

Judge: Treatment of Calif. mentally ill inmates 'horrific'

By Sam Stanton and Denny Walsh, Sacramento Bee

Following weeks of graphic court testimony and chilling videos of inmates writhing in pain as they were blasted with pepper spray, a federal judge has found that the use of force against mentally ill inmates in California prisons is unconstitutionally harsh.

Citing the "horrific" videos he viewed during hearings last fall and a wealth of other evidence, U.S. District Judge Lawrence K. Karlton on Thursday ordered state officials to continue revising the use-of-force procedures deployed against the state's 33,000 mentally ill prisoners and to limit the use of solitary confinement as a means of disciplining such inmates.

The 74-page order cites the "overall significant progress" that the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has made in modifying its use-of-force policies, especially new limits on how and when pepper spray can be used against mentally ill inmates.

Read the whole story