

OBEY OR DISOBEY?

Pennsylvania Department of Corrections' Corrupt Realities

By Christopher Balmer

Many correctional officers employed who work for the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections are sometimes caught between a rock and a hard place in regards to making their own decisions. During their scope of employment, correctional officers are sometimes forced to engage in acts that violate the rights of human dignity. They must obey the orders of their superior no matter if they disagree with the nature or wisdom of such order. If they feel that the order given to them was incorrect, the correctional officer can decide to appeal the order from their superior to the Civil Service Commission, which nine out of ten times never happens. To many correctional officers, it's perfectly fine for them to beat a human being who has handcuffs and leg irons securing his body. But when the inmate is on the ground being restrained by six or seven correctional officers, it's deemed OK for one or two of them to elbow the inmate in the face and threaten him.

However, when the inmate reacts in defense to the abuse, correctional officers cry to the Pennsylvania State Police, wanting to press criminal charges against an inmate. But what the correctional officer didn't tell the state police was "Well, the reason why this inmate punched me in the mouth was because I attacked him first," or "Well, he hit me because I was encouraging him to do so."

Most of the times when officers get assaulted it's mainly a result of their actions and to be honest, many of them deserve it.

It saddens me as well to see young rookie officers fall victim to other officers who have fifteen or twenty years working for the Department of Corrections. Many of these officers lead the rookies down the wrong path. For example, officers who have time working for the Department play pranks on the rookie officers to see how tough they are and how they may respond to certain aspects of the job. I've seen a few rookie officers break down mentally and quit before their career even started.

The PA Department of Corrections promotes that they are "professionals". However, to become a correctional officer all you need is a GED and to pass the civil service test. If this is all it takes to be a professional, this sends a big sign to the public saying "All those years of college you have attended mean nothing to the Department of Corrections."

Correctional officers are not professionals whatsoever. Why? Because many of them are corrupt and professionals allegedly have ethical standards. Correctional officers are trained by the Department of Corrections in many ways closely related to military basic training. But to my knowledge, they have no training in how to properly deal with human beings. All they know is: use force when needed, don't trust the criminal, and security. Many officers who work for the Department of Corrections were military men themselves who were trained to kill. There are some who have criminal records themselves and many are suffering from post traumatic stress disorder from military

combat operations during multiple tours in Afghanistan and Iraq. A lot of them served in the military during Operation Desert Storm. As a result, correctional officers have been trained automatically to follow orders no matter the nature and wisdom of the order. A great example of this ideology was on March 30, 1941, when Adolf Hitler made his final speech to annihilate the Soviet Union: *"I do not expect my generals to understand me, but I shall expect them to obey my orders."**

Sixty-one (61) years later, Adolf Hitler's ideology still is alive inside the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. If you review the procedures for cell extractions and how correctional officers assemble a team of eight men, all wielding some kind of weapon, you would be able to recognize what these procedures resemble.

Before going inside an inmate's cell, eight men dressed in top-of-the-line SWAT gear, wielding gas, batons, electronic riot shields and hand-held tasers, line up in a straight line outside the cell door. The commanding officer orders the inmate, who is completely unarmed, to come to the cell door to be handcuffed. If the inmate refuses to comply, the commanding officer of the cell extraction team orders the cell to be sprayed with gas. The officer who has the canister opens the cell door tray slot and sprays a fire-hose stream of gas inside the cell, then shuts the slot, leaving the inmate to gasp for air, choking. The commanding officer orders the inmate again to come to the cell door to be handcuffed. If the inmate does not (or cannot) comply, the commanding officer administers two more rounds of gas inside the cell.

This usually brings the inmate to his knees. The next thing you know, the officers open the door, all running into the inmate's cell, hitting him with the electronic shield, shocking him repeatedly, hitting him with a wooden baton, yelling "Stop resisting!" before handcuffing and shackling the inmate. Here's the really humiliating part. They then make the inmate duck walk with shackles so tight the metal is embedded in their ankles to the strip cage. Then the officers proceed to humiliate the inmate even more by cutting his clothing off his body. Mind you the gas also burns the inmate's body, not literally but once the gas gets on your skin your skin feels like its being placed under a hot burner. When the officers strip search you after they cut off your clothes, all that gas that's on their gloves gets all over your privates and anus when a part of the strip search involves the officers lifting the inmate's penis and opening his butt cheeks to check his anus for contraband which causes the inmate severe pain because the gas burns very badly.

Described above is what a typical cell extraction involves and sometimes it's over the smallest things like an inmate having a Styrofoam cup in his cell. When the correctional officer doesn't get it back from the inmate, the correctional officer makes a big deal out of it. Many times these cell extractions involve mentally ill inmates who are out of their minds and are unable to understand what's going on.

In my eyes, these methods of "control" or "force" resemble military tactics of invading the enemy to cause the least resistance from them.

* *Why Nations Go To War* by John G. Stoessinger, p. 36

"On January 26, 1991 at 6 P.M. Washington time, the first allied bombs fell out of the skies on Baghdad from 20,000 feet. Operation Desert Storm was under way. The air campaign that began on January 16, 1991, was an unqualified success. It subjected the Iraqi forces to the most severe pounding endured by any land army in history and it achieved this with incredibly low casualties for the U.N. forces. The ground war that followed in late February lasted only one hundred hours. Iraqi resistance to the air attacks turned out to be so weak that air force captain Gunther Drummond who took part in the opening assault remarked 'It was as if we had no adversary.'"^{*}

The invasion of Iraq by mass air strikes forced Iraq to be unable to resist. Why? Because their ability to resist was impossible. They simply couldn't, due to the power of the U.N. forces.

