

September 28, 2020

Sent:

Via electronic mail to christopher.fallon@doc.state.ma.us Via facsimile to (508) 279-3802

Christopher Fallon Deputy Commission, Prison Division Massachusetts Department of Corrections

RE: Robert Silva-Prentice (W112667)

Appeal of guilty finding on Disciplinary Report # 45539.

Dear Deputy Commissioner Fallon:

Please accept this letter as an appeal from the decision dated September 11, 2020 in which Hearing Officer Jennifer Redd (hearing officer) found by a preponderance of the evidence that Mr. Silva-Prentice assaulted an unidentified staff member during an unannounced, forcible cell extraction of Mr. Silva-Prentice and his cellmate from cell 15 on P2 during the planned institutional searches on January 22, 2020.

For at least the following seven reasons, Mr. Silva-Prentice respectfully requests that the guilty finding on assault of a correctional office be vacated.

1. The hearing officer implicitly rejects Lt. Allain's and Sgt. Breslin's testimony identifying Lt. McCullough as the "victim" of the alleged assault and fails to make any finding regarding the identity of the officer allegedly struck by Mr. Silva-Prentice allegedly.

In her findings, the hearing officer explicitly relies upon and finds credible some – but not all – of the incident reports written by the Tactical Team members who stormed Cell 15. Specifically, she credits incident reports written by Lt. Allain (#1894920), Capt, Lanpher (#189055), Lt. Murphy (#1896741), Sgt. Breslin (#1896763), and Sgt. D'Amadio (#1897635). H.O. Redd does not credit a report by the "victim" identified by Allain and Breslin at the hearing, Lt. Stuart McCulloch, except to the extent that the report states where Silva-Prentice's cellmate was located at the time the Tactical Team stormed the door (Decision at p. 17).

Not a single one of these reports identify the "victim" of Silva-Prentice's alleged assault. Rather:

- Lt. Allain's report states: "I then directed my attention to Silva-Prentice who was on the top bunk and was attempting to assist [redacted] by *punching staff* in the back." Exhibit 3.
- Capt. Lanpher's report states: "Inmate Silva-Prentice then began to assault staff from behind resulting in him being taken to the floor." Exhibit 4.
- Lt. Murphy's report states: 'Inmate Silva-Prentice was closets to me on the floor wrestling with staff. I sent to the ground and secured his legs with my arms and body weight preventing him from further kicking staff." Exhibit 6.
 - O Notably, Allain and Breslin never claimed to have been kicked nor do they claim to have witnessed any other staff member being kicked. Further, both Allain and Breslin testified clearly and unequivocally that no one touched Mr. Silva-Prentice's legs and that they were in positions where they would have necessarily witnessed any such event if it were to actually happen.
- Sgt. Breslin's report states: "My attention was on SILVA-PRENTICE, who was attempting to assist [his cellmate] by **punching Officer's [sic] in the back** from the top bunk as they continued in their attempts to control an assaultive [cellmate]." Exhibit 7.
- Sgt. D'Amadio's report states: "At this time, Inmate Silva-Prentice, Robert (W112667) from his position in the top bunk, began to assault other team members." Exhibit 13.

At the hearing, Lt. Allain and Sgt. Breslin claimed to have seen Mr. Silva-Prentice strike the back of Lt. McCulloch multiple times, but the hearing officer does not credit this aspect of their testimony; in fact, the hearing officer does not identify any victim at all. See Decision at p. 16, ¶¶ 5-6. The Hearing Officer likely made no findings on the identity of any "victim" because while Allain and Breslin identified McCulloch for the first time during the hearing, McCulloch explicitly denied any physical contact with Mr. Silva-Prentice in his IAU interview (Exh. 35 at p. 20 ("McCulloch stated he never had physical contact with Silva-Prentice during the incident") and, even worse, his report claims that Mr. Silva-Prentice struck Lt. Allain and Sgt. Breslin, both of whom denied in their testimony that they were struck. Exhibit 12 (McCulloch report stating: "Inmate Silva-Prentice Robert W1 12667 then began to assault other team members as they entered and was taken to the floor").

With no victim, it is legally and factually impossible for Mr. Silva-Prentice to be guilty of assault on a correction officer and upholding a guilty finding on these facts would be a very serious violation of due process which the Superior Court will no doubt vacate.

