

CAPSULE SUMMARY OF THE MARION LOCKDOWN

-Events leading to the Lockdown

10/22/83 - Two guards die in the isolated Control Unit at the hands of two prisoners, one of whom had been in the Control Unit for at least six years.

10/27/83 - A prisoner in the general population is killed; an administrator assaults a prisoner; prisoners return to their cells at the request of the guards. No prisoner riot occurs. The lockdown is on.

-Imposition of the Lockdown (Late October - early November 1983)

Officials subject Control Unit prisoners to forced finger probes of the rectum, under the guise of searching for contraband, and impose a permanent policy mandating such rectal probes for every Control Unit prisoner who leaves and returns to the Control Unit,* even when there is no suspicion that the person is carrying contraband.

Sixty (60) guards from other federal maximum security prisons, chosen for their large size and "goon squad" training, are shipped to Marion. They are equipped with riot gear - helmets, face shields, flak vests, gloves, boots, and armed with 3 foot long clubs. Along with Marion guards, they systematically wend their way through the prison, removing the entire contents of every person's cell, shackling, and then strip searching every person and removing each from his cell. During this sweep, they beat over 100 prisoners, using clubs, fists, and boots, in a uniform method revealing an organized plan to avenge the October 22 guard deaths.

Prison officials prohibit entrance to many lawyers who, hearing about the beatings, come to interview their clients. Days later, after the lawyers resort to court, officials permit them to enter, and delay the interviews. Administrators refuse to allow them to photograph the prisoners' injuries.

For days, the prisoners, never accused of rule violations, are allowed no showers, no yard, no recreation, one or no warm meals, no religious services, no law library, no sick call or medical attention, no movement of any kind out of the cells, except for delayed legal visits.

In a few weeks, prisoners are allowed some brief "recreation", alone or with one or two others, in the barren range along the cells, for 30 - 60 minutes. Some showers are permitted. Small amounts of property are returned, yet most has been lost by guards or sent out to prisoners' families.

*Finger probes are performed, for example, on Control Unit prisoners who exercise their constitutional right of access to the courts, on their way back from court.

-Architectural implementation of the Lockdown

The visiting room is gutted; small glass booths are constructed, such that prisoners are separated from their social visitors by a thick plexiglass partition and must use a bugged telephone to communicate. During construction, legal visits occur in a gymnasium. Prisoners' hands and feet are shackled; armed guards stand within earshot.

Steel beds are removed from the Control Unit. In their place, concrete slabs with metal rings at the four corners, for use in chaining men to the "beds."

"Rec cages" are installed in the yard outside, restricting the available recreation space.

-The Lockdown settles in

The last contact visit for any prisoner at Marion occurs October 27, 1983.

The last visit to the main law library also occurs October 27, 1983.

Televisions, as pacifiers, are installed in every cell.

No congregational religious services are permitted, nor are Muslim imams, Jewish rabbis, or Native American medicine men allowed confidential spiritual consultation with the men.

Prisoners are allowed out of the cells one hour per day, on the range adjacent to the rows of cells. The range is barren of equipment. No one gets fresh air or sunshine.

Beatings continue to occur sporadically, over incidents such as prisoners failing, at the end of meals, to return paper salt and pepper containers to food trays.

Prisoners are shackled, hands and feet, whenever they leave the cell - for family or legal visits, for trips to court, for trips to the infirmary, etc.

No one is ever afforded any due process proceedings prior to being placed in the punitive lockdown conditions.

In two unrelated incidents, months apart, two prisoners are killed.

-The Lockdown matures

A small "honor" unit, populated by people straight from the lockdown permits men to work, eat communally, and walk about unshackled. The unit succeeds because, except for the lack of contact visiting, the conditions approximate humanness.

Intermittent religious services commence, though with total disregard for the tenets of non-christian faiths.

A third prisoner is killed by another prisoner.

Though outdoor recreation is permitted two times per week, people still spend 157 of 168 hours per week or 93.5% of their time in a 6x8x8 cage.

Prisoners are permitted two 10 minute phone calls per month. All calls are monitored and/or tape-recorded.

Mail - incoming and outgoing, legal and social - is often opened and copied and frequently unreliable.

Sporadic guard against prisoner beatings continue to occur, as do forced rectal finger probes.

-Congress condemns the lockdown, yet permits it to continue. Two private consultants recommend, among other things, that the lockdown end.

-The Court gives its blessing to the lockdown. After months of testimony in a class action lawsuit seeking an order to end the lockdown and beatings, Kenneth J. Meyers, U.S. District Magistrate for the Southern District of Illinois, recommends that the injunction be denied and reveals more than a mere lack of impartiality. The following excerpt represents the tone of his 166 page recommendation and refers to the prisoners' allegations of guard brutality:

It is abhorrent that correctional staff and officers have been subjected to so many vicious and unjustified attacks on their integrity. Such exploitation is an abuse of the judicial process.

Finally, the Court is of the firm conviction that this litigation was conceived by a small group of hard-core inmates who are bent on the disruption of the prison system in general and of USP-Marion in particular. These inmates will spare no effort, means, or tactics to accomplish their final objective: the control of USP-Marion. This Court will not be an accomplice to such an endeavor.

Even the local newspaper headlines "Meyers overdid it" and looked forward to more impartial judicial review of the evidence.