ORLEANS PARISH SHERIFF'S OFFICE

INTERNAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

OPSO ITEM NUMBER E-2130-23

NOPD ITEM NUMBER E-29391-23

GIST:

Detective Joseph Armstrong, a member of the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office (OPSO). assigned to the Internal Affairs Division (IAD), respectfully submits the following:

On Friday, May 26, 2022 at approximately 0605 hours, Detective Armstrong received information about a medical emergency at the Orleans Justice Center (OJC), which is located at 2800 Perdido Street, more specifically housing unit [redacted] It was learned at approximately 0242 hours, Inmate Christopher Johnson (2519990) was found by Deputy Alex Gunasekara, while doing security rounds, unresponsive within cell [redacted] Deputy Gunasekara immediately radioed for medical assistance who arrived at 0245 hours.

Members of Wellpath medical staff administered 6 (six) doses of Nasal Narcan, to no avail. Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) was immediately initiated at 0246 hours. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) arrived at 0305 hours, continuing life saving measures. EMS departed with Inmate Johnson at 0324 hours enroute to University Medical Center (LCMC).

As a result of the aforementioned incident, Inmate Johnson was routed via EMS to LCMC. "Dr. Ashley Misky of LCMC advised no injury, trauma, suspicions, or alcohol reported". Preliminarily, toxicology test was POSITIVE for fentanyl. Inmate Johnson was pronounced deceased on Sunday, May 28, 2023 at 0645 hours by Dr. Hai Tran (LCMC). Further information will be included upon receipt of the final report from the Coroner's Office. An ongoing investigation is in affect to determine the source of the fentanyl.

On Tuesday, May 30, 2023 at 0630 hours, Detectives Armstrong, Corey Amacker (IAD) and Lieutenant Karen Gant (IAD Commander) attended the Post Mortem examination of Christopher Johnson that was conducted by Orleans Paris Coroner's Office (OPCO), Dr. Samantha Hurber (Pathologist). At the conclusion of the examination, it was communicated by Dr. Hurber that Christopher Johnson's body exhibited no Trauma injuries. However, recent superficial abrasions were discovered and determined consistent with the life-saving measures conducted by medical staff performing the aforementioned duties.

VICTIM

Christopher Johnson, is a black male, date of birth [redacted], folder number 2519990. Johnson entered OJC on 01/13/2023 at which time he was booked with violating Louisiana Revised Statute 14 Article 34, relative to Aggravated Battery and 14 Article 68.4, relative to Unauthorized Use of a Motor Vehicle. Christopher Johnson died while in custody at UMC on Sunday, May 28, 2023 at 0645 hours.

DATE AND TIME OF OCCURRENCE

Christopher Johnson was observed by Deputy Alex Gunasekara, unresponsive within the cell [redacted] on Friday, May 26, 2023 at 0243 hours while housed at OJC, Pod [redacted] Johnson, while hospitalized at UMC, was declared brain dead on Sunday, May 28, 2023 and pronounced deceased at 0645 hours by UMC, Dr. Hai Tran MD.

LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

The original incident occurred inside of the Orleans Justice Center (OJC), located at 2800 Perdido Street, New Orleans, La. 70119, specifically, pod [redacted] Mezzanine level.

SCENE DESCRIPTION

The aforementioned scene is described as follows, the OJC is located at 2800 Perdido Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70119, specifically, Pod [redacted] The scene in question was located on the third level of the OJC, more specifically, the north side of the building.

From the threshold, the detective observed the interior of the housing unit and noted the following: Near the entrance door, in immediate view was a typical housing unit bearing movable and immovable fixtures leading to the 1st (nearest) stairway.

Continuing in a forward direction, climbing the 1st stairway to the mezzanine level utilizing stairs and railing, are cell doors affixed to the west wall numbered [redacted] descending through [redacted]

Continuing forward on the mezzanine level, approaching cell [redacted] M, which is the location of occurrence.

From the threshold of cell [redacted] on the south wall is photos of individuals attached to wall, presumably the family of the cell's inhabitants.

Continuing counter-clockwise, on the east wall is an affixed toilet-sink combination with photos of individuals attached to wall.

https://www.nola.com/news/crime_police/new-orleans-inmate-who-died-tested-positive-for-fentanyl/article_a10dd7fa-282a-11ee-97ce-23b560bdc4e8.html

Jail inmate who died tested positive for fentanyl, Orleans Sheriff's Office says

His was one of two suspected drug overdose deaths in May at Orleans Justice Center

By GABRIELLA KILLETT | Staff writer
Jul 21, 2023



The Orleans Justice Center.

STAFF PHOTO BY CHRIS GRANGER

As suspected, tests showed fentanyl in the body of an Orleans Parish jail inmate who was found unconscious in his cell and later died, the Sheriff's Office said Friday.

Christopher Johnson, 24, died May 28, two days after jailers removed him from his cell and sent him to University Medical Center. He was being held on charges of aggravated battery and unauthorized use of a motor vehicle.

The Sheriff's Office said it's now investigating how the fentanyl was smuggled into the Orleans Justice Center.