2. Even if the decision can be read on appeal to find that Lt. McCulloch is the victim of the alleged assault, then the guilty finding must still be vacated.

Assuming arguendo that the hearing officer's decision is interpreted to mean that Lt. McCulloch is the victim, then the guilty finding must still be vacated because the disciplinary and hearing officers denied Mr. Silva-Prentice the opportunity to call any team member other than Lt. Allain and Sgt. Breslin on grounds that the other team members' testimony would be duplicative. But here, the person who was allegedly assaulted denied outright having any physical contact with Mr. Silva-Prentice and points to Lt. Allain and/or Sgt. Breslin as the victims. Due process requires that Mr. Silva-Prentice have an opportunity to flesh out the truth -- the very purpose of holding a hearing in the first place.

3. The hearing officer erroneously relies upon IAU's "exoneration" of Lt. Allain and Sgt. Breslin.

In finding Mr. Silva-Prentice guilty and attacking his credibility, the hearing officer cites the IAU report which exonerates Lt. Allain and Sgt. Breslin of using excessive force. That exoneration, however, is based on a story which has now been discredited beyond any doubt. As shown in the photographic exhibits, Mr. Silva-Prentice has a series of round, even spaced burn marks on the back of his right arm, just under his right arm pit, and under his right scapula.1 Exhibits 36-43.2 During the discovery process, D.O. Brian Mulvey stated that no photographs of Mr. Silva-Prentice's injuries exist. But on July 31, 2020, counsel informed him of the photographs she and an IPS officer had taken of Mr. Silva-Prentice's face, head, back, and torn out dreadlocks on February 12, 2020, after counsel first learned that IPS failed to timely photograph the injuries as required by DOC regulations. That these marks were caused by drive stuns is confirmed by an expert affidavit by Dr. Kent, who was retained by the New England Innocence Project to opine as to the cause of those marks. Dr. Kent concludes to a reasonable degree of medical certainty that the wounds to the arm and under the arm pit were in fact caused by a drive stun from a taser-type weapon and that the other marks are consistent with such a weapon. Exhibit 51. Dr. Kent's affidavit is uncontroverted and, in fact, is corroborated by the notes on Mr. Silva-Prentice's sick slip (referenced in Exhibit 35 at p. 22) which confirms that 6 days later, Mr. Silva-Prentice's wounds had started to scab.

¹ Sgt. Breslin freely admitted that he had no idea that photographs of Mr. Silva-Prentice's injuries existed. Lt. Allain claims to have seen photographs of the injuries in a media article but his testimony makes no sense: each and every article with photographs is about the lawsuit filed by Mr. Silva-Prentice and others, yet Lt. Allain insists he had no idea that Mr. Silva-Prentice had sued, an impossibility if one were to even glance at the photographs in the articles. See Exhibit 49.

²Counsel met Mr. Silva-Prentice for the first time after attorneys were finally allowed back into the institution and contact visits were allowed, on or about February 6 or 9, 2020. Unaware that DOC had violated its own regulations by failing to photograph Mr. Silva-Prentice's injuries, counsel was not able to document the injuries until February 12, when she returned to SBCC with a camera.

4. Lt. Allain's and Sgt. Breslin's claims are fatally infected by unexplained, material inconsistencies.

Lt. Allain's and Sgt. Breslin's explanations for why and when they deployed their ECDs are contradicted by the ECD reports referenced in Exhibit 35 (as discussed below, Mr. Silva-Prentice has been denied access to the ECD reports).

Both Allain and Breslin testified and wrote in their reports that prior to the first drive stun: Lt. Allain was the third or fourth team member to enter the cell; Sgt. Breslin was the fifth member to enter the cell; Lt. Allain saw the cellmate "refusing Captain Lanphers (sic) orders to get on the ground and lowered his center of gravity in an attempted physical assault on staff (Exhibit 3);" Lt. Allain saw Capt. Lanpher use his ECD on the cellmate, who "fell backwards into the wall" (Exhibit 3); Lt. Allain's and Sgt. Breslin's attention was then trained on Mr. Silva-Prentice, who was lying on the top bunk; Lt. Allain and Sgt. Breslin saw Mr. Silva-Prentice hit Lt. McCulloch in the back multiple times; Mr. Silva-Prentice defied orders to "stop resisting;" Lt. Allain pulled Mr. Silva-Prentice from the top bunk onto the floor; on the floor, Silva-Prentice continued to resist and refused to be handcuffed; and only then did Lt. Allain drew, activated, and used his ECD on Silva-Prentice's abdomen.³

