

Crisis in Conneaut

18 Months in the Life of the Lake Erie Correctional Institution, The Nation's First Prison Sold to a For-Profit Company

9-1-2011

Lake Erie Correctional Institution (LaECI) becomes the first state-owned prison in the nation to be sold to a private company, Corrections Corporation of America (CCA). It sells for \$72.7 million instead of the predicted \$200 million.¹

10-12-2011

The city of Conneaut learns investigation of felony-level crimes that take place in LaECI will transfer from the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) to local law enforcement.²

10-20-2011

Conneaut is told that the job of investigating crimes in LaECI will be transferred to the Ashtabula County Sheriff's Department, relieving the city of the responsibility.³

12-24-2011

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) declares that the job of handling felony-level crime in LaECI will be transferred back to (OSHP)⁴

12-31-2011

CCA begins ownership of LaECI.⁵

1-4-2012

The Ohio Attorney General opposes use of OSHP troopers, again leaving Conneaut to investigate felony-level crimes at LaECI.⁶

4-4-2012

Legislation is sent to Governor Kasich to formally establish OSHP's role in investigating felony-level crimes at LaECI.⁷

4-16-2012

Less than four months after CCA assumes control of LaECI, the prison is almost at capacity with 1,721 inmates.⁸

4-17-2012

Prisoners that have committed murder or aggravated murder are reportedly being assigned to work in unauthorized areas of the prison, resulting in a security breach.⁹

6-2-2012

An ODRC monitor conducts a walk-through of food services at LaECI and finds unsanitary conditions.¹⁰

7-23-2012

CCA issues a statement regarding a "minor incident caused by one of the inmates" at LaECI. The inmate received six shots of pepperball and suffered minor injuries.¹¹ No staff injuries were reported.¹²

9-4-2012

An ODRC monitor conducts a walk-through of segregation of LaECI and discovers inmates using bags for defecation and no access to running water. Inmates are also found housed in recreation areas.¹³

9-18-2012

An audit of LaECI is performed, with over 47 instances of noncompliance found. These violations include inmates triple bunked, improper medical care, blocked fire escapes, lack of officers observing distribution of medication, and lack of sanitation in food services.¹⁴

11-16-2012

Re-inspection of LaECI finds improvement at the facility, with 37 of the 47 security, health, and safety issues from the earlier fall audit resolved.¹⁵

11-27-2012

An inmate dies of a suspected drug overdose.¹⁶

1-11-2013 and 1-15-2013

A Conneaut council member asks state officials to help relieve the Conneaut Police Department of perimeter patrol duties at LaECI due to the city's tight budget.¹⁷ The request sparks conversation about the dramatic increase in attempts to smuggle contraband into LaECI, mostly through bags thrown over the side of prison fences. Local police have received 248 calls for patrols since CCA purchased the prison, compared to 157 such calls during the previous 11-plus years combined.¹⁸

1-22-2013

A surprise inspection of LaECI by the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee (CIIC) finds "multiple deficiencies" in the way CCA is handling the prison, as reported by State Rep. John Patterson.¹⁹

1-25-2013

LaECI goes on lockdown after fights break out among at least three dozen inmates.²⁰ As a result, several dozen inmates are transferred to a state-owned prison in Mansfield. One inmate is taken to the hospital for a broken leg after being forced to the ground by a corrections officer.²¹

1-30-2013

LaECI is accredited by the American Correctional Association.²²

2-4-2013

Within the past year, CCA has been docked nearly \$500,000 in penalties related to LaECI.²³

2-22-2013

CIIC releases their formal report on the January 22 inspection of LaECI. The report highlights a 300% increase in inmate-on-staff violence and a 187.5% increase in inmate-on-inmate violence from 2010 to 2012.²⁴ The facility is rated "in need of improvement" in many of the major CIIC evaluation categories.²⁵