Beat: News

2 Florida killers recaptured after using phony documents to escape

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USPA News - Two convicted killers who used fraudulent documents to escape from a medium-security prison in Florida were arrested Saturday at a motel in the state`s northwest, officials said on Sunday, ending a statewide manhunt that made international headlines. Charles Walker and Joseph Jenkins, both 34 and serving life sentences without the possibility of parole, were released from the Franklin Correctional Institution in recent weeks after fraudulent documents were submitted that ordered their sentences to be reduced to 15 years.

The legit-looking documents contained reproductions of signatures and bore the seal of the Orange County clerk of court`s office. The Bay County Sheriff`s Office said both inmates were taken into custody at approximately 5:20 p.m. local time on Saturday at the Coconut Grove Motor Inn in Panama City Beach, a popular vacation destination about 90 miles (145 kilometers) southwest of Tallahassee in northwest Florida. Law enforcement agencies had received information on Thursday that the two men were staying in Panama City Beach, and an interview on Saturday afternoon with an unidentified "associate" helped them narrow down the search area to room 227 at the motel, according to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). "About 20 members of the task force surrounded the room and a message was sent using a PA system instructing Jenkins and Walker to come out," the Bay County Sheriff`s Office said in a statement. "About a minute later, both men exited the room with their hands in the air and were taken into custody without incident." Both escapees were then taken to Bay County Jail and made their first court appearance through video link on Sunday morning. Both men were ordered to be held without bond on escape charges and will appear back in court on Friday to verify they were retrieved by the department of corrections. With the two men now in custody, investigators are shifting their attention to finding out who made the fraudulent documents. The Florida Department of Corrections has already announced immediate steps to prevent future escapes by phony documents, as inmates will no longer be released early until a copy of a release order has been received from the Bureau of Admissions and Release. "Upon receipt of any Order that appears to modify a sentence, the Department`s Bureau of Admissions and Release will provide a copy of the Order along with a form for the sentencing judge`s independent verification of the Order," Corrections Secretary Michael Crews said on Friday. "The Department will not release the inmate or take any other action in regards to the Order until this verification is received."

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