After the first drive stun and prior to escorting Mr. Silva-Prentice from the cell, Lt. Allain and Sgt. Breslin testified and/or wrote: Lt. Allain re-holstered his ECD device; an attempt was made to restrain Mr. Silva-Prentice; Mr. Silva-Prentice continued to resist by thrashing his arms and legs wildly; Sgt. Breslin drew his ECD; Sgt. Breslin administered 3 drive stuns to Mr. Silva-Prentice's hip and thigh; an unspecified team member placed Mr. Silva-Prentice in handcuffs; and Mr. Silva-Prentice was escorted from the cell.⁴ The videos and ECD reports, however, reveal that Lt. Allain's and Sgt. Breslin's timelines are impossible:

- According to the videos and as found by IAU, the first team member entered the cell at 2:42:51. Exhibit 35.
- The ECD reports described in Exhibit 35, however, establish that Lt. Allain deployed his ECD "at approximately 2:42" leaving, at most, the passage of 8 seconds from the time the first member entered the cell and time that Lt. Allain administered the first drive stun.
- The ECD reports further establish that Sgt. Breslin administered all 3 drive stuns "at approximately 2:43," i.e., within no more than 68 seconds from the time that the first team member entered the cell.

³ Exhibit 3; Decision at p. 9 (summarizing Lt. Allain's testimony); Decision at 16 (setting forth hearing officer's findings about Lt. Allain's and Sgt. Breslin's testimonies).

⁴ See Decision at pp. 9-10 (summarizing Lt. Allain's hearing testimony); Exhibit 3 (Lt. Allain's incident report); Exhibit 12 (Sgt. Breslin's report).

• The videos further establish that Mr. Silva-Prentice was not removed from the cell for 3 more minutes.

Notably, neither Lt. Allain nor Sgt. Breslin offer any explanation for what happened during those 3 minutes between the last drive stun and the time Mr. Silva-Prentice was escorted from the cell.

5. Only Mr. Silva-Prentice's testimony and statements fit the undisputed timeline.

Contrary to Allain's and Breslin's prior statements and hearing testimony, Silva-Prentice's version of events is the only version which is consistent with the objective and uncontroverted evidence. Indeed, only Silva-Prentice's description of the drive stuns fits the medical, photographic, and expert evidence.

Silva-Prentice consistently said to IAU and in his court and hearing testimony that he had been lying on the floor face down each time he was drive stunned. Exhibits 35, 50. The medical evidence confirms that Silva-Prentice had burn-like injuries to his back and posterior right arm which had started to scab 6 days later. Exhibit 35. The photographs confirm the location of the injuries. Exhibits 36 - 44, 51. Dr. Kent's expert affidavit confirms that the injuries shown in the February 12 photographs were caused by an ECD-type weapon. Exhibit 51. And, as Breslin conceded on cross-examination, Mr. Silva-Prentice's injuries were located on areas of the body which would be exposed if he were lying face down with his hands cuffed behind his back. Decision at p. 14.

Conversely, there is not one shred of objective, forensic, or documentary evidence to support the notion that Lt. Allain administered a drive stun to Mr. Silva-Prentice's abdomen; that Sgt. Breslin administered 3 drive stuns to Mr. Silva-Prentice's hip and/or thigh; and/or that Lt. Allain and Sgt. Breslin escorted Mr. Silva-Prentice from the cell after he was placed in cuffs immediately after the final drive stun.

6. The hearing officer's credibility findings are clearly erroneous.

Mr. Silva-Prentice is cognizant of how difficult it ordinarily is to successfully challenge a hearing officer's credibility findings. But on this record, one can only conclude that the credibility findings are clearly erroneous.

