



June 23, 2020

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Cameron Quinn
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RE: Toxic Exposure of People in ICE Detention at Glades to Hazardous Chemicals

Dear Field Office Director Martin, Sheriff Hardin, and Officer for Civil Rights & Civil Liberties Quinn:

Friends of Miami Dade Detainees and Freedom for Immigrants submit this complaint on behalf of Astley Thomas [REDACTED] and the 320 people in Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") detention subjected to ongoing, highly toxic chemical exposure at Glades County Jail in Moore Haven, FL. Glades County Jail has one of the highest COVID-19 rates in the country and this chemical usage exacerbates difficulty in breathing while increasing the spread of aerosol droplets, placing both general population and individuals who have contracted COVID-19 like Mr. Thomas at even greater risk. We are calling for an immediate Office of Inspector General investigation into the dangerous use of toxic chemicals in the facility.

An initial civil rights complaint was filed on May 23rd regarding this use of toxic chemicals and negative health impact. Since then, no steps have been taken to mitigate or investigate the harm of forced exposure to people detained. Protective gear is not being provided, nor is the required ventilation. Furthermore, neither those requesting medical attention to address the impact of the chemicals alone nor those naming the exacerbation of already life-threatening symptoms associated with COVID-19 are being provided appropriate medical care.

This danger is enhanced by the practice Glades County Jail is employing of cohorting people known to have contracted the virus with others who are deemed healthy, in violation of ICE's own COVID-19 policy. When individuals detained have attempted to raise concerns publicly they have

faced retaliation. A Miami Herald news article¹ published this week named individuals being pepper sprayed, then denied access to water until the following morning, for speaking up about life-threatening conditions inside the facility.

Since May 16, 2020, we have received more than a dozen reports from people in ICE detention at Glades County Jail regarding the serious health consequences that they are suffering due to being exposed to hazardous chemicals being disseminated. These are just a few of the first-person reports. All except Mr. Thomas choose to remain anonymous out of fear of retaliation:

1. "They are still spraying the chemical with us all in here we can't really breathe cause it's too much chemical. People crying from their eyes burning from the chemical they are spraying here." Astley Thomas, currently sick with COVID-19
2. "There is no ventilation in here for us and they are spraying this chemical every day that is making us sick. Every night we are affected by the stuff that they are spraying."
3. "I'm not doing too good. I been having shortness of breath, especially when they spray the dorms with that chemical. There's a lot of people complaining about the same issue. I put in two medical requests to see the doctor and they never respond."
4. "[They] spray the dorms three times a day every day and it's causing shortness of breath in a lot of people. The containers look like a backpack with a hand pump to spray the chemical mist in the air."
5. "Today they took one more person out of our pod and I overheard the nurse said where we going to put the guy that they taken out saying they don't have any space. I'm scared and I know they're scared too. We're really not safe here.. Yes, they are (spraying the chemical) people been getting really high fever and stuff and I'm really scared because I got asthma."
6. "Yes, they are still spraying the chemical in the dorms 3 times per day.... I've been suffering of chronic pain shortness of breath, and especially when they spray the chemical in the dorm but they keep telling me and other people with medical issues that there is nothing wrong with us. It's been two weeks since I put in a medical request to see the doctor and I have not gotten a response."

From these reports, we can confirm the following:

- The Glades County Sheriff's Office is rampantly spraying chemicals three times a day throughout the facility including where people detained sleep and eat. The sprayed chemicals are coming into contact with individuals' eyes, noses, mouths, skin, clothing, bedding, food and drinking water.
- At least a dozen individuals housed in units across the facility have reported the following symptoms as widespread among the population of detained people inside Glades, as direct results of the hazardous chemicals being sprayed on them:
 - Painful, burning, red, and swollen eyes, nose, and throat.

¹ <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/immigration/article243603327.html>

- Painful breathing, sneezing and coughing.
- Nosebleeds.
- Sneezes and coughs that produce blood.
- Severe nausea.
- Stomach pain.
- Headache.
- The Glades County Sheriff’s Office staff have not verbally shared or posted any safety risks or precautions regarding the chemicals they are spraying with the individuals in detention.
- There is no ventilation to mitigate the negative effects of these chemicals; the resulting sensation is described by multiple individuals as “not being able to breathe.”
- The Glades County Sheriff’s Office staff has not addressed the medical needs of people who have been exposed to the chemicals.

On April 10, 2020, ICE issued a statement² asserting that it would follow guidance issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding the usage of disinfectant products to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in detention facilities. However, it is apparent that ICE has not been following EPA guidance, which clearly state the following:

- “These products are for use on surfaces, NOT humans.”³
- “Use products that could reduce your inhalation exposure, such as wipes or dampened towels, to disinfect surfaces. These options will substantially lower inhalation exposure compared to sprays, which generate aerosols.”⁴
- “EPA does not recommend use of fumigation or wide-area spraying to control COVID-19... Fumigation and wide-area spraying are not appropriate.”⁵
- “Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products for concentration, application method and contact time.”⁶

In regards to this last point, the Safety Data Sheets for Mint Disinfectant⁷ and Combat Disinfectant⁸, both used in the facility, clearly states the following guidelines for safe application, which ICE and the Glades County Sheriff’s Office are blatantly violating:

- “Precautions for safe handling: Provide good ventilation in process area to prevent formation of vapor.”
- “Wear protective gloves/eye protection/face protection. Chemical goggles or safety glasses. Wear appropriate mask”
- “First-aid measures after inhalation: Allow victim to breathe fresh air”
- Mint and Combat hazards: “Serious eye damage/severe eye irritation/skin corrosion/irritation”

² <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/coronavirus/eroCOVID19responseReqsCleanFacilities.pdf>

³ <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

⁴

<https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/how-can-members-my-household-use-disinfectants-properly-control-covid-19-if-family>

⁵ <https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/can-i-use-fumigation-or-wide-area-spraying-help-control-covid-19>

⁶

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-04/documents/316485-c_reopeningamerica_guidance_4.19_6pm.pdf

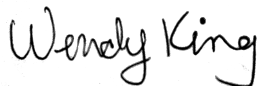
⁷ <https://www.cleaning-solutions.com/images/msds/disinfectants/155-5160.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.nclonline.com/documents/download/14655/0/COMBAT%20SDS%20English.pdf>

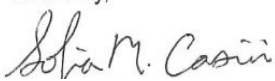
- Combat Chemical warning: “Symptoms may include stinging, tearing, redness, swelling, and blurred vision. Skin irritation. May cause redness and pain. Ensure that medical personnel are aware of the material(s) involved, and take precautions to protect themselves.”

Given the increasing numbers of people in detention at Glades County Jail testing positive for COVID-19 and the danger posed by these toxic chemicals’ improper use, we are concerned that ICE and the Glades County Sheriff’s Office response is both failing to protect individuals and exacerbating the spread of COVID-19, causing serious and potentially irreversible harm to the health of those in custody. We demand the immediate discontinuance of this toxic chemical usage by the Glades County Jail. Further, we urge ICE to comply with the Gayle lawsuit, in which a recent motion to compel names the dangers of ICE’s ongoing practices and chemical usage in the order to immediately release all immigrants detained at Glades County Jail to their families and communities.⁹ Given that this issue has been raised to the attention of CRCL previously and yet remains ongoing, we also urge that an OIG investigation take place into the use of toxic chemicals in the facility.

Sincerely,



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⁹<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:0567f828-3618-4374-86ac-7d6535392f52>