

97-MS-001

JOHN P WHITLEY
660 Laurel Street -- Suite A
Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5631
Telephone 504 342-9880
Fax 504 342-9882

FILED
U.S. DIST. COURT
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA
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AUG 19 1998
8:59
FRANK J. POLOZOLA
U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA

August 9, 1998

Honorable Frank J. Polozola
United States District Judge
Middle District of Louisiana
Russell Long Federal Building
Baton Rouge, LA 70801

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Dear Judge Polozola:

I toured the Jena Juvenile Justice Center, located in LaSalle Parish, on Thursday, August 6, 1998. I found the facility close to completion, and being checked by the Fire Marshall's inspectors. The Health Department inspection should occur within the next few weeks. The warden, and several of his staff are working out of a building located in Jena.

I spoke with Michael Wodkins, the Warden, and toured the facility with him. He seems to have some good ideas concerning the operation of the Jena Facility. I am interested to see just how his plans work, as it would seem to be something completely new to the Louisiana Juvenile Justice System. He is a Juvenile Professional, and his thoughts seem to be geared toward juveniles. As I explained to him, his ideas sound very good; however, I want to see how his ideas actually work in practice. I doubt that Mr. Wodkins will have a chance to put his plans into effect with the inadequate staffing being planned for the facility. After reviewing the Jena Juvenile Justice Center and their staffing plan, I am amazed that they plan to open in September.

Security

The facility plans to have 75 security personnel for 276 juveniles. This does not include Assistant Warden, Chief of Security, Administrative Captain, Training Captain, and Fire/Safety Lieutenant. As shown from documents received, there will be 17 officers assigned to each of the two day shifts, and 20 officers assigned to each of the two night shifts. There will be one officer assigned to each living area, with one rover between the two 48 bed units. This staffing gives the facility a offender/officer ratio of 3.6:1. This is a high ratio for a small unit. Bridge City has a ratio of 2:1, Swanson has a ratio of 2.5:1, Jetson has a ratio of 2.6:1, and TCCY has a ratio of 2.2:1. I cannot understand why the state would accept this staffing from a private prison, when its own facilities have better staffing and are still having trouble.

Medical

The facility plans to have two RN's and four LPN's. A Physician has yet to be hired, and the facility plans to open on September 15th. The Physician is suppose to be contracted for six hours per week according to the staffing plan. A Dentist will be contracted for 12 hours per week.



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Mental Health

The facility plans to contract for two hours a week psychiatric service. There is no psychiatrist hired at this time. There will also be a part time psychologist contracted for ten hours a week, two full time Case Managers, and eight full time councilors. I asked the warden if the councilors were going to conduct therapy. He stated that the councilors were not qualified to conduct therapy, and that he, the two case managers, the psychologist, and the psychiatrist would handle the therapy. Two hours of Psychiatric Service does not come close to being adequate. There is some inconsistency in the JJC policy on Programs. JJC policy 2400.01 states that Case Managers will have a ratio of 1:138 offenders. This is a very high ratio. This policy also states that Counselors will have a ratio of 1:34 offenders. JJC policy 2400.02 states that Case Managers will have a ratio of 1:24 offenders, which would be 11.5 Case Managers hired, instead of the two presently hired. This policy gives many good reasons for using the 1:24 ratio for Case Managers, and seems more appropriate than the 1:138 ratio. This facility is suppose to be a Substance Abuse Treatment Center, and there is very little specialization shown among the councilors concerning substance abuse treatment. Considering the amount and type of programs Jena plans to implement, the number of councilors and Case Managers is not adequate.