For example, the hearing officer credits Lt. Allain because he was purportedly "forthcoming" about his inability to recall when he wrote his reports; the failure to conduct debriefings; and failing to have Mr. Silva-Prentice medically evaluated, all in violation of 103 CMR 505. Decision at p. 16. But Lt. Allain was not the least bit "forthcoming" – each one of these concessions came only after Lt. Allain was told on cross-examination that it had ultimately been concluded that the use of force upon Mr. Silva-Prentice violated DOC's use of force policy. See Exhibit 35; 103 CMR 505.13. Simply put, Lt. Allain had no choice but to accept these findings

once confronted with them. That he told the truth when confronted with irrefutable proof hardly reflects well on his truthfulness.

The hearing officer also credits the testimony of Lt. Allain and Sgt. Breslin because IAU exonerated them of excessive force. Decision at pp. 17-18. But, as discussed above and as clearly shown in Exhibit 35, Allain and Breslin were exonerated because IAU did not know about the photographs which plainly show that Mr. Silva-Prentice was drive stunned while face down on the floor, not on his abdomen, hip and thigh to stop him from resisting. It is impossible for any CO to use an appropriate amount of force on a prisoner who is lying face down on the floor, with his hands cuffed behind him.

The hearing officer credits Lt. Allain's and Sgt. Breslin's testimony because they purportedly testified consistently on the topic of whether they spoke to each other about their testimony prior to hearing and because they purportedly testified consistently about whether they rehearsed their testimony prior to the hearing as well as where in the cell Mr. Silva-Prentice's cellmate was located when they entered the cell. the location of the cellmate when they first entered. The hearing officer is wrong. Only Sgt. Breslin confessed to fully discussing the events inside the cell with Lt. Allain on the morning of the hearing. But Lt. Allain, who testified first, insisted that they only discussed personal matters and that he did not tell Breslin what he was going to say in his testimony. When pressed multiple times, Lt. Allain admitted only that he told Sgt. Breslin that he would testify consistently with his report, not that they discussed what happened inside the cell or even what Allain wrote in his report.

Regarding the location of the cellmate, Lt. Allain was crystal clear when trying to explain how it was possible for Mr. Silva-Prentice to hit a team member who was dealing with the cellmate from the top bunk -- that when he entered the cell, Mr. Silva-Prentice was on the top bunk and his cellmate was on the bottom bunk. The hearing officer claims that this testimony is somehow corroborated by the reports written by Captain Lanpher, Sgt. D'Amadio, and Lt. McCulloch. Those reports do not corroborate. Rather, the other reports contradict, stating that the cellmate was standing in a fighting pose when they entered and that at some point he fell against the bottom bunk. By the time the cellmate was moved onto the bunk, it was at the end of the encounter inside the cell, when the cellmate was finally restrained. Exhibits 4, 12, 13. Further, the hearing officer completely ignores that Lt. Allain clearly and unequivocally contradicted himself at the hearing. Indeed, in a different part of his testimony, Lt. Allain freely admitted that the cellmate had been standing at the back of the cell in a "fighter's stance" when he entered, just as Breslin and the other reports say. Decision at p. 14.

Lt. Allain's and Sgt. Breslin's credibility is further undermined by their utter inability to give even a single reason why they entered cell 15 without first asking Mr. Silva-Prentice and/or his cellmate to cuff up. When pressed on cross-examination about why he would have entered the cell knowing that the prisoners inside were not cuffed, Lt. Allain even conceded, "I have nothing for you." They also had no explanation for why they would possibly return Mr. Silva-Prentice to his general population cell if he had just committed an assault on a team member, except to repeat over and over, in almost mechanical fashion, that Deputy Commissioner Paul Henderson "tasked" them to remove the cellmate, not Mr. Silva-Prentice.

Sgt. Breslin's explanation for why he violated 103 CMR 505.13 by waiting 26 days to write a report is equally suspicious. It is simply not reasonable, nor credible, for a sergeant on the tactical response team to believe he had "implicit permission" to delay writing an incident report about his use of a weapon for nearly a month due to "busyness of the week at SBCC and his current position at MCI Concord." Decision p. 13.

