

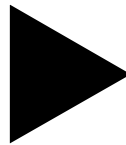
# Cook County detainees secretly monitored in holding cell bathrooms, lawsuit says

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CHICAGO -- A new class action lawsuit has accused Cook County sheriff's deputies of spying on inmates while they used the bathroom in holding cells.

This class action lawsuit against the county and Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart involves tens of thousands of men and women who were detained in holding cells in every Cook County courthouse.

The attorney in this case won't say how he got one of the photos, but it shows a camera that records the entire holding cell, including the toilet area on the right side.

“When I found out I was very embarrassed. I felt ashamed, humiliated. I felt violated,” Michelle Urrutia, a plaintiff, said.

Urrutia was arrested for driving on a suspended license and spent about 24 hours in the cell before seeing a judge. Elizabeth Alicea was arrested for shoplifting, charges that were later dropped. She was in the cell about twelve hours and used the toilet a few times. Both women were at 26th and California.

“There’s something right here that I thought blocked us from you know anybody seeing us using the bathroom,” Alicea said.

Attorney Tom Zimmerman said the cameras that show the toilet area are unconstitutional.

“So you can see from the photograph, the view that it’s clear and it’s unobstructed,” Zimmerman said.

The lawsuit states “pretrial detainees retain an expectation of privacy in their naked bodies, genitals and bodily functions.”

He said the cameras are monitored in real time by male and female sheriff’s police and kept for 30 days.

The chief policy officer for Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart, Cara Smith, released a statement saying:

“We vehemently deny the allegations that there are hidden or secret cameras focused on detainees’ private parts or the toilet areas of holding cells. Fixed cameras are present in the holding cells in courthouses as a critical tool to ensure the safety of staff, the safety of detainees and transparency of our operations.”

Smith also called the allegation outrageous. The complaint was filed in federal court on Wednesday. An emergency motion to retain the recorded videos will be filed later this week.