Johnson's death was one of two suspected fatal overdoses in the jail in May. The other inmate who died, Terry Carter, 34, had previously been involved in four drug-related incidents while incarcerated there.

In a court hearing in June, U.S. Magistrate Judge Michael North, who helps oversee a court-ordered reform progam for the jail, criticized Sheriff Susan Hutson, who has opposed construction of a mental health annex for the lockup. "People on the mental health caseload are dying at the jail," North said.

At the time, a Sheriff's Office spokesperson said deputies monitor for contraband with "extensive and random shakedowns," and had recently brought in a drug-sniffing dog.

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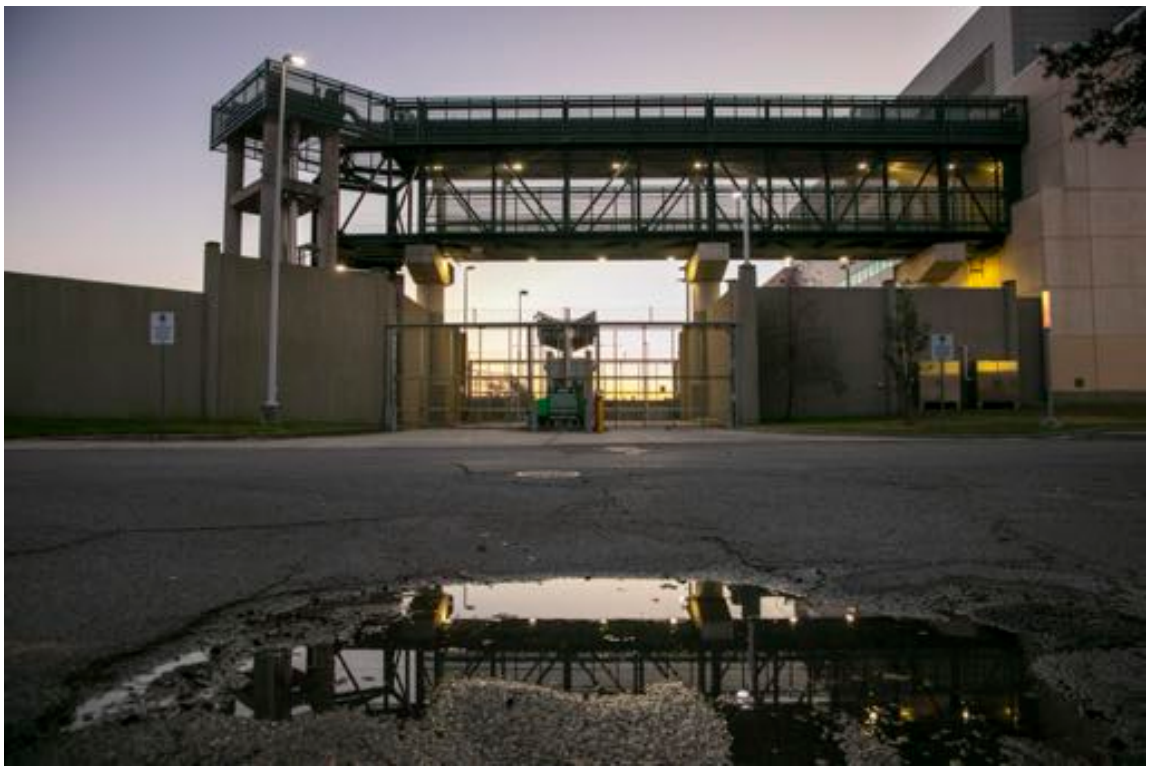
Email Gabriella Killett at GKillett@TheAdvocate.com or follow her on Twitter, @GEKillett.

https://www.nola.com/news/courts/judge-slams-opso-over-objections-overdose-death-of-inmate/article_71f8f75a-1601-11ee-87fe-b7572a64dace.html

Judge slams Orleans Parish sheriff over late objection to annex, overdose death of inmate

An OPSO inmate who died Sunday had overdosed at the jail twice in May, a lawyer advocating for inmates said Wednesday.

By JOSEPH CRANNEY | Staff writer
Jun 28, 2023



The Orleans Justice Center.

PHOTO BY CHRIS GRANGER / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

The most recent of two suspected overdose deaths at the Orleans Parish jail involved an inmate who had previously been hospitalized twice in May after overdoses at the jail, a lawyer advocating for inmates told a federal judge during a hearing Wednesday.

Emily Washington, the plaintiffs' attorney in the jail's decade-old consent decree — an agreement overseen by the federal government that requires certain reforms — told U.S. District Magistrate Michael North that inmates were hospitalized at least nine times in the last month. Every one of those cases involved suspected abuse of drugs smuggled into the jail.

That group included 34-year-old Terry Carter, who died Sunday at University Medical Center after he was found unresponsive in his cell. It was at least the fifth drug-related incident involving Carter since mid-May, Washington said, including two overdoses that required hospitalization and two other instances where he was found to be intoxicated.

Christopher Johnson, 24, also died of a suspected overdose at the jail in late May, Washington said. In total, four people have died at the jail since Sheriff Susan Hutson took office in May 2022, including a suicide and a homicide over during a two-day span last June.

An Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office spokeswoman said deputies monitor for contraband with "extensive and random shakedowns," and have recently brought in a drug-sniffing dog.

Washington's comments came during an hourlong hearing where North reaffirmed the court's ruling that a controversial jail annex to house mentally ill inmates must be built, despite a last-ditch effort by Hutson to kill the project.

North didn't rule on Hutson's motion to reverse the court's orders, which was filed Monday along with a six-page letter outlining the sheriff's concerns about what she called an "outdated" and "inhumane" project.

But North's sentiments were clear: He said Hutson's arguments had "already been rejected by multiple courts" and that they were far too late. North then fast-tracked the process by moving up the deadline under which the opposing parties have to reply to Hutson's motion by more than a week, to July 10.

The city has already selected a building contractor and construction on the annex could start as soon as July 7, North said. The costs of the project have soared from the city's pre-pandemic estimate of roughly $45 million to around $109 million. It has been opposed by Mayor LaToya Cantrell and the New Orleans City Council, along with Hutson.

In a letter to the court Tuesday, council members reiterated that they've "repeatedly supported an alternative" to the so-called "Phase III" project and are concerned about its costs. But council members took a different tack from Hutson, stressing that they are not trying to buck U.S. District Judge Lance Africk's order demanding the annex be built.

"Any reasonable and responsible actor understands the fight is over," the two-page letter reads. "OPSO, however, refuses to accept its loss and chooses to publicly pander instead."

John Williams, Hutson's chief of staff and attorney, told North that Hutson has a responsibility to advocate for a different plan. Hutson upset former Sheriff Marlin Gusman in the 2021 election on a platform that centered around her opposition to the mental-health annex.

After the hearing, Hutson said, "I will follow all valid court orders."

"Until that point, we need to make our solutions known," she said. "We need to have a robust conversation in this community about mental health."

North said legal delays were the reason why the overall price tag for the project has ballooned.

If Hutson tries again to block the project, "the outcome will be the same, and it will be $150 million," North said.

"So that's not happening," he said. "At least not anywhere in this building."

North also tried to draw a connection between delays in the project and the jail's recent drug-related deaths. He criticized Hutson for continuing to oppose the annex while "people on the mental health caseload are dying at the jail," adding that others have attempted suicide.

"But what we get is a letter," North said.

"That is not enough," he added. "It's not nearly enough to disrupt this plan and this project. It's not enough for Terry Carter and people like him who need care that they are not receiving."

When Washington questioned Hutson in May about Carter's supervision after his two overdoses, Washington said Hutson told her that the plaintiffs "should just be appreciative for all the lives that they have saved."

"Four days later, Mr. Carter was dead," Washington said.

Hutson declined to address those comments after the hearing, stating, "We're not going to go back and forth."

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By **GundryMD**

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MORE INFORMATION



Federal judge 'worried' after New Orleans jail backslides on reforms

OFFICE OF THE CORONER
ORLEANS PARISH
DWIGHT MCKENNA
3001 Earhart Blvd. , New Orleans, LA 70125

504-658-9660 Fax: 504-658-9674

DWIGHT L. MCKENNA, M.D.

CORONER'S REPORT

(pursuant to R.S. 44:19 (E)(3))

I, Dwight McKenna, CORONER FOR THE PARISH OF ORLEANS, certify the following report of death:

REPORTED NAME OF DECEASED:	Johnson, Christopher
ADDRESS:	[redacted]
SEX:	Male
DATE AT BIRTH:	Oct 13, 1998
AGE AT DEATH:	24 years 7 months 15 days
RACE:	African American / Black
DATE AND TIME OF DEATH:	May 28, 2023 at 13:30
PLACE OF DEATH:	UMC Hospital 2000 Canal Street New Orleans LA, 70112
DATE AND TIME OF AUTOPSY:	May 30, 2023 at 06:30
CAUSE(S) OF DEATH:	Complications of Anoxic Brain Injury; Multiple Drug Intoxication
MANNER OF DEATH:	Accident

DWIGHT MCKENNA
CORONER, ORLEANS PARISH

DATE: **November 20, 2024**

R.S. 44:19 (E)(3)

(3) A coroner's report is a document that includes the name of the decedent, address, sex, date of birth, age, and race of the decedent, date and time of death, place of death, date and time of autopsy, when applicable, and the cause and manner of death, including any scientifically contributing factors. The coroner's report is a public record, and the coroner or his designee shall release this report to the news media, any other person, the Department of Children and Family Services, when appropriate, the spouse, parent, sibling, child, grandchild, niece, nephew, aunt, or uncle of the decedent, or to the person with the right to control and authorize the interment of the decedent as provided in R.S. 8:655(A). However, nothing in this Paragraph shall authorize the release of the information set forth in this Paragraph prior to notification of the next of kin of the deceased unless no next of kin can be determined or, despite reasonable efforts by the coroner's office, no next of kin can be located. The provisions of this Paragraph shall not require the release of information in non-coroner cases, nor shall it prohibit the coroner from releasing information pursuant to R.S. 13:5713 or Children's Code Article 609 to the Department of Children and Family Services.