To justify her rejection of Silva-Prentice's credibility, Hearing Officer Redd cites several purported inconsistences in his court and hearing testimonies. But those inconsistencies, too, are largely nonexistent. For example:

The hearing officer claims that Mr. Silva-Prentice gave inconsistent testimony about the number of dreadlocks which were pulled from his head during the incident. He did not. He testified in Superior Court that an officer had pulled "roughly 5 or 6 dreads" from his head. Exhibit 50 at 54-55. Notably, Associate Justice of the Superior Court Beverly Cannone explicitly found that this testimony was truthful and that correction officers had been the ones to pull out the dreadlocks. Exhibit 52 at 28. At the hearing, Mr. Silva-Prentice testified that he found some dreadlocks in his cell, but that an officer may have carried off others. There is no inconsistency; even if there were, given the clearly tumultuous incident involving at least 8 different men inside a small prison cell, it is not the least bit surprising that Mr. Silva-Prentice is unsure as to specifically how many dreadlocks were ripped from his head.

The hearing officer finds suspicion in Mr. Silva-Prentice's hearing testimony that he was surprised when the tactical team stormed into his cell because he also testified that his cellmate warned they were coming. The hearing officer, however, omits that Mr. Silva-Prentice has consistently said that he responded something along the lines of, "Nah, bro, they ain't coming in here." Exhibit _ (Appel to Shaw, dated 4/2/2020). He said something similar in court, Exhibit 50 at p. 49, and repeated the same testimony during his testimony when he was asked to describe what happened inside his cell in his own words. In other words, while the cellmate said the team was coming to their cell, Mr. Silva-Prentice did not believe him.

The hearing officer claims that Mr. Silva-Prentice failed to write in his grievance that he had been kicked three times. Decision at p. 16. This is simply not true. Rather, his grievance states quite clearly that he had been punched, kicked, and tasered several times. Exhibit 26. As for Mr. Silva-Prentice's failure to explicitly mention the dreadlocks, it is of no consequence here, where Mr. Silva-Prentice disclosed the pulled-out dreadlocks to IAU during his interview on March 4, 2020 and testified consistently in court and at the hearing. Exhibits 35, 50.

The hearing officer criticizes that counsel did not come into possession of the torn dreadlocks until 3 weeks after the incident. Decision at p. 17. Yet, as Superior Court Associate Justice's written findings clearly state, attorneys had been locked out of the facility for much of those 3 weeks. Exhibit 52.

The hearing officer finds suspicious that other officers did not write reports about seeing Mr. Silva-Prentice's injuries. Decision at p. 17. Why would they, when DOC regulations and policies required the team members who were involved to immediately report their uses of force, for a medical evaluation to be conducted immediately, and for IPS to document the injuries immediately. Were other officers compelled to somehow divine that the six COs involved in the use of force inside Mr. Silva-Prentice's cell had violated clearly established policy and so it fell to them to document what happened?

The hearing officer faults Mr. Silva-Prentice for alleging telling different stories about being called a "faggot." He did not. To IAU, Mr. Silva-Prentice explained that he was called a "faggot" after he said to a CO, "I didn't do nothing," to which the CO responded, "shut the fuck up, I'll tell you one thing faggot, I don't give a fuck. You don't run this jail, we do." Exhibit 35 at p. 11. At the hearing, Mr. Silva-Prentice attributed the slur to Lt. Birri. Whether Lt. Birri was there ore not does not take away from what Mr. Silva-Prentice heard. It is absurd to conclude that Mr. Silva-Prentice lied because he thought Lt. Birri was inside his cell when he very easily could have just blamed Allain and Breslin. Mr. Silva-Prentice, however, truthfully said he did not recognize either of them from inside the cell. At worst, he made an incorrect identification.

The hearing officer faults Mr. Silva-Prentice for testifying inconsistently as to the number of drive stuns. According to the hearing officer, Mr. Silva-Prentice testified in court that he had been drive stunned 6 times. Decision at 17. He did not. Rather he testified that "they tased me **about** five to six times." Exhibit 50 at 51. To IAU, Mr. Silva-Prentice said he was tasered 4 to 5 times. Exhibit 35 at 12. According to the ECD reports which have been withheld from Mr. Silva-Prentice, he was purportedly tasered 4 times. Given the confusion, this slight variation is neither surprising nor suspicious.

The hearing officer also criticizes Mr. Silva-Prentice for purported inconsistencies in his description of being kicked in the face. No material inconsistencies exist. To IAU, Mr. Silva-Prentice said he was kicked two times when he looked to the left toward his cellmate and then kicked a third time for no reason. Exhibit 35. In court, Mr. Silva-Prentice said the same thing. Exhibit 50 at 51.

