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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

News Releases

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ICE identification of previously un-tracked detainee deaths highlights importance of detention reform

WASHINGTON - During an in-depth review of records related to individuals who have died in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody since October 2003, ICE has identified 10 individuals who were not previously included on the agency's list of detainee deaths. These 10 deaths occurred between FY 2004 and FY 2007.

In response, on Saturday, August 15, ICE Assistant Secretary John Morton directed an agency-wide review of all documents and databases to ensure the integrity of ICE's records on detainee deaths.

"This is a serious matter that we uncovered and it requires an immediate response. Appropriate tracking and accounting of the deaths of individuals in ICE custody is imperative," said Assistant Secretary Morton. "This highlights why I am passionate about the need for more direct federal oversight of ICE's detention system and the critical importance of the detention reforms I announced two weeks ago."

Late last month, the processing of a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for documents related to the death of a detainee not previously captured on ICE's list triggered the subsequent review of agency records.

On August 14, 2009, Huluf Guangule Negusse, a 24-year old Ethiopian national being held with a final order of removal pending the receipt of his travel documents, passed away at Tallahassee Memorial Hospital (TMH) in Florida.

Including Mr. Negusse's death, the current number of detainee deaths in ICE custody since October 2003 is 104.

The names of the deceased are available in the public record.

-- ICE --

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