the waistbands of the clothing. You can imagine it would be very difficult to detect that.

I can give you another problem we had recently. We have factories in every one of our facilities. We manufacture electrical harnesses, bulletproof vests for the federal government, and furniture. That is our corporation. Recently, we purchased a large piece of equipment that

was approximately 12 feet long, 6 feet tall, and maybe 4 feet wide. It was purchased from a federal government contractor for one of our institutions in Phoenix. Inside that piece of equipment, a functional piece of electronic cable-testing equipment, were concealed two semi-automatic 9mm weapons, 150 rounds of ammunition, a complete communications system, narcotics, and a very large amount of money. Unfortunately, we didn't realize what happened until after the inmates had their hands on these things. They attempted to escape. It came out very well for us although two inmates did get killed in the process. It taught us something with regard to our equipment. I would not like to say we have blinders on; but when you have active contracts with people, you expect that they will live up to their end of the contract.

We use any number of X-ray machines; we tried them for different reasons. We've worked with the vendors who have been very gracious in demonstrating and doing evaluations for us. Along those lines, we are making strides. I did notice that some of the speakers here this week are people we personally have had in our agency, and they are working with us.

One of the problems in the prison setting is that you have a constant flow of narcotics. You don't have large drops, or large amounts of narcotics that come in. Large amounts of narcotics can be

controlled; they're easier for our staff to detect, and, quite frankly, inmates can't control large amounts of narcotics. Other inmates would actually take them away. That continues the flow of narcotics. This is good in some ways but bad in others. With small amounts of narcotics, it's very difficult for federal agencies to attempt to prosecute. District attorneys' offices will not come down with indictments for small amounts. If they're not familiar with prisons, they equate these small amounts with the same amounts statutes in the community would regulate. Those are, for the most part, less damaging drug uses than small amounts in the federal prisons.

We have another way that inmates smuggle narcotics that is difficult to mandate or detect. We have, with the exception of one of our institutions, what we call contact visiting. We have a secured area within a facility where the inmate is stripped, searched, given separate clothes, and then allowed to go into their room to meet their family. Their family will run through metal detectors in semi-search prior to going in, but often they smuggle in balloons of narcotics. Small balloons are easily swallowed. Some of them are not much bigger than an M&M. They'll swallow numbers of those things; and once they go back to their living quarters, they retrieve those and go on with their business. This has been a continuous problem for us. We go through a dry cell process to try to retrieve these. We have

intelligence that gives us a lot of information, but we don't get it all. That is primarily how the inmates beat our system. We've had a number of deaths—tremendous numbers. The concentrated, large amounts of cocaine, heroin, and crack are toxic narcotics. We are still looking for a way to detect that.

Another problem is the limitation that so many other government agencies have: funding, contracting, and procurement constraints. The hesitancy of our executive staff to adopt and consider new technology, is, quite frankly, the expense of a lot of new equipment. Our budget this past year was larger than any other appropriated budget within the Department of Justice. Our appropriated funding last year was about 1.7 billion dollars. That seems like a lot of money, but our per capita cost is very high. We do not have R&D money available. Our money strictly pays for the maintenance of inmates.

I'd like to close by saying that we do not feel we have a narcotics problem in the federal systems. We really don't believe that we have a serious contraband problem within the federal system. We obviously, however, do not have a flawless system, and we're always trying to improve—to upgrade our system.

We are very pleased to be here, and I certainly appreciate the invitation to come speak to you.

Thank you.