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## D.C. Jail Itemizes Smuggled Weapons

### Knives of All Sizes Among Seizures In Past Three Years

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Inspections at the D.C. jail over the past three years have uncovered a number of weapons that may have been smuggled into the facility, including Swiss Army knives, steak knives, saw blades and even a 22-inch machete, according to records from the D.C. Department of Corrections.

Small weapons, as well as drugs, are sometimes tucked inside tennis balls and thrown over the jail fence and into the recreation yard, corrections Director Odie Washington said. He said yesterday that weapons are smuggled in by visitors, contractors and corrections employees.

On Saturday, an inmate fired a small-caliber handgun and wounded four prisoners. Jail officials said they are investigating how the inmate managed to obtain the gun, apparently the first such case at the facility in recent memory. The weapon was later found in a trash can. No charges have been filed.

"People on the outside are always trying to find ingenious ways of bringing in contraband," said Washington, who declined to discuss the shootings because of the ongoing inquiry. "We don't always know the source of how the contraband is coming in."

The jail conducts searches of everyone entering the facility, including corrections staff. Corrections officers do not carry weapons in the jail. Every day, the jail conducts a random inspection of at least five cells. Sometimes, as is the case now in the wake of the shootings, the entire jail is locked down and a more systematic search is conducted.

Most of the weapons found inside jails are fashioned by inmates from everyday items. Broomsticks are cracked in half, toothbrushes and butter knives are sharpened to a point. Last December, about 50 such instruments were found, according to inspection records provided under the Freedom of In-

formation Act. But other items appear to have been smuggled into the jail, which houses about 2,200 inmates. They include flathead screwdrivers, Allen wrenches, bullets, nails, syringes, saw blades and scissors, according to the records. Some contraband is destroyed at the jail. Other items, such as drugs and weapons, are turned over to D.C. police, Washington said.

Sometimes, jail staff members are a source of contraband. An FBI investigation last year resulted in the arrest of four correctional officers who later pleaded guilty to bringing contraband into the jail. In the most serious case, an officer accepted money or property for smuggling cash, drugs, a pager and a knife to an inmate.

Doug Sparks, an attorney for the family of an inmate who was stabbed to death at the jail last December, said the weapon in that case was smuggled by a corrections officer.

"There's no way anybody but the correctional employees are bringing things like knives and guns in from the outside," Sparks said.

Pamela Chase, head of the Fraternal Order of Police-Department of Corrections, the bargaining agent for about 680 Department of Corrections employees at the D.C. jail, said many items on the shakedown inventories may once have come into the jail as authorized equipment.

She also said some of the items, including the machete, were made in the jail.

She said she was unaware that any weapon had been smuggled into the jail, because its discovery would trigger disciplinary action "and we've not had that."

But she said she was concerned about the number of potential weapons uncovered, because they presented a threat to staff mem-

bers.

In August, Washington ordered a search of correctional staff members as they arrived for work. A checkpoint was set up, vehicles were searched and the lockers of the workers were examined without their consent. The union representing the D.C. Department of Corrections workers filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court, claiming the searches were illegal.

"Staff has always been a source of contraband," Washington said of the August searches. "What I wanted to do was utilize an existing resource to shakedown vehicles."

The jail has several points of entry, aside from the area where visitors check in. Staff members have two entrances, and vehicles use a docking station. And then there is the access over the perimeter fence and wall.

The contraband reports from the jail, in the form of memos, have several examples of how this method is used.

On July 29, an air-conditioning repairman working on the roof found 10 plastic bags containing heroin and three other bags with marijuana and a Swiss Army Knife. All the items were attached to a "medium size light brown rock with dark green duct tape," notes the contraband report for August.

D.C. Council member Kathy Patterson (D-Ward 3), who chairs the committee that oversees the jail, said yesterday that she was waiting to be briefed about the gun by jail officials. She and council member Adrian M. Fenty (D-Ward 4) expressed concerns about Saturday's incident.

"Clearly, somebody was asleep at the switch," Fenty said. "You can't get a gun in a municipal building in the city, but you can get one in the jail? It's just unacceptable."

Staff writers Neely Tucker and Martin Weil contributed to this report.