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## D.C. Corrections Chief Resigns

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Odie Washington, the embattled director of the D.C. Department of Corrections, said yesterday he has resigned after nearly six years in the job to return to Illinois to be with his family.

Washington said his tenure has been "extremely challenging" but said he is proud of his accomplishments.

Under Washington's leadership, the city closed seven prisons ahead of schedule at the Lorton Correctional Complex in Fairfax County. In addition, Washington helped to eliminate court oversight of the department and began the implementation of a multimillion-dollar renovation of the D.C. jail.

But during his tenure, the jail also experienced a four-day stretch of violence in 2002, during which two pretrial detainees were killed and a third was wounded in a stabbing. Several outbreaks of violence at the jail have been the subject of D.C. Council hearings.

"This is just the right time to go back," said Washington, whose family never moved to the District. "We accomplished most of the goals I set when I came in with the mayor."

D.C. Mayor Anthony A. Williams (D) said S. Elwood York Jr., a deputy administrator with the Youth Service Administration, will become the interim corrections director next week. A national search will be conducted to fill Washington's position.

"Director Washington is an exemplary public servant who has made a lasting impact at the D.C. Department of Corrections," Williams said. "I will miss his calm demeanor and thoughtful contributions."

The mayor praised Washington for managing the closing of the Lorton complex, eliminating 33 years of court oversight and court orders and completing a nearly \$30 million renovation project at the jail. Some city officials and prison advocates said, however, that they are excited to have new management at the agency.

D.C. Council member Kathy Patterson (D-Ward 3), a frequent critic of Washington, said he has been slow to reduce the jail population and provide quarterly reports to keep elected officials apprised of conditions at the facility, as required by law.

"I look forward to new leadership and hope that the administration will now comply with the jail improvement act," Patterson said. "We worked very hard with the administration on that law, and it's been disheartening that it's been ignored."

A city-funded study released in June cited a number of violent incidents at the jail and stated that the inmate population there should be reduced.

Douglas R. Sparks, an attorney for the family of one of the inmates killed in December 2002, said Washington is "personally" named as a defendant in a \$20 million lawsuit against the city.

"It's probably a good thing for the city," Sparks said of Washington's departure. "Most of the guys that are incarcerated are pretrial detainees and haven't been convicted of anything. They've been forced to live in an inhuman jail, and the director is violating their civil rights."

Washington said the lawsuit had "absolutely" nothing to do with his decision to leave.

"This decision was made more than a year ago," he said. "I simply stayed longer than I anticipated."