Finally, the hearing officer also claims that Mr. Silva-Prentice is not credible because he did not write on his sick slip or complain to the nurse who finally saw him 6 days later that he had a bruise on his face or that his dreadlocks were pulled out. So what? Why would he submit a sick slip for a bruise and torn hair, when there were no underlying injuries to his scalp?

7. Important and Exculpatory Evidence Was Suppressed.

Finally, the hearing officer's guilty finding must be vacated because important exculpatory evidence was suppressed and/or because the hearing officer improperly relies upon evidence not made available to Mr. Silva-Prentice.

First, Mr. Silva-Prentice explicitly requested information about the weapons used by Allain and Breslin in her supplemental discovery letter. See supplemental discovery letter to D.O.

Mulvey. D.O. Mulvey denied the request, stating that DOC does not track which weapons are assigned to which officers. The existence of the ECD reports and that they were linked specifically to Allain and Breslin show otherwise. While counsel and Silva-Prentice have no reason to believe that D.O. Mulvey misrepresented the availability of the requested evidence, it turns out that he was wrong and that the weapons used by Allain and Breslin had, in fact, been identified. Indeed, per Exhibit 35 there are ECD reports for the weapons assigned to Lt. Allain and Sgt. Breslin which show, respectively, that drive stuns were administered "at approximately 2:42" and "at approximately 2:43." Exhibit 35.

Based on the testimony, videos, and exhibits, Mr. Silva-Prentice believes that these reports will show that all 4 drive stuns were administered in very quick succession – just as Mr. Silva-Prentice testified. The suppression of the ECD reports or at least the exact times of activation is undoubtedly prejudicial to Mr. Silva-Prentice's ability to fairly prepare a defense and to obtain a fair hearing which satisfies basic notions of fundamental fairness. Even more troubling, the hearing officer relied upon the withheld ECD reports in finding Mr. Silva-Prentice guilty. See Decision at p. 17 (citing "the ECD reports (located within Exhibit 35)"). Because Mr. Silva-Prentice has been derived of evidence which corroborates his version and contradicts Allain's and Breslin's, the guilty finding must be reversed and the ABCO charge must be dismissed.

Also, undersigned counsel recently uncovered a grievance by a prisoner who occupied Cell 7 on January 22 and who reported that, consistent with what Mr. Silva-Prentice has said all along, an unidentified member of the tactical team yelled at the occupant of cell 7 to "get the fuck off the door or you're next." The suppression of this exculpatory grievance is a violation of Mr. Silva-Prentice's due process rights.

8. The hearing officer's decision is based in part upon evidence she obtained outside the hearing.

The hearing officer seems to have relied in part upon improperly obtained evidence. In the first instance, she cites to certain of Mr. Silva-Prentice's medical records. But when counsel requested the records, D.O. Mulvey responded that DOC does not have access to medical records. How, then, did IAU obtain them, as Exhibit 35 shows they did?

In the second instance, the hearing officer discredits Mr. Silva-Prentice because he testified that he believed an officer named "Biri" or "Birri" is the officer who assaulted him inside cell 15. When counsel requested to call an officer named "Biri," D.O. Mulvey said that no such person worked for DOC, apparently because of a 1-letter difference in the spelling. This is the only time that Mr. Silva-Prentice has publicly identified Birri as his assaulter. Neither he, his counsel, nor D.O. Mulvey reported to any third parties that Mr. Silva-Prentice even mentioned Birri's name. Yet within 24 hours of the hearing, the superintendent's investigator showed up to interview Mr. Silva-Prentice about his testimony and the hearing officer's written findings state that Lt. Birri did not write a report. Decision at p. 17. The only way for her to know whether that is true is from the superintendent's investigator; that investigator, however, did not reveal the results of his investigation to Mr. Silva-Prentice or counsel. Since the hearing officer seems to have learned the results of that investigation, then Mr. Silva-Prentice is entitled to know, too.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the guilty finding against Mr. Silva-Prentice be vacated.

Sincerely,

/ Patricia A. DeJuneas

cc: D.O. Mulvey; R. Silva-Prentice