

Norfolk Inmate Council
Executive Board
2 Clark Street / P.O. Box 43
Norfolk MA 02056

December 10, 2023

RE: Death of Jorge Zerquera, BAU
MCI-Norfolk , UPDATE

To update facts as they become available. The suicide in the BAU in the late night hours of November 17, 2023. To the best of my knowledge Jorge was placed in the BAU at about 8:55 PM and was found hanging in his BAU cell at 10:30 round on 11/17/2023. This persons name was Jorge Zerquera, T 26786. He was an out of state transfer from Florida for more than a decade. He was of Cuban heritage.

My understanding is that Jorge had an ongoing back and forth dispute with Jerome B. DePina for days, his unit officer in 6-2. On the day in question Jorge went to the CSD (Program Building) around 6:00 PM to work and prepare for Veterans Day celebration. It is reported that he spent some time with other Vet's talking about military stories of his time in the Navy. When he returned to his unit around 8:30 PM he found his cell to have been "shaken down" just destroyed everything thrown around.

He found his medications (Keep On Person) were missing from his cell. That Wednesday Nov 15, 2023 he had a medical emergency which is reported to have been a mild stroke or seizure. Reporting accounts. Medical urged him to stay on his blood pressure medications etc. When he found that his meds were missing he went to the office and requested his KOP's back from Officer DePina. CO DePina denied the request. Jorge then asked to see a supervisor about his meds. Not that cell being torn up in violation of 103 DOC 506 Search Policy. However DePina then slammed the door and Jorge at about 9:00 PM went onto the quad and yelled I need a shift commander seeking his medications. It is further reported that Jorge also said he felt he was having a stroke. This resulted in an disruptive innate response and Jorge being placed in the BAU.

Staff report Jorge was cleared by mental health and medical. However mental health has expressed concerns that they were not fully informed as to his alleged outburst in the Unit 6-2 (on video). However if his alleged erratic behavior which is reported by all staff to be out of the room for him, maybe mental health would not have cleared him for the BAU.

This is the Jorge I knew. He was a past NIC Latino Chairman and very proud of his heritage. He was an active member of Project Youth and the Lifer's Group. He also had his degree from Boston University. During the pandemic he also had his sentence reduced and cut decades or more off his overall sentence. He was excited to be going home in just 12 months and would be living with his sister. He spoke of setting up a web site to expose the DOC and work in advocacy. He worked in CSD building since before COVID and was an active member of the Native American Circle, Project Youth and Catholic Community. He would help anyone with school / college work etc. His job in the CSD was one of the lowest paying positions but Jorge made it a vital component to all functions and groups. Operating the Program and Religious Video Lending Library. He also maintained what is essentially a storage area for all CSD bulk supplies such as copy paper, cups and archives. Jorge is missed and it is still hard looking up to the loft and knowing he is not there.

Suicide simply seems off and staff feel the same way and continue to say 'what happened'. He was not a person who engaged in altercations with staff or inmates and was always a calming influence. I know mental health and suicide is not rational but this is shocking to staff and inmates who knew him.

However since this incident some staff have acted unprofessional saying Jorge did not want to go

home. He was institutionalized. One officer stated to me in passing you guys really need to let up on this then spoke of his criminal case which he is serving time for. He informed me when he was his house officer he looked up his case on the internet and said alls I need to do to look up your case is put your name in and state. This officer said he runs checks on everyone when he runs a unit and not using the IMS but a general search as not to get into trouble. These comments are disgusting and harmful in the wake of Jorge's passing.

To note these windows were not the larger size as required under mental health standards but aprox 4 inches by 12 inches. Prisoners were on the 3rd floor because of an alleged door malfunction on the 1st floor of the BAU several months ago. However my information tells me it was staff error in door operation.

The below is another prisoner's account who was in the cell (In BAU) next to Jorge when he passed (BAU Prisoner)[BP].

This individual was held next door to Jorge on the night of his death). I will keep this just as I was told.

(BP) was awoken to a thud or someone hitting the wall which he believes was when officers cut Jorge down. The walls are thin in the BAU about 1/2 inch plate steel but everything can be heard. (BP) heard staff in the cell and a nurse (believed to be) Julia Silva. One of our better nurses, tries to help and care for patients.

- 1) (BP) heard them "administer Jorge with narkan" Detox drug.
- 2) Then (BP) heard the defibrillator with automated instructions for approximately 10 minutes. (BP) also said there was another nurse but did not know who. (BP) states he heard the machine state chest compressions, stop etc.
- 3) (BP) also indicated that they took a blood sugar level and said it was ok.
- 4) (BP) said he heard them say at one point he still has a pulse.
- 5) Ambulance arrived and the ambulance driver indicated there is no use.
- 6) Note: window covers / doors were not shut until staff removed Jorge from the cell. Therefore could not see him.
- 7) Officer Adam J. Tyks (start date: 7/7/19) found him on a round.
- 8) Further (BP) indicated that the Lt. Samuel M. Carver (start date doc: 1/13/2013) asked when was the last time you saw him (Jorge) and Tyks said on my last round.

* I had a chance to speak to Lt. Carver and he said he did respond to him in the housing unit. the call was a disruptive inmate. So he supervised his placement in BAU. He stated to me it was all a blur in the BAU. However he said that Jorge was acting erratic in the block.

Other reports:

Officer DePina & Jorge was having a back and forth for a few days not just one day.

Someone walked Jorge back to the block from the CSD and left him at 8:20 PM in front of the unit.

It has also been told to me now that the unit prisoners were never questioned about events leading

up to this. Yes mental health went over several times and and Superintendent Alves, & Deputy McDonald however never questioning into the events leading up to his placement in EAU and what transpired in the block.

Please use this info as you see fit and if you have more questions please let me know. Also share this with whomever you feel best.

My questions are:

- Was this a scheduled cell search?
- I believe now he was not a scheduled search which should be viewed as retaliatory.
- Did medical and mental health sign off on his placement in the EAU?
- I am told he was cleared and now Mental Health & Officers are pointing the fingers at one another for not being transparent as to events occurring in the housing unit.
- Were proper rounds conducted?

Camera Footage can be utilized to flush this out.

Please let me know if you have other questions or need anything further.

This has been redrafted as to understanding of events today and speaking to many prisoners for hours. The first summary of November 19, 2023 was only 48 hours after the passing of Jorge.

Thank you for all your efforts in this tragic death.

Sincerely,



William J. Duclos
Majority Chairman

cc: file