



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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**DOI RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CITY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION TO
IMPEDE CONTRABAND SMUGGLING IN THE CITY'S JAILS**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), issued the following eight recommendations in connection with the announcement today of the joint investigation by DOI, the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation that resulted in federal charges against four former City Department of Correction ("DOC") employees, one person in custody, and one vendor for their alleged involvement in contraband smuggling and corruption at Rikers Island.

DOI re-issues two recommendations made in prior public reports in 2014 and 2018 that were meant to strengthen procedures that allowed correction officers to bypass drug and weapon detection mechanisms at entry points to DOC jail facilities. DOI also issues six new recommendations, as detailed below. In the near future, DOI will issue a report describing key observations from recent investigations that support these recommendations. DOI's 2014 and 2018 reports can be found on its public reports' page at the following link: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doi/newsroom/public-reports.page>

- 1: In 2014 DOI recommended that DOC explore reasonable structural changes to the facilities in order to place correction officer lockers outside of security gates. In 2018, DOI recommended that the lockers be located outside of front gate entrances. DOC partially implemented this recommendation by placing lockers outside the front gate entrance of a single DOC facility.

DOI now recommends that all DOC staff members' personal lockers currently located within the facilities and past the screening areas be re-located either outside of the facilities or at a location within the facilities before the screening areas. Staff members must be required to secure cellphones and other electronic devices in their lockers prior to entering the facility at the front gate or prior to moving through the screening areas. The new borough-based DOC facilities should be designed with this feature in mind. In the event that modification of DOC's existing facilities is impractical in light of the anticipated closure of Rikers Island in 2026, DOC should explore temporary and cost-effective solutions, such as installing trailers in the immediate vicinity of the facility to house staff lockers.

- 2: In 2014, DOI recommended that DOC place canine (K-9) units at the staff entrance gates to screen correction officers for drugs; in 2018 DOI re-issued this recommendation after determining that K-9 units rarely were placed at entrance gates. DOC partially implemented this recommendation -- prior to the summer of 2023 DOC conducted sporadic front gate K-9 searches; however, DOC has not conducted any front gate searches with drug-sniffing dogs in over a year.

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DOI now re-issues its recommendation that DOC increase the presence of K-9 Units at security checkpoints so that the units are present during as many tours as possible, including weekends, overnight tours and times between tour changes. DOC should develop a detailed plan to increase the K-9 presence at the front gate and submit the plan to DOI for review within 30 days.

DOI issues the following new recommendations:

- 3: DOC should use contractors or external law enforcement partners to serve as front gate staff, rather than DOC staff, in order to ensure that front gate staff are free of conflicts of interest and conduct robust searches and screening of DOC staff.
- 4: DOC should prohibit DOC staff from bringing open or unsealed containers into DOC facilities and front gate staff should check all liquid containers to ensure that they are fully sealed and have not been opened.
- 5: DOC should prohibit staff members from visiting unauthorized areas by:(a) requiring Correction Officers to swipe their ID cards when reporting to a housing area; (b) disciplining officers found on a post to which they are not assigned without justification.
- 6: DOC should implement a standardized, comprehensive application review process for any non-DOC agency employee and any employee of a City vendor with access to Rikers Island, including prohibiting access by (a) any employee who does not meet standards applicable to DOC staff; (b) any service provider who was formally incarcerated at Rikers Island until at least 3 years after their release, to avoid undue familiarity concerns.
- 7: Persons in custody who have smuggled or possessed contraband in City jail facilities in the past, or who are deemed high risk due to their gang affiliation, should be rotated between different housing areas to minimize the risk of inmate control over any housing area.
- 8: DOC should establish a classification system for persons in custody who attempt to bribe staff, similar to existing Intended Contraband Recipient or Red ID applicable to inmates involved in slashings/stabbings. This classification system would affect placement in housing areas.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country and New York City's corruption watchdog. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City. DOI's strategy attacks corruption comprehensively through systemic investigations that lead to high-impact arrests, preventive internal controls and operational reforms that improve the way the City runs.

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