If you take a look at this in the sense of an inmate being cell extracted, you can see the similarities of the invasion during Operation Desert Storm. Eight men fully dressed, wielding weapons, storming inside a small cell that houses a defenseless man, there's no possible way for the inmate to resist. The PA Department of Corrections methods of bombarding the inmate with manpower and weapons is a method they designed to ensure the least resistance, if not any resistance at all from the inmate after they storm the cell.

This is a method the United States uses in successful invasions of countries during war time. Which is to ensure total "control" of the inmate, and send a message to all other inmates who witness the method of the cell extraction, that "This is what will happen if we need to come in your cell." These barbaric and oppressive methods are not only physical but formulated as a psychological control over the mass population of inmates housed in the Department of Corrections, designed to enslave the inmate and to keep his or her rebellious actions in total alignment with how the Department deems the inmate should act.

Again, many officers are forced to obey their superior's order to utilize these methods no matter if they agree or disagree with the nature and wisdom behind such order. The Department of Corrections is not meant to "correct" or "rehabilitate". It's to control and enslave in order to meet the modern goals of society which are also to control and enslave prisoners for profit.

The majority of prisoners are frightened by the physical force of correctional officers and rarely do you see prisoners unite and rebel against the oppressive actions of correctional officers, especially in the RHU. A lot of the time you hear inmates say, "He's on his own. He did it to himself." There is no unity whatsoever. Inmates have a habit of turning a blind eye on situations that need attended to. Those of us who do have the strength to withstand the difference have no ability due to all the other inmates who are psychologically controlled by correctional officers.

I'm not against correctional officers. However, I am against them when they participate in abusive and oppressive acts towards prisoners. For those that do, I have no sympathy for them. The American justice system needs to eat them alive in the same methods prisoners are. If an inmate fights back against a correctional officer, the

^{*} *Why Nations Go To War* by John G. Stoessinger.

correctional officer has brought it on himself by participating in abusive behaviors towards prisoners. They need to feel and experience what it's like to be starved, beaten and mentally tortured behind a cell door, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Maybe they wouldn't partake in such abusive behaviors.

The Pennsylvania prison system is provided with way to much leeway and immunity from punishment. However, when an inmate does something, he is immediately punished and treated like an animal, thrown into a cold cell, sometimes naked, semi-starved, deprived of the basic necessities of life and considered an enemy.

Then you have the boot-licking inmates who assist these officials in barbaric methods of treatment. Sometimes guards will pay their puppets extra food, cigarettes, porno magazines, and other perks for them to assist them in mistreating the inmates they don't like. Examples of such are spitting on the inmate, throwing fecal matter on them, throwing urine on them, giving them the inmate's United States mail, and other foul things a maniac and worthless scumbag can think of.

What is really ironic is the fact that some of these same inmates that assist these abusive prison guards in mistreating other inmates were at one time abused themselves by the same prison guards who are abusing their fellow brothers.

With all of this being explained now, the public can recognize how much control a prison guard has over inmates. Their methods of control fall outside the realm of "professional" and are closely related to corruption. This is why I have not for one day respected nor acknowledged correctional officers or prison administrators as "professionals". In my eyes they are not worthy of this title and anybody who recognizes these individuals as professionals are outright disrespecting the true professionals who work hard every day at being the best at their profession. Not for one minute do true professionals compromise their integrity in the fear of losing their job. They do what is morally correct to do.

You rarely ever find a correctional officer who is willing to be a whistle-blower. If you do hear of one, the PA Department of Corrections immediately terminates his or her employment with the Department. This is the Department's way of saying, "We need to weed out all potential threats that can expose to the public and to authorities our corrupt and abusive methods of treatment towards prisoners that can bring our entire Department to its knees."

The PA Department of Corrections hates the media and the public exposing the sad realities of their Department. When their corruption is exposed, they go on the defensive, blaming the inmates, and promoting to the public that they should take all allegations with a grain of salt, basically saying, "These are inmates. Nobody should take their allegations seriously."

However, when a prisoner decides that he has had enough of the abusiveness and assaults a prison guard, the Department of Corrections immediately cries out to the Pennsylvania State Police for help, demanding that they believe their allegations that an inmate assaulted one of their officers.

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections has bred corruption since the first prison opened its gates with arms wide open, saying, "Welcome to Hell."

If the public only knew how the prison administration is built, you would shake your heads in despair. Many of the prison guards are best friends, military buddies, high school lovers, married couples, brothers, sisters, cousins and even sex partners. How can anything be properly corrected when there's a 100% guarantee that the prison guards will cover up things for each other because they are related in one way or another

Sometimes I sit in my cell and laugh at some of the comments the PA Department of Corrections press secretary, Susan McNaughton, makes to the public. This woman probably never stepped one foot inside a prison let alone properly report what goes on within the Department of Corrections. I find myself reading a press release and yelling "Come on, Susan, you're full of yourself." Then I sit back and smile ruefully, shaking my head, realizing how much the Department of Corrections is full of horse manure.

I'm going to end this article, asking those who care to realize how corrupt the PA Department of Corrections is, to see for yourself about one small aspect of corruption. Read in the *Nation Magazine's* issue of May 7, 2012 the article entitled "Why Are Prisoners Committing Suicide in Pennsylvania Prisons?" by Matt Stroud. Matt Stroud's article exposes a lot of the corrupt and barbaric methods of treatment the Department of Corrections uses. The Department's corruption is no longer a secret.

Open your eyes because evil is sitting in plain view.

©2012