

4 Guards in Brooklyn Jail Accused in Inmate's Death

NYTimes

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AUG 20 1971

A "homicidal assault" by guards caused the death of an inmate at the Brooklyn House of Detention for Men on Aug. 10, District Attorney Eugene Gold charged yesterday.

The victim, a heroin addict who had been imprisoned since May 13 in lieu of \$1,500 bail on charges of selling dangerous drugs, was Bernard Cintron, 34 years old, of 162 Third Avenue, Brooklyn.

After the Brooklyn District Attorney had made his accusation, Correction Commissioner George F. McGrath announced the suspension of three guards and a captain, pending the action of a grand jury.

At a joint news conference in the District Attorney's office, Mr. McGrath said he had ordered the suspension on the basis of "tentative conclusions" drawn by Mr. Gold after an investigation.

The grand jury inquiry into the death of the inmate, who had a prior arrest record for sales and possession of drugs, began yesterday.

Commissioner McGrath retracted a statement he had made at the time of the incident that correction officers had found Cintron in his cell with a homemade knife—"a shiv"

—in his hand. That report, he explained had been given by one of the suspended officers. "Our investigation establishes beyond question that at no time did he attack anyone with a knife," Mr. Gold said.

Cintron was pronounced dead by a prison doctor at 5:45 P.M., one hour and 45 minutes after he was allegedly beaten. A knife, fashioned from a bed-spring, was discovered in Cintron's cell, from which another inmate had been transferred earlier in the day, Mr. Gold reported. It was then that Cintron was beaten, Mr. Gold said.

"Cintron was then forcibly

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taken by correction officers to another area of the fifth floor, where a homicidal assault took place," the District Attorney added. "There is no doubt that correction officers violently pushed Cintron into a protruding metal bar and then punched him in the stomach. Cintron doubled over and exclaimed, 'Oh, my God.'"

According to the autopsy performed by Dr. Milton Helpen, the Chief Medical Examiner, death resulted from "a traumatic laceration of enlarged soft spleen associated with cirrhosis of liver; massive hemorrhage into the peri-

"more physicians would be freed of tedious chores for more productive work."

Dr. de'ak said that the main distinction between a physician associate and a registered nurse would be that while a nurse was generally qualified only to collect patient data, the physician associate also would be trained to evaluate it. However, he said, final diagnosis under all circumstances would be made by a physician.

Mrs. Rachel Rotkovich, director of nurses at the Long Island Jewish Medical Center, expressed some reservations about the program, which was begun in May after the State Legislature approved physicians associate training. She said that some nurses "weren't favorably disposed" toward the program, fearing a conflict of duties.

However, Mrs. Rotkovich said, she feels the program is "an excellent way of introducing more men into middle-level medical services."

toneal cavity; injury caused by assault—homicidal."

The autopsy report, made public by Mr. Gold, also disclosed multiple bruises of the face, forehead, scalp, left shoulder and both arms and cuts on the forehead and the left eyelid.

The autopsy disclosed that the lacerated spleen "resulted from a blow that caused massive bleeding in the abdominal cavity," Mr. Gold said. In addition there were five fractures of four ribs on the left side and one rib fracture on the right side. Within the abdominal wall, there were scattered small hemorrhages "indicating a blow to the stomach."

The District Attorney said he had furnished additional facts not included in his formal report to Mr. McGrath.

On the day of Cintron's death, a homemade knife was given to a guard by an inmate, who said he had found it on the fifth floor, Mr. Gold related. Because the prison authorities had heard rumors that the inmates might attempt to rebel, an inspection was ordered.

Guards equipped with nightsticks started their search after inmates routinely were ordered out of their cells, stripped naked and told to grip the bars on the outside of the tier.

Mr. Gold reported that the search had uncovered seven homemade knives on the fifth floor.

Commissioner McGrath explained that it was "in the nature of our work to provide physical control over inmates," adding:

"The test of our effectiveness is how this control is exercised, particularly with the use of excessive force. The rules pro-

hibit this, and we do not tolerate it."

Mr. Gold issued a statement, saying that "humane treatment of inmates must be maintained, lest we threaten not only the human rights of those incarcerated but the rights of all citizens."

He reported that initial reports on the death had been "vague and confusing" and that some witnesses had changed their testimony during the inquiry.

Last Friday about 100 persons were brought to his office, he said. Twenty-seven correction officers and 36 inmates were among those questioned.

The suspended correction captain is Fred Kamether, 52, of 138 Burgher Avenue, S. I., who has been in the department for 20 years.

The suspended officers are James A. Galashaw, 28, of 3401 Foster Avenue, Brooklyn; Alar Cronheim, 26, of 283 College Avenue, S. I., and George Sidotti, 27, of 993 East Third Street, Brooklyn.

William T. vanden Heuvel, chairman of the city's Board of Correction, said that he had followed closely the investigation into the death of Cintron and that Mr. Gold's recommendation for a grand jury investigation "speaks for itself."

Public Hearings Due

He said he would begin public hearings on Aug. 31 at 14 Vesey Steet on the problem of suicides and other deaths in city prisons.

"There have been 17 deaths in the prisons during the last 10 months," Mr. vanden Heuvel said. "Each death in a public institution where citizens are held in custody must be thoroughly investigated, and an explanation must be given that

assures the community that the custodial responsibilities have been met properly and humanely."

Mayor Lindsay met with Mr. McGrath and wardens of city correction institutions for two hours yesterday. He said afterward that the meeting had had nothing to do with the suspension of the guards and Mr. Gold's findings.

The Mayor said his confidence in Mr. McGrath was "100 per cent," adding that if any wardens failed to fulfill their obligations, "there'll be all hell to pay."

Leo Zeferetti, president of the Correction Officers Benevolent Association, said at a news conference that Cintron had attacked the guards twice and that they had used only necessary force to restrain him.