



US & CANADA

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US man 'abandoned' in US jail gets \$4m in compensation

A university student in the US city of San Diego has received \$4.1m (£2.7m) from the US government after he was abandoned for more than four days in a prison cell, his lawyer said.

Daniel Chong said he drank his urine to stay alive, tried to carve a message to his mother on his arm and hallucinated.

He was held in a drug raid in 2012, but told he would not be charged. Nobody returned to his cell for four days.

The justice department's inspector is now investigating what happened.

Mr Chong, now 25, said he slid a shoelace under the door and screamed to get attention before five or six people found him covered in his faeces in the cell at the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) San Diego headquarters.

After Mr Chong was rescued, he spent five days in hospital recovering from dehydration, kidney failure, cramps and a perforated oesophagus. He also lost 15lb (7kg).

'Horrible accident'

Mr Chong was one of nine people detained in the raid in April 2012. Authorities determined that they would not pursue charges after questioning him.

One of Mr Chong's lawyers said a police officer then put him in the holding cell and told him: "We'll come get you in a minute."

Mr Chong said he thought he was forgotten by mistake.

"It sounded like it was an accident - a really, really bad, horrible accident," he said.

The 5-by-10-foot (1.5-3m) cell had no windows and Mr Chong had no food or water while he was trapped inside for four-and-a-half days.

Mr Chong said he started hallucinating on the third day.

He urinated on a metal bench so he could have something to drink. He also unsuccessfully tried to set off a fire sprinkler to draw attention of the DEA authorities.

"I didn't just sit there quietly. I was kicking the door yelling," he was quoted as saying by the Associated Press news agency.

"I even put some shoestrings, shoelaces through the crack of the door for visual signs. I didn't stay still, no, I was screaming."

At one point, Mr Chong admitted, he thought he was going to die. He broke his eyeglasses by biting into them and tried to carve a

"Sorry Mom" farewell message. He managed to finish an "S".

DEA spokeswoman Allison Price confirmed that the \$4.1m settlement had been reached, without providing further details, according to the AP.

The incident prompted the head of the DEA to issue a public apology last May, saying he was "deeply troubled" by the incident.

Mr Chong's lawyer said that as a result of the incident the DEA had introduced new policies for detention, including checking cells daily and installing cameras inside them.

Mr Chong, now an economics student at the University of California, says he plans to buy his parents a house.

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