

Following new allegations of the beating of an inmate at Union Correctional Institution between Aug. 15 and Aug. 16, Florida Department of Corrections Secretary Walt McNeil ordered the Inspector General's Office to launch a full investigation.

The investigation led to the discovery that on Aug. 15, a 47-year-old white male inmate allegedly threw feces at a correctional officer, after which he was removed from his cell and assaulted numerous times by staff members over a two-day period.

In a press conference held on Aug. 21, McNeil stated that the incident came to light more than a day after the alleged abuse took place when a DOC employee reported the inmate's injuries.

At first, the inmate claimed he had been injured in a fall. It was only after he had transported outside the prison for medical care that he said he had been beaten.

*Fear for he was in the hands of his enemies*

"We suspected all along that the injuries were not consistent with a fall," said McNeil.

"The inmate's injuries are serious and are reprehensible. I'm grateful to the employee for acting appropriately in reporting this horrendous incident."

Four UCI correctional officers and two sergeants were placed on leave pending results of the investigation. In addition, one contract and three temporary nurses were dismissed for failure to report the abuse.

The officers placed on leave were Lt. Bennett Kilgore, Sgt. Aaron Coleman, Sgt. Eugene McLemore, Officer John Carter, Officer Sean Johnson, Officer Derek Philip Gibstein and Officer John A. Thomas.

The names of the nurses fired were Catherine Collinwood, Tony Davis, Alicia Bettylou Forsyth and Zelda Mae Lee.

In an earlier statement released to the press, McNeil had said he intended to bring the full resources of the agency to bear on the individuals responsible for the violent assault, including prosecution, termination and decertification, so they can never work in a correctional environment again.

"There is no place in our profession for this depraved mind-set," McNeil said.

McNeil said the vast majority of the 28,000 employees in the system are responsible, and noted that staff members reported the beating to their superiors. The inmate, whose name was not released citing federal health laws on confidentiality, was said to be incarcerated for drug offenses.

This is latest of several incidents where abuse has been alleged  
This is the second reported incident of abuse of an inmate by UCI  
correctional officers in the past four months. Yet another allegation of  
abuse took place at neighboring Florida State Prison in April.

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Five correctional officers at FSP were fired and one resigned following an alleged April 8 beating of an unidentified inmate in solitary confinement that was caught on camera. The officers—a lieutenant, three sergeants and two officers—who apparently thought the video cameras weren't working following a power outage, pulled the inmate from his cell and beat him. The dismissed officers were Lt. William Hinson, Sgt. Anthony Reed, Sgt. James Coleman, Sgt. Richard Kross and Officer Raymond Williams. Officer Charles Reames resigned before being dismissed.

In an unrelated incident at Union Correctional Institution the following day, April 9, four correctional officers were put on administrative leave while an incident of excessive force against an inmate was investigated. Charges were eventually filed against the officers who were all fired on May 7.

Turning themselves in to the Union County Jail and booked on one count each of felony battery on a prisoner causing malicious great bodily harm were Sgt. Daniel Ledwith, Officer Clayton Lee, Officer Marcel Lizotte and Officer Durrell Warren. Lee was also charged with an additional felony count of aggravated battery with a deadly weapon. The cases were referred to the State Attorney's Office.

The officers involved in these incidents had between six and 25 years of service with DOC.

In July of this year, former FSP Officer Paul Tillis was sentenced to three years in prison for violating the civil rights of an inmate. According to court records, in August of 2005, Tillis intentionally poured hot water onto an inmate's chest as he lay of the floor of his cell, feigning a suicide attempt. Tillis did not immediately seek medical attention for the inmate.