Education

The facility has eight classrooms. JJC has asked for a waiver from the LaSalle Parish School Board to have a ratio of one instructor per eighteen juveniles. I asked the warden why he was not going to have the required one to fifteen ratio. He stated that there were not enough classrooms built for the number of juveniles the facility would house. I went into one of the larger classrooms, which had 18 desks stored inside. Once the desks are in place, this is going to be a crowded classroom. This is a brand new facility, and before it opens, it does not have the space needed to perform its mission. The warden stated that he would have nineteen teachers. There are plans to have only two special education instructors. Past reviews of the other state institutions would indicate that this will not be adequate. I asked the warden about programs for the mentally retarded, or mentally ill offenders. He stated he did not know how many he would receive, but he would work them into the programs as needed. I asked the warden how all of the juveniles will go to class, as shown on the daily activity sheet. He stated that one dorm will provide academic studies three times a week, and then will be given social skills, counseling, gym, two times a week. This will rotate between dorms. The policy is to have special education classes with a ratio of one special education instructor per 10 juveniles. That will allow for 20 special education students. If statistics from the other juvenile institutions are any indication, there will be a need for more than two special education instructors. This will have to be worked out with the LaSalle Parish School Board. I still have some confusion concerning the educational program, and where the juveniles will be located that are not in the classrooms, as well as where the remainder of the nineteen teachers will be. At this time there are no plans for juveniles who arrive at the facility and have completed their GEDs. I will need more information on the educational process.

Vocational Training

The facility has plans to offer vocational training in the areas of Culinary Arts, Grounds keeping, and Laundry. This sounds like the offenders will work in the kitchen, keep the grass cut and plant flowers, and do the laundry for the facility. This is done in each of the other juvenile facilities, but is considered a job, not vocational training. I have not seen any plans for vocational instructors, equipment, or space. I will need more information on this.

Cameras

There were two video cameras in each living area. There is a camera in six of the eight classrooms, the kitchen and dinning areas, the visitation area, the recreation areas, the medical area, and at other strategic areas around the facility. I did not get a chance to view how the cameras were aimed, or how they worked, or if they have audio capabilities, due to personnel working on the monitors in the central control. The central control area is where the monitors will be observed by the security officer. Staffing for the central control is one (1) officer per shift. My experience with this type of central control is that one officer is not adequate due to the fact that the central control is the hub of the facility, with numerous telephone calls being received, information being looked up on request, opening doors throughout the facility, receiving the count for the facility, and then trying to view the monitors when possible.

Dinning Room

The facility has two small dinning areas for the juveniles. At the time of my inspection, the warden was having a different type of table put into the dinning area to accommodate more juveniles. The warden stated it would take approximately one and a half hours to feed the population.

Visitation

The facility has one medium size indoor visiting room, and one medium size outdoor visiting room. The warden stated that the indoor visiting room would hold up to 36 people. There were three non-contact visiting areas, along with two attorney visiting rooms. Visitation will be on the weekends. Each juvenile will be allowed two visitors at a time. The warden stated that the juveniles could visit each weekend if visitors showed up to visit.

Recreation

The facility has two large recreation areas inside the facility, and one gymnasium on the outside. There are plans for each day room area to have tables for quite games, and a small television room.

Problem Areas

While inspecting with the warden, I noticed the bathroom-shower area of the 48 bed units had privacy walls that were too high. There would be juveniles who would completely disappear from sight once in the bathroom area. There were large girders in the 48 bed units, that would allow the juveniles to climb, and swing from the exposed pipes above. The commodes and sinks are porcelain and could be easily broken. The warden and I discussed these problems.

This is Wackenhut Corrections Corporations second juvenile facility. The first is located in Coke County, Texas. It concerns me that after all the reports and publicity concerning Tallulah Correctional Center, and the three state juvenile institutions, that Wackenhut Corrections Corporation would try to present The Court with such inadequate plans, and that the state would have accepted it.

At this time, with the inadequate staffing proposed in security, psychiatric services, mental health, questions concerning the educational and vocational programs and space, and with more information obviously needed before the facility would be ready to open, I would recommend that no juveniles be allowed to enter the Jena Juvenile Justice Center until these problems have been addressed.



