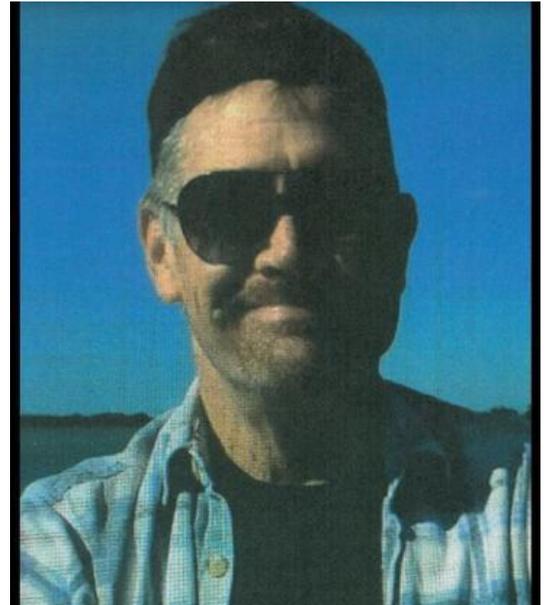


Broward jail inmate died slow, painful, preventable death, lawsuit says

Armor Correctional Health Services is a Miami company paid \$25 million dollars a year in taxpayer money to provide health care in Broward County jails. A Sun Sentinel investigation found Armor has failed to protect some inmates endangered by their mental illnesses, with deadly consequences.

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Tonya Alanez, Reporter



He claimed he had degrees in psychology, law and electrical engineering. That the CIA had hired him to fight in Vietnam, where he was exposed to Agent Orange. That he had been arrested for trafficking cocaine and he was divorced.

But none of that was true.

And as a result, a court psychologist found Scott Burrell, of **Coral Springs**, incompetent to stand trial.

Nine days later, on March 30, 2016, the 62-year-old developer was found in his Broward County jail cell curled into the fetal position, covered in urine, feces and vomit and complaining of severe abdominal pain.

Two days after that he was dead from what a federal lawsuit says was a preventable death from what would have been a treatable condition — if jail staff had transferred him to a hospital for proper care.

Burrell's case echoes others featured in a December 2016 Sun Sentinel investigation, "Death on Their Watch." The project found that Armor Correctional Health Services of Miami, the private company paid to handle jail health care, had failed to protect Broward inmates endangered by their mental illnesses — with deadly consequences.

A review of thousands of pages of court, medical and jail records showed that seven Broward inmates since 2010 killed themselves or **suffered dramatic weight loss** while they were held alone in cells, despite long-standing concerns about the **impact of isolation on people with mental illnesses**.

And a **lawsuit filed in a separate case in December 2016** by the lawyer now representing Burrell's estate contended that five other inmate deaths in 2011 and 2012 were preventable and reflected a pattern of putting "profits before patients."

Burrell's case mirrors the same pattern — at the hands of the same doctors, according to the latest lawsuit lodged against the Broward Sheriff's Office, Armor, two of its doctors, John Martin and Stanley Frankowitz, and several nurses.

The Coral Springs man's family is suing the parties, saying they ignored Burrell's glaringly obvious mental health and physical ailments and failed to provide him with medication or adequate treatment.

Diagnosed with bipolar disorder and arrested for taking an ax to his wife's locked bedroom door, Burrell had been involuntarily hospitalized for psychological treatment one week before his Feb. 18, 2016 arrest.

The married father of two spent two months in jail refusing medication, exhibiting delusional behavior and making fantastical claims, according to the lawsuit.

The medical examiner concluded that Burrell's death was a natural death caused by inflammation to the tissue that lines the abdomen and a ruptured bowel.

The lawsuit says: "Mr. Burrell died a slow, painful and preventable death from a common treatable medical condition."

The lawsuit summarizes nine other cases of Broward County jail deaths it deems negligent and preventable.

Filed Thursday in federal court in Fort Lauderdale, Burrell's lawsuit accuses Armor, which is paid \$25 million annually for health care at the county's four jails, of intentionally not sending Burrell to an outside hospital for treatment because it would cut into the company's profits.

Armor is responsible for paying up to \$50,000 for an inmate's care at an outside facility, according to the company's contract with the [Broward County Sheriff's Office](#). That means Armor has a financial incentive not to send seriously ill inmates to an outside health care provider, according to the lawsuit.

The company has previously said that the fact that it has an individual cap contradicts any claim that it has an incentive not to provide care. Armor said it made about 11,000 referrals for off-site care over the past decade.

"Armor does not comment on pending litigation," a company spokeswoman said Friday in an emailed statement. "In addition, Armor is committed to its patients' rights to confidentiality, and it adheres to Federal HIPAA privacy laws that prohibit discussing specific patient information."

The Broward Sheriff's Office also declined to comment on pending litigation or inmates' health care.

When Burrell, who had no criminal record, was booked into the jail he was identified as having bipolar disorder. It also was noted that he had recently been "hospitalized for a serious psychiatric illness just days before his arrest." And within six days, Burrell told a doctor that "he felt that he was on the edge of a manic episode," the lawsuit said.

Burrell paced his cell with a laundry bag over his shoulder, claiming he and his fellow inmates were Colombian freedom fighters. He refused all but one of his psychotropic medications. He talked to himself and claimed he owned the jail, that he was a millionaire and a doctor.

After an interview on March 21, 2016 — three weeks into Burrell's incarceration — a forensic psychologist found that Burrell was incompetent to stand trial. The doctor diagnosed Burrell with bipolar disorder with psychotic features

and concluded that Burrell met the legal criteria for involuntary hospitalization. His condition would stabilize, the doctor predicted, with psychotropic medications in a secure psychiatric setting, court records show.

By March 30, 2016, Burrell was complaining of severe abdominal pain. His vital signs were critical. His jail uniform was soaked in urine. He was disheveled and dirty and so unsteady on his feet that he was taken to the infirmary in a wheelchair. Despite all of this, plus shortness of breath, rapid heart rate and an elevated temperature, the jail's medical staff failed to transfer Burrell to a hospital for treatment, the lawsuit said.

It was later that same day that Burrell was found in his cell, curled up and covered in filth. His pulse was extremely rapid and his blood pressure critically low. He winced in pain when a washcloth touched his stomach.

The next day, the results of a blood draw showed an elevated white blood cell count indicating that Burrell had a severe infection and dehydration, and still he remained in the jail, according to the lawsuit.

On the following day, green vomit was found at Burrell's bedside. His stomach was distended and tender. He was disoriented and asking to see his wife, who he thought was downstairs.

Ten hours later, at 10:45 a.m., Burrell was found unresponsive in his cell. He was finally taken to a hospital emergency room at 11:43 a.m. Sixteen minutes later, Burrell was pronounced dead, according to the lawsuit.

"The death of this dedicated father and husband is an outrage," Greg Lauer, the Burrell family's lawyer, said Friday. "And his inadequate care is morally and legally indefensible."

The lawsuit seeks a \$10 million award of compensatory damages.

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