

NEWS RELEASE

Delaware Department of Correction
Commissioner Terra Taylor



DOC announces leadership promotions in Special Operations and at Sussex Correctional Institution

Dover, DE — — The Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) today announced that **Christopher Kearney has been promoted to Warden of the Special Operations Group (SOG)** and **Sean Milligan has been promoted to Deputy Warden of Sussex Correctional Institution (SCI)**. These promotions fill vacancies created by the retirements of two distinguished DOC leaders - Special Operations Group Warden Michael Merson, [who served in the position since 2022](#), and SCI Deputy Warden Marvella Wise, [who served in the position since 2023](#). Both promotions took effect this week.

“Warden Kearney and Deputy Warden Milligan have worked hard, demonstrated personal initiative and the ability to lead, and earned the respect of their peers and chain of command,” **Bureau of Prisons Chief Robert May said**. “Under their leadership, the Bureau of Prisons is in a strong position to continue to meet our high standards of safety and preparedness as we strive to promote environments across our facilities that support personal growth and reentry success through treatment, programming and rehabilitation.”

Special Operations Group Warden Christopher Kearney completed his Academy training and joined the DOC as a Correctional Officer in 2005 and has served assignments in the Bureau of Prisons (Baylor Women’s Correctional Institution), Bureau of Community Corrections (Plummer Community Corrections Center), and the Special Operations Group. He earned promotions through the ranks, achieving Correctional Corporal in 2012, Correctional Lieutenant in 2012, Correctional Captain in 2016, Correctional Security Superintendent (Major) in 2017, and Deputy Warden of Howard R. Young Correctional Institution in 2022. Most recently, [Kearney has served as Deputy Warden of the Special Operations Group since January, 2023](#). Kearney has been a member of the DOC’s Correctional Emergency Response Team (CERT) since 2011, including as a full-time CERT member who deployed on-site during the 2017 inmate uprising at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center. He has taken on additional responsibilities, including assignments as Emergency Preparedness Director, the DOC’s Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team which provides trauma-informed peer support to staff and their families after being impacted by a traumatic or critical incident, and the Staffing Analysis Team. During the COVID pandemic he provided statewide leadership of DOC’s efforts to secure and administer supplies of Personal Protective Equipment. Warden Kearney has participated in numerous specialized trainings, including Conducting Prison Audits, Tactical Breaching, Strategic, Tactical, Resilient Interdiction of Violent Extremism, Staffing Analysis, Delaware State Police Crisis Intervention and

Hostage Negotiations and Delaware State Police Interviewing and Interrogation, and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) courses. He is a recipient of the prestigious FBI-LEEDA Trilogy Award for successfully completing its Supervisor Leadership Institute, Command Leadership Institute, and Executive Leadership Institute. He has participated in and completed the Sam Houston State University Warden's Peer Interaction Program with the Correctional Management Institute of Texas, and in 2023 Warden Kearney earned a Bachelor's degree in Liberal Studies with a concentration in History from Delaware State University.

The Special Operations Group within the Bureau of Prisons is a specialized unit that is [responsible for DOC's central intelligence operations, the Steven R. Floyd, Sr. Training Academy, Correctional Emergency Response Teams, Escapee Recovery Teams, K-9 Units, the Mobile Command Post and Court and Transportation Units.](#)

Sussex Correctional Institution Deputy Warden Sean Milligan joined the DOC in 2006 after serving in the United State Marine Corp for eight years, attaining the rank of Staff Sergeant. After completing his Correctional Officer academy training he served assignments at SCI, James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC), and Sussex Community Corrections Center (SCCC). He earned promotions through the ranks, achieving Correctional Corporal in 2009, Correctional Sergeant in 2010, Correctional Lieutenant in 2013, and Correctional Staff Lieutenant in 2019. In 2007 he joined the Department's Correctional Emergency Response Team (CERT), served as a CERT/ERT Team Leader, and was deployed as a CERT member during the inmate uprising at JTVCC in February, 2017. As Staff Lieutenant he served as a Shift Commander, Institutional Scheduling Officer, Institutional Training Administrator, Thinking for a Change Program Coordinator, Liaison for Religious Services, and a member of the Policy Review and American Correctional Association Accreditation committees. [In April, 2023 he was promoted to the rank of Major and SCI Security Superintendent](#), with day-to-day responsibilities for maintaining safety and security for Correctional Officers, staff, and inmates. In addition, in this capacity he assisted the Warden and Deputy Warden in management of all aspects of the facility including working closely with facility treatment and contracted healthcare staff, implementing programs, and overseeing inspections, while also serving as a member of the Employee Recognition Committee, Post Order Committee and the Policy Review Team. Deputy Warden Milligan has completed numerous specialized trainings and has taken on additional responsibilities, including assignments as TASER/CEW Instructor, PepperBall Instructor, ASP Tactical Weapons Instructor, Train the Trainer, and Working with Women Trainer, and received numerous recognitions, including Bureau Commendation, Meritorious Service Award, and On the Spot Award and has been nominated for Correctional Officer of the Year. Deputy Warden Milligan earned an Associate's Degree in Criminal Justice from Delaware Technical Community College and a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice from Wilmington University.

The Sussex Correctional Institution, located in Georgetown, was opened in 1931 and houses an all-male population in maximum, medium, and minimum security housing units. SCI provides a variety of treatment and programming for the incarcerated population, including educational instruction, vocational training, substance abuse treatment, cognitive behavioral therapy, work assignments, spiritual/religious programming and a variety of other classes and programs.

Photos of Warden Christopher Kearney and Deputy Warden Sean Milligan are attached.



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