John P. Whitley
Court Expert

JOHN P WHITLEY
660 Laurel Street -- Suite A
Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5631
Telephone 504 342-9880
Fax 504 342-9882

August 11, 1998

Honorable Frank J. Polozola
United States District Judge
Middle District of Louisiana
Russell Long Federal Building
Baton Rouge, LA 70801

RE: For Your Information

Dear Judge Polozola:

During the hearing on August 10, 1998, concerning the Jena Juvenile Justice Center, Bob Mianowski, Senior Vice President of Wackenhut Corrections Corporation, stated to Your Honor in court that he had given a copy of the staffing plans to Mr. Ross Maggio, Jr., a former court expert, and then a Regional Vice President for Wackenhut Corrections Corporation. Bob Mianowski stated that Mr. Maggio had been given a copy of the staffing plans, and had given his approval to the staffing plans for the Jena facility.

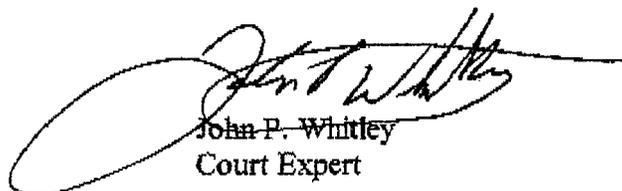
I was an employee of Wackenhut Corrections during that time, and remembered that Mr. Maggio was not working on the Jena project. I called Mr. Maggio after the hearing to advise him what had been said concerning his approval of the Jena staffing plan, and to find out if he had seen them. Mr. Maggio stated that he had never seen the staffing plans for Jena, and had not been allowed to work on the project, even though Jena was in his regional area. He reminded me that he had told the Wackenhut Staff over a year ago that they needed to work with the court on their plans for Jena, and that the Senior Staff discussed this at a staff meeting. After Mr. Maggio retired, there has been no contact with the Wackenhut staff concerning the staffing or plans to open the facility until Your Honor told the Department of Corrections last month that Wackenhut Corrections needed to advise The Court of their plans. Mr. Mianowski stated in court last month that he had only a few weeks notice that The Court would need information on the Jena opening. Mr. Maggio stated that he was going to call Your Honor to advise you of this situation.

After the hearing Monday, August 10, Bob Mianowski walked up to me and stated that he had no hard feeling over what I had said in court concerning Jena. He stated that he knew I was just doing my job, and that he wanted me to know that he did not hold it against me. (This statement came as something of a surprise to me, as I had not given any thought one way or the other about how my presentation to the court would affect Mr. Mianowski's feelings toward me.) Mr. Mianowski told me that he did not "give a damn if Jena ever opened." He stated that Wackenhut had not had a chance to negotiate the contract with the state, and that they had gotten the contract from another group who had negotiated with the Department of Corrections. Bob Mianowski stated that the per diem was not sufficient, and that the Department of Corrections was going to have to come up with more money if they wanted Jena to open properly.

Mr. Keith Nordyke stated to me that Bob Mianowski basically told him that Wackenhut was not involved in the negotiations on this contract, and that they had received the contract from another group after the negotiations had been finalized. Bob Mianowski said Wackenhut would need more money if they were to do the job properly. Bob Mianowski told him that Wackenhut would walk away from the project if this could not be resolved. Again I question how this contract was approved, if everyone seems to know that the per diem involved was not adequate to perform the services properly.

Mr. Nordyke, myself, and members of the Department of Justice met with the Wackenhut Staff at Mr. Rick Curry's office around 1:20 p.m. after the hearing. Mr. Cheney Joseph was in attendance. We met in order to try and help the Wackenhut staff understand some of the additional information that was needed, and to answer any questions that we felt that we could. During the meeting, Ms. Iris Goldschmidt of the Department of Justice asked the Jena Warden, Mike Wodkins, several questions concerning the staffing at the facility. Mr. Wodkins answered several times that he felt he could use more staffing in several areas, and that he agreed with the staffing ratios mentioned by the Department of Justice experts. The Wackenhut attorney finally told Ms. Goldschmidt not to ask the warden any more questions concerning staffing at the Jena facility.

This is for Your Honor's information.



John P. Whitley
Court Expert

F A C S I M I L E

To: Judge Frank J. Polozola
Fax: 3893577
Pages: 7, including this cover sheet.
Date: August 13, 1998

From the desk of...

John P. Whitley
Court Expert
660 Laurel St. Suite A
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802
342-9880
Fax: 342-9882