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CROATIAN MAN HANGS SELF IN JAIL - Times-Picayune, The (New Orleans, LA) - March 19, 2000 - page B4

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A Croatian man who was being held as an illegal immigrant hanged himself in his jail cell at **Orleans Parish Prison** early Saturday, the Criminal Sheriff's Office reported.

Sheriff's spokeswoman Mary Baldwin Kennedy identified the man as Mirko Cucek. He used a bedsheet to hang himself, Kennedy said.

Cucek was believed to be 52, chief coroner's investigator John Gagliano said. An autopsy showed Cucek died of asphyxia due to hanging, and Coroner Frank Minyard classified the **death** as a suicide.

An initial investigation uncovered no evidence of foul play, Kennedy said.

Caryl Thompson, deputy district director of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service in New Orleans, said the case was turned over to the service's deportation section. He said he could not comment while an internal investigation is under way.

Aside from Cucek's identity and nationality, authorities released little information about his background. Neither the Sheriff's Office nor the INS would say how long Cucek had been in Parish Prison or in the United Sates, why he was being held or whether he was applying for asylum.

The name of Cucek's hometown was not released, but Thompson said INS officials contacted the Croatian consulate in Chicago to notify Cucek's relatives.

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