



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS



PRESS RELEASE

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MDOC CONDUCTING MASSIVE SHAKEDOWNS

JACKSON - The Mississippi Department of Corrections is conducting massive, random shakedowns to reduce contraband for the safety of staff and inmates.

Two private and two state prisons have been searched since Feb. 6, with the latest shakedown occurring Friday, March 13, at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman.

More than 150 shanks of varying sizes, tobacco, cellphones, cellphone chargers and an assortment of other contraband have been found on inmates or in their cells.

“This is a public safety issue,” said Commissioner Marshall Fisher “One shank or one cellphone is one too many. Officers routinely do periodic shakedowns unit by unit. But this is a show of force with a large number of officers both in and outside the agency searching units simultaneously.”

The seized contraband lessens the ability of prison gangs, also known as security threat groups, to threaten the safety of officers, fellow inmates and the public, Fisher said. Inmates have used shanks to harm officers and fellow inmates and cellphones to harass and threaten crime victims.

The shakedowns confirm that work as a correctional officer is dangerous, Fisher said. “The risk undertaken by these officers on a daily basis certainly warrants higher pay than \$22,000 a year starting pay,” he said.

This action is one of many the agency has taken to keep contraband from getting into inmates’ hands, including installing netting around perimeter fences and using body scanners, hand wand metal detectors and K-9 cell phone detector dogs.

“If we suspect someone has violated the law by bringing in contraband, we will refer the individual for prosecution,” Fisher said.

Introduction of contraband into a correctional facility is punishable by three to 15 years in prison, a maximum \$25,000 fine, or both. Conspiracy to introduce contraband carries up to a \$5,000 fine, five years imprisonment, or both.

Contraband items found at MSP on Friday include 25 shanks, 11 cellular phones, one MP3 player, nine cellular phone chargers, and a large amount of what appeared to be marijuana. The other locations and items found include:

- South Mississippi Correctional Institution in Greene County, Feb. 20, 36 shanks, 13 cellphones, two cellphone chargers, a tattoo gun, an assortment of pills, two bags of a white powdery substance and two Bluetooth devices.
- Wilkinson County Correctional Facility in Wilkinson County, Feb. 14, more than 60 shanks, razors, watches, medication, a VHS tape and tattoo guns.
- East Mississippi Correctional Facility in Lauderdale County, Feb. 6, more than 50 shanks, tobacco products, cellphone batteries, tobacco, SIM cards, a small amount of cash, improvised metal and wooden clubs, a homemade crack pipe, a bag of white crystal substance, suspected pills, jewelry, and tattoo material.

Fisher said he appreciates assistance from the Mississippi Highway Safety Patrol in conducting the shakedowns. The agency is assisting MDOC officers from Institutions and Community Corrections for the first time in years.

MEDIA NOTE: Photos of contraband attached.

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