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## Justice Dept. watchdog to probe safety concerns at prison where 'Whitey' Bulger was killed

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### The entrance to the Federal Corrections Complex.

By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

GLOBE STAFF NOVEMBER 09, 2018

The top internal watchdog in the US Department of Justice is reviewing safety concerns raised at the West Virginia prison where notorious Boston gangster James "Whitey" Bulger was [beaten to death](#) by other inmates late last month — the third killing at the facility this year.

Justice Department Inspector General Michael Horowitz, in [a letter](#) Friday to Congresswoman Eleanor

Holmes Norton, wrote that his office has requested more information from the federal Bureau of Prisons “about conditions affecting safety and security at the [US Penitentiary] Hazelton facility.”

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Horowitz’s letter was sent in response to one Norton sent to the inspector general calling on his office to investigate the prison following recent killings and reports of other violence there.

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“We are carefully reviewing the information in your letter,” Horowitz wrote. “After we complete our initial assessment of this information, we will make a determination as to the appropriate course for further action.”

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Norton, a Democrat representing Washington, D.C., applauded Horowitz's decision to launch a review. "The families of inmates and federal employees who work at Hazelton have drawn attention to conditions at the BOP facility that have put inmates and staff alike in danger," Norton said in a statement. "A third-party review by the Inspector General is much-needed to analyze the conditions at Hazelton and recommend appropriate actions."

Norton, other federal lawmakers, an independent oversight agency, and leaders of the union representing workers at the prison [have raised concerns](#) about recent violence, a shortage of security

workers at Hazelton, and the use of noncorrectional officers to fill in as guards.

The Bureau of Prisons, which is an agency within the Department of Justice, declined to comment Friday as did the inspector general's office.

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#### Funeral Mass held for James 'Whitey' Bulger in South Boston

A funeral Mass was held in South Boston for notorious gangster James "Whitey" Bulger, the Boston Archdiocese has confirmed.

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The prison agency [told the Globe last week](#) it was working to fill some of the officer vacancies.

The agency has also said it was conducting its own inquiry of "operational activities and correctional security practices and measures," in the wake of Bulger's killing.

Bulger, an [infamous South Boston criminal](#) and a long-time FBI informant serving a life sentence for 11 murders, was beaten to death inside his prison cell by fellow inmates Oct. 30. Nobody has been charged with the slaying, but the Globe reported last week that law enforcement officials have identified two Massachusetts organized crime figures as suspects, Fotios "Freddy" Geas and Paul J. DeCologero.

The agency [hasn't addressed questions](#) about why Bulger, a frail 89-year-old who used a wheelchair, was

sent to Hazelton, where he had access to more limited medical care — and why officials at Hazelton allowed Bulger to be placed in the prison’s general population, which included organized crime figures from Massachusetts who might pose a danger to him.

The FBI and the US attorney for northern West Virginia are investigating his murder. No charges have been filed.

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A [funeral was held](#) Thursday for Bulger at St. Monica/St. Augustine church in South Boston. He was buried at St. Joseph’s Cemetery in West Roxbury alongside his parents.

*Shelley Murphy and Kevin Cullen of the Globe staff contributed to this report. Matt Rocheleau can be reached at [matthew.rocheleau@globe.com](mailto:matthew.rocheleau@globe.com).*

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