Camp reserved for inmates' attitudes

By JAMES MINTON

ANGLA - its location near scenic Lake Kilmer is no accident. Out of the way, it's perfect as a prison for blacks. But the residents, marked by the orange of its prison walls, have little choice but to call it home.

Camp comprises 446 cells set aside for the inmates who break the rules in the sprawling penal system's northernmost camp. The inmates are often described by wardens as "the most dangerous in the system." Outside, in cells blocked with miniature windows like those in the old-fashioned iron bars of old-fashioned lockups, the attitudes of many of its prisoners are prime targets for attack, often by fellow prisoners.

Last year, Camp logged 85 assaults on employees and 120 incidents involving inmates and camp commander Maj. Dave Kelton. There are some very dangerous people here," said Whitley. "If a security officer gets hurt, it's small because he was lax in following procedures."

One recent case that has caused some recent concern in Camp J - a large口语:st stock with radio antennas, a large, blood-stained slice of cake that showed the man's head and the smashed remains of a portable radio - shows that the situation has not improved.

An inmate recently smashed the light fixture in his cell and selected a fragment that most resembled a knife. Kelton said. The prisoner, wanted until security guards arrived to take him out of his cell, cut his own throat and attempted to stab a guard, he said.

"The wardens' office just decided he didn't want it anymore," Kelton said. Pieces of the plastic case or a section of the antenna could have been used to complete the weapon.

"Make-shift weapons are just as effective as the real things," Kelton said.

Throwing a cup of water over a cell is an inmate's ultimate insult to a guard. But portal workers medical personnel and mental health workers also are at risk. The attack on the guard is followed by the attack on the inmate.

Some Camp J convicts, in addition to their violent behavior, are well-known among prison employees for their bizarre behavior.

One of the inmates in Camp J regularly is known to push straightened paper clips into his chest, going close enough to his heart that the paper clip twitches with each heart beat. He claims to have married six nuns in his past, Kelton said.

Although each cell has a toilet, some prisoners routinely urinate and defecate on the floor, the major said.

"You and I might think this behavior indicates the person is mentally ill," Whitley said. "But mental health personnel make that decision. And this inmate knows what he's doing, and he's doing it for a reason."

Camp has three types of confinement, in keeping with national standards.

- Administrative lockdowns for prisoners awaiting disciplinary hearings. Personal possessions are limited to a small amount of clothing and a few toilet articles. The camp's canteen is closed and mail is not allowed.

- Extended lockdowns for inmates found guilty of rules violations. They stay in their cells all day, and their cases are reviewed every 90 days.

- Isolation, with restrictions similar to administrative lockdown except that inmates get no decent meal with their noon and evening meals. It doesn't bother the Whitley. Mentions a particularly intractable inmate, the wardens added, "He doesn't care about any jobs."

Camp J inmates are allowed to exercise, one at a time, for an hour, three times a week in a small enclosure outside the cellblocks. They may have the same number of visitors each month as other Angola prisoners, but a cross- sector party is allowed.

"Some of them can't live with their families," Kelton said. "They came out them."

Cash purchases are allowed twice a week. Extended lockdown programs may be used to guard certain of their cigarettes. Any movement outside the cells, even to the adobe 40 feet away, requires that the inmate be searched with an elaborate arrangement of chains, handcuffs, belts and padlocks.

"You don't fathom John Whitley," Kelton said. "They come out them.

Camp J is a living example of what happens when an inmate is allowed to run things. The inmates run things. The guards are there to keep an eye on things."

Inmates at the camp are in a constant state of combat, either with each other or with their own minds. Once an inmate gets ahold of a cigarette, he tends to keep it.

"I think there are a few inmates who have the same attitude as the guards," Kelton said. "They don't want to have the same attitude as the guards."

Guard's report that his weapon has been handed out twice a week.

Camp J inmates are given a hospital card that is issued once a year. A hard plastic Id card with a mass of information, it requires a nurse's effort to read.

The grid ends a high-voltage, low-amp, electric shock when the guard pushes a button on the handle. Before it is used, the inmate gets a non-contact demonstration of what it's all about.

The guard may apply the current for seven seconds, and two officers with wooden or plastic batons and two with shockers follow him into the cell. After four seconds, the shock deals you, and you want it. You want it."

Kelton said that as he arrived at Angola last year, Camp J was filthy, the inmates were handcuffed, employee morale was low and "the inmates seemed to be more in charge than the employees."

Kelton, Whitley's former security chief at Butte Correctional Center, asked to transfer to Angola, the wardens said. "He knew what Camp J should be, and he's doing a good job of it."

"It's supposed to be," Whitley said. "I don't want to do it."

Kelton said he found Camp J "very dirty, small and disorganized." The first thing he did was pull up a large number of troops, who were on a mission to replace the old cobbles with new, hard plastic sheets that were in better shape to last.

The limited opportunity for movement in the worst part of Nelson. The camp's low privileges also magnify their importance.

Joseph Phillips, who said he was sent to Camp J for "a little more than two years," has come to appreciate his three hours per week of outdoor time.

"I look above and see something up there that is more beautiful than what's down on earth," he said. "I would give anything to go outside and see it."

"I have been fortunate to have it, and I give it me an inner peace," he said. The prisoners' daily routine is monotonous, the security officer's day is often the opposite.

Kelton said he prefers working with the inmates to regular dormitory duty, "There's more excitement and more to do. It makes the day go by better."

An officer has to be constantly on the toes, said. "There's more responsibility on him."

The dorms have better inmates. "There are always something going on."

Occasionally, an inmate bails at being shackled or assails an officer from his cell, the guards have to use force. Often, in the past, that meant injuries to the prisoners and guards.

Guard's report an instance when a fellow inmate, in a desperate act to escape, had a hard plastic Id card with a mass of information.

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