

# GEO Group (Formerly Wackenhut) Rap Sheet

## GEO/Wackenhut Does Not Properly Screen Staff:

- Four felony child pornography charges were recently filed against an assistant warden of GEO's Lawton County Correctional Facility in Canadian County, Oklahoma. The assistant warden was freed on bail after turning himself in to authorities in February of 2004 ("Prison worker freed on bail," The Oklahoman, 2/12/04).
- A former GEO jail guard agreed to plead guilty in federal court in March of 2004 to intending to distribute between 50 and 500 grams of methamphetamine. **The guard was caught in a sting operation in which she attempted to sell meth to an undercover police officer** ("Former jail guard to plead guilty," San Antonio Express-News, 3/16/04).
- Another GEO jail guard was arrested for accepting money and what he believed to be heroin from an undercover officer while *inside* the GEO-operated federal correctional facility where he worked (GEO (formerly Wackenhut) Rap Sheet, Private Corrections Institute, [www.flpba.org/private/rap\\_geo.html](http://www.flpba.org/private/rap_geo.html), accessed 4/5/04).
- In New Orleans, a Wackenhut security guard was accused of second degree murder for fatally shooting his roommate, *who was also a Wackenhut security guard*. The incident occurred during a scuffle *outside the Wackenhut headquarters*. It was unclear whether the murder weapon was issued by the company ("Coroner identifies security guard shot to death; Man's roommate booked in slaying," Times-Picayune, 6/27/03).
- In 2002, a Texas GEO guard crashed a jail van into a lamppost while transporting prisoners from the federal courthouse. It was later discovered that **the guard did not have a driver's license** (GEO (formerly Wackenhut) Rap Sheet, Private Corrections Institute, [www.flpba.org/private/rap\\_geo.html](http://www.flpba.org/private/rap_geo.html), accessed 4/5/04).
- A former assistant warden of a GEO prison in New Mexico pleaded guilty in 2002 to two felony charges in connection with the abuse of some inmates. He was accused of **ordering two lieutenants to assault two former inmates at the prison, then orchestrating a cover-up** of the incident (GEO (formerly Wackenhut) Rap Sheet, Private Corrections Institute, [www.flpba.org/private/rap\\_geo.html](http://www.flpba.org/private/rap_geo.html), accessed 4/5/04).

## GEO/Wackenhut Has History of Shady Dealings:

- A county judge in California approved a settlement against GEO in a class-action lawsuit accusing Wackenhut of **requiring its employees to work unpaid overtime**. The settlement could pay 1,600 current and former employees up to \$1 million. The attorney for the plaintiffs argued that Wackenhut has "a corporate policy of refusing to pay overtime." Plaintiffs also complained they were not given proper rest and meal breaks. One worker said she was denied restroom breaks even while she was pregnant. ("TCL overtime suit tentatively settled," Taft Midway Driller, 8/30/04 and "Prison company nears end of battle," The Bakersfield Californian, 9/7/04).
- A prisoner in a GEO-operated federal prison was **kept two years past the date when a US District Judge had signed an order for his release**. Court and prison officials claimed not to know what happened to the original release order ("Judge's order to release prisoner went unnoticed for over two years," Associated Press, 6/3/02).
- A federal jury awarded a former GEO guard over \$600,000 in a wrongful termination suit. The suit charges that GEO retaliated against him for divulging **illegal activities at a California facility**. The man sent letters to government officials complaining that "Wackenhut covered up an inmate escape, engaged in fraud, mishandled incident reports, allowed sexual and physical assaults and drug use by inmates, allowed inmates to possess weapons, retaliated against him

for seeking various changes, failed to follow the agreement it had reached with the government and allowed officers to carry weapons illicitly in public” (“Alleged Wackenhut whistleblower will get his day in court,” Corrections Professional, 3/14/03 and “Former TCI employee wins suit,” Taft Midway Driller, 8/27/04).

- The Florida state ACLU chapter filed a public records suit against Wackenhut in 2000 for “stonewalling” on allowing them access to its records. The organization sought records to confirm **allegations of sexual harassment, abuse, and “excessive profit” taken by the company** (“A Record of Dishonesty,” Austin Chronicle, 7/5/02).

### **GEO/Wackenhut’s Facilities are No Bargain:**

- Commissioners in Val Verde County, Texas had a rude awakening this year when they learned that **the county will pay nearly double the amount it budgeted to house state prisoners in its county jail**. According to the contract with GEO, the county can house up to 60 prisoners without charge, but for every state prisoner above that cap, the company will charge them the rate it charges federal agencies—\$57 per inmate per day.
- In a similar story, Delaware County, PA is facing a **significant increase in spending on its GEO-operated prison**. Total county spending on the prison was projected to be \$28.7 million in 2005—a 19% increase from 2004.

### **GEO/Wackenhut’s Overseas Ventures Haven’t Fared Much Better:**

- GEO’s Melbourne, Australia jail was described as “**a hellhole**” by one of 5 staff people who had to take medical leave as a result of the stress of working in the facility. Complaints from staff called the jail, “**overcrowded, poorly managed and occasionally dangerous**” and complained of problems including, “sexual harassment, discrimination, bullying, victimization, intimidation, and poor treatment of inmates” in the facility. One of the officers on leave was quoted as saying, “Everything is just shonky. People are bullied and harassed if they make a complaint, and any problems are covered up.” (“Jail is a ‘hellhole,’” Melbourne Herald-Sun, 11/18/04).
- A GEO prison in Ashfield, England was **declared “the worst in the country”** by the chief inspector of prisons there in 2003. An inspection found that “conditions were so bad that many inmates were frightened to leave their cells. Under pressure staff relied on inmates to act as “mini-officers” in the reception wing, and escort van drivers were used as officers on other wings” (“Premier’s Ashfield “worst” prison in England and Wales,” Public Private Finance, February 2003).
- A special UN envoy in 2002 declared that Wackenhut’s Woomera immigration detention center **violated an international human rights convention** on children’s rights and an international covenant on torture and cruel or degrading punishment (“Asylum policy a tragedy: UN judge,” The Age, 8/1/02). That facility had been plagued by scandal when the immigrant detainees engaged in a hunger strike protesting conditions and Australian immigration policy. At one point, about 60 of the detainees, including some minors, actually sewed their lips together in protest (“Woomera asylum seekers sew lips together,” Sydney Morning Herald, 1/18/02). About 21 others resorted to drinking toxic substances (“Woomera woes worsen as seven rushed to hospital,” Sydney Morning Herald, 1/22/02). At least one other inmate threw himself on the prison’s razor wire (“Violence erupts as protest spreads to WA,” Sydney Morning Herald, 1/27/02).

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