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SOUTH MISSISSIPPI PRISON IS LATEST STOP FOR OPERATION ZERO TOLERANCE

JACKSON – South Mississippi Correctional Institution in Leakesville is the latest prison searched in the Mississippi Department of Corrections’ ongoing contraband crackdown.

Acting under Operation Zero Tolerance, officers found numerous types of contraband Thursday morning, including 47 shanks, 33 cell phones, 27 cell phone chargers, cell phone accessories, homemade alcohol, extension cords, green dot numbers, tattoo guns, tobacco, spice, and assorted jewelry in Area II of the Greene County prison. Some items were disposed of while others were turned over to investigators with the Corrections Investigation Division.

“The current lockdown at this facility has allowed us to isolate the movement of contraband, thus enabling us to better find it,” Corrections Commissioner Pelicia Hall said. “With today’s seizures, we are opening new investigations.”

The amount of contraband indicates inmates are being aided in conducting illegal activity or getting contraband, Hall said. “Regardless of the source, whether it is staff, visitor or vendor, I have zero tolerance for anyone who is putting staff and inmates at risk. If we learn you are illegally helping inmates, we will refer you for prosecution. Just today, my office was notified that a former corrections officer pleaded guilty to extortion stemming from a 2013 case.”

Jimmie Ree Leverette, 67, of State Line, was sentenced today in Greene County to one year and one day, and must serve four years of post-release supervision. She had been working for MDOC slightly more than six years when she was arrested and charged.

Today's unannounced shakedown occurred in a largely open bay, dormitory style area with 1,836 offenders, including 11 maximum security inmates who say they are on a hunger strike.

SMCI, one of three state-operated prisons in Mississippi, is the eighth facility to be searched under Operation Zero Tolerance. All facilities will be searched, Hall said.

Shakedowns also have occurred at the Hinds County Restitution Center, Carroll-Montgomery County Regional Correctional Facility, Wilkinson County Correctional Facility, East Mississippi Correctional Facility, Marshall County Correctional Facility, Yazoo County Regional Correctional Facility, and Holmes-Humphreys County Regional Correctional Facility since March 2.