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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Releases National Institute of Corrections Technical Assistance Report

PIERRE, S.D. – The National Institute of Corrections (NIC) has issued a favorable report on the response by the South Dakota Department of Corrections (SDDOC) to the homicide of State Penitentiary Officer Ronald Johnson. NIC also said the state prison system is well-run.

Johnson was killed April 12 during an attempted escape by two inmates.

In the wake of the murder, Gov. Dennis Daugaard directed SDDOC to request technical assistance from the NIC for an independent evaluation of the department's response to the incident and the state's prison policies, procedures and training.

Two NIC consultants conducted a review at the Penitentiary in early September. The review included a comprehensive tour of the facility, staff interviews, observation of institutional activities and operations, examination of documents, a variety of simulations and daily out-briefings with SDDOC staff.

The NIC consultants verified that the facility operational recommendations included in the After-Incident Report that was released by Gov. Daugaard on May 9, were adopted by SDDOC. The consultants found that changes made by SDDOC are "consistent with good security practices and in keeping with response to this incident."

The NIC report commends SDDOC for taking a series of appropriate measures in response to the homicide and escape attempt and for having several "best practices" in place at the Penitentiary in terms of pre-service training, staff accountability and the facility's Designated Armed Response Team.

"We believe the NIC Technical Assistance Report and its recommendations will be extremely useful tools that will enhance the safety and security measures already in place at the Penitentiary," said South Dakota Corrections Secretary Denny Kaemingk. "The report also reinforces the fact that our institutions are well-run correctional facilities that are adaptable to change and are continuously striving for improvement."

Many of the NIC recommendations already have been enacted by SDDOC or are in the process of being implemented.

Among the recommendations for improvement:

- Incorporating provisions contained in a memo from Penitentiary Warden Doug Weber outlining a Facility Accountability Plan into applicable policy, procedure and post orders
- Reviewing all maximum-custody inmates assigned to general population at the Penitentiary
- Evaluating inmate employment based on risk levels
- Conducting a staffing analysis
- Making the additional correctional officer posts in Prison Industries permanent
- Implementing an Incident Command System specifically for corrections
- Placement and training on specific security equipment for staff
- Ensuring documented staff review of post orders
- Enhancement of staff safety training
- Constructing containers for secured disposal and storage of scrap metal
- Adding staff in Prison Industries buildings during high-traffic times
- Ensuring inmate routing through metal detectors and detector-testing procedures
- Relocation of staff panic alarms

Portions of the NIC report and the state's responses to the NIC recommendations have been redacted from the public report released by SDDOC because they address safety and security provisions that, if made public, could compromise the safety of inmates, staff and the public and the security of the facility.

A copy of the NIC report with the SDDOC response is posted on the SDDOC website at <http://doc.sd.gov/>.