



District of Columbia Corrections Information Council

August 4, 2023

CIC Statement on the DOC Use of Force on May 31, 2023

On Wednesday, May 31, 2023, a fight occurred at the Central Detention Facility (CDF) between two residents that escalated to a unit disturbance, which resulted in CDF utilizing tactical use of force.

The incident occurred in housing unit Northwest Two at approximately 1:01 PM. During this time, an all-available code was issued for housing unit Northwest Two. When officers arrived, they observed two residents who were involved in a fight with each other. Those two residents were restrained, secured, and escorted out of the housing unit.

While additional staff was attempting to secure housing unit Northwest Two, some of the other residents in the housing unit refused to return to their cells. Since some residents were refusing to step into their assigned cells, a captain was called to the unit and began speaking with some of the residents to gain compliance. Residents continued to refuse, and the captain communicated with the deputy warden about the possibility of using force. The deputy warden gave his approval.

The Tactical Response Unit (TRU) was activated. Once TRU and additional staff members were staged outside of Northwest Two, authorization was given to use force on the residents to gain compliance. At approximately 1:45 PM, TRU entered the sally port of Northwest Two and fired two bore thunder rounds into the housing unit; immediately thereafter - TRU began discharging pepper spray balls repeatedly on all residents who were not in their cells. Residents who were not in their cells, including those who were showering, began to comply with directives from staff to get on the ground. There were instances of residents who appeared to be shot with balls after complying.

There were approximately 45 residents who were placed in flex restrains and removed from the housing unit. They were moved to the outside recreation area to start the decontamination process, which includes the ability to take a decontamination shower in the Inmate Reception Center (IRC) and receiving newly issued clean clothing. No residents were given incident reports except the initial two who were fighting. One resident suffered a minor injury, and he was taken to the infirmary and treated.

On June 6, 2023, CIC visited Northwest Two, and conducted some interviews with the residents who were involved. The following week, CIC received and viewed surveillance and body camera footage from the staff who were involved.

CIC concluded that during the initial incident, residents should have gone to their cells when ordered to do so by staff, and they refused. CIC also concluded that once staff returned to Northwest two with TRU, residents should have been given the opportunity to return to their cells before force was actually used. This second opportunity was not provided, and there were specific orders to not open the cell doors.

Recommendations

- During future incidents that may require the use of force, tactical teams should visibly show themselves so that residents are given a final opportunity to comply before actual force is used.
- If force is necessary, it should not be used on residents who are complying with orders.