

# NY state prison superintendent ousted

**Body camera footage shows officers hitting inmate, who later died**

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USA TODAY NETWORK

UTICA, N.Y. — A New York prison where a 43-year-old man died in December after being violently beaten by correctional officers is getting a new superintendent, Gov. Kathy Hochul said Monday.

After visiting the Marcy Correctional Facility on Monday, Hochul demanded answers from the facility's interim leadership and announced immediate corrective actions in the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.

The announcement came days after the New York State Attorney General's Office released body camera footage showing multiple officers repeatedly pummeling Robert Brooks on Dec. 9 while his hands were cuffed behind his back.

"The system failed Mr. Brooks and I will not be satisfied until there has been significant culture change," Hochul said in a statement Monday. "I am implementing a number of new policies at Marcy and within DOCCS, and I look forward to continuing to hear ideas from experts, elected officials, and advocates as we continue this work."

At the time of the incident, Brooks was serving a 12-year prison sentence for first-degree assault. On Dec. 9, he was moved from the Mohawk Correctional Facility to the Marcy facility, a men's medium-security state prison north of Syracuse.

Body camera footage released last week showed Brooks' hands cuffed behind his back as officers repeatedly punched him, hit him with a shoe, lifted him up by his neck, pushed him up against a wall and stripped him of his clothing before medical personnel entered an examination room to assess him.

Brooks was pronounced dead the next day, according to authorities. Officials have not yet determined an official



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SETH HARRISON/WESTCHESTER COUNTY JOURNAL NEWS FILE

cause of death for Brooks as autopsy results are still pending. His death has sparked public outrage, community protests and calls for justice and reform.

Hochul previously ordered an immediate and full investigation into the death of Brooks, and further directed the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision to begin the termination process for the 14 people who were involved in the fatal attack: one nurse, 11 corrections officers and two sergeants.

On Monday, Hochul's office said 13 have been suspended without pay and one employee resigned.

New York Attorney General Letitia James has also opened an investigation into the officers' use of force. Earlier Monday, the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice confirmed that they were reviewing "the facts and circumstances surrounding the death of Robert L. Brooks to determine the appropriate federal response."

Hochul traveled to the facility to meet with corrections department leadership and people incarcerated at the facility who serve as liaisons for the larger in-

ed programs such as College in Prison and Rehabilitation Through the Arts.

"He is a career DOCCS employee who has never served at Marcy or nearby facilities, giving him expertise and a fresh perspective on what must be done," Hochul's office said in the statement.

Hochul added that she will add staff members to the state corrections department's special investigation office to "ensure that complaints are handled immediately and that anyone found of wrongdoing will be held accountable in a timely manner." The governor also said she will direct the department to hire an outside prison human rights program, AMEND, to conduct a review of the culture, patterns and practices across the state's entire correctional system.

The newly announced actions build on existing work directed by Hochul in the days following Brooks' death. The governor said corrections department leadership has already expanded a policy that requires staff members to activate body-worn cameras whenever they come into contact with incarcerated people.

The footage of Brooks' beating came from the body-worn cameras of four correctional officers — Sergeant Glenn Trombly and correction officers Michael Along, Michael Fisher and Matthew Galliher. Their cameras were turned on but since none of the officers activated the cameras, the videos were recorded on standby mode with no audio.

"Today, as I stood in the room where Robert Brooks was killed, I was once again heartbroken by this unnecessary loss of life and further sickened to think of the actions of depraved individuals with no regard for human life," Hochul said in the statement. "Mr. Brooks and his family did not deserve this. I told both Marcy's leadership and the incarcerated individuals that I met with that every single individual who enters a DOCCS facility deserves to be safe, whether they are employed there or serving their time."

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mate population.

She directed corrections department leaders to implement immediate changes to protect the safety and well-being of all department personnel and incarcerated people, including appointing Shawangunk Correctional Facility Superintendent Bennie Thorpe as the new superintendent of the Marcy Correctional Facility.

Thorpe has spent more than two decades working in corrections, including leadership roles at New York's Hudson Correctional Facility and Sing Sing Correctional Facility, according to the governor's office. He also has experience in security operations and has implement-