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JUSTICE NEWS

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Federal Government to Resume Capital Punishment After Nearly Two Decade Lapse**Attorney General William P. Barr Directs the Federal Bureau of Prisons to Adopt an Addendum to the Federal Execution Protocol and Schedule the Executions of Five Death-Row Inmates Convicted of Murdering Children**

Attorney General William P. Barr has directed the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to adopt a proposed Addendum to the Federal Execution Protocol—clearing the way for the federal government to resume capital punishment after a nearly two decade lapse, and bringing justice to victims of the most horrific crimes. The Attorney General has further directed the Acting Director of the BOP, Hugh Hurwitz, to schedule the executions of five death-row inmates convicted of murdering, and in some cases torturing and raping, the most vulnerable in our society—children and the elderly.

“Congress has expressly authorized the death penalty through legislation adopted by the people’s representatives in both houses of Congress and signed by the President,” Attorney General Barr said. “Under Administrations of both parties, the Department of Justice has sought the death penalty against the worst criminals, including these five murderers, each of whom was convicted by a jury of his peers after a full and fair proceeding. The Justice Department upholds the rule of law—and we owe it to the victims and their families to carry forward the sentence imposed by our justice system.”

The Federal Execution Protocol Addendum, which closely mirrors protocols utilized by several states, including currently Georgia, Missouri, and Texas, replaces the three-drug procedure previously used in federal executions with a single drug—pentobarbital. Since 2010, 14 states have used pentobarbital in over 200 executions, and federal courts, including the Supreme Court, have repeatedly upheld the use of pentobarbital in executions as consistent with the Eighth Amendment.

Upon the Attorney General’s direction, Acting Director Hurwitz adopted the Addendum to the Federal Execution Protocol and, in accordance with 28 C.F.R. Part 26, scheduled executions for the following individuals:

- Daniel Lewis Lee, a member of a white supremacist group, murdered a family of three, including an eight-year-old girl. After robbing and shooting the victims with a stun gun, Lee covered their heads with plastic bags, sealed the bags with duct tape, weighed down each victim with rocks, and threw the family of three into the Illinois bayou. On May 4, 1999, a jury in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas found Lee guilty of numerous offenses, including three counts of murder in aid of racketeering, and he was sentenced to death. Lee’s execution is scheduled to occur on Dec. 9, 2019.
- Lezmond Mitchell stabbed to death a 63-year-old grandmother and forced her nine-year-old granddaughter to sit beside her lifeless body for a 30 to 40-mile drive. Mitchell then slit the girl’s throat twice, crushed her head with 20-pound rocks, and severed and buried both victims’ heads and hands. On May 8, 2003, a jury in the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona found Mitchell guilty of numerous offenses, including first degree murder, felony murder, and carjacking resulting in murder, and he was sentenced to death. Mitchell’s execution is scheduled to occur on Dec. 11, 2019.
- Wesley Ira Purkey violently raped and murdered a 16-year-old girl, and then dismembered, burned, and dumped the young girl’s body in a septic pond. He also was convicted in state court for using a claw hammer to bludgeon to death an 80-year-old woman who suffered from polio and walked with a cane. On Nov. 5, 2003, a jury in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri found Purkey guilty of kidnapping a child resulting in the child’s death, and he was sentenced to death. Purkey’s execution is scheduled to occur on Dec. 13, 2019.
- Alfred Bourgeois physically and emotionally tortured, sexually molested, and then beat to death his two-and-a-half-year-old daughter. On March 16, 2004, a jury in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas found Bourgeois guilty of multiple offenses, including murder, and he was sentenced to death. Bourgeois’ execution is scheduled to occur on Jan. 13, 2020.
- Dustin Lee Honken shot and killed five people—two men who planned to testify against him and a single, working mother and her ten-year-old and six-year-old daughters. On Oct. 14, 2004, a jury in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Iowa found Honken guilty of numerous offenses, including five counts of murder during the course of a continuing criminal enterprise, and he was sentenced to death. Honken’s execution is scheduled to occur on Jan. 15, 2020.

Each of these inmates has exhausted their appellate and post-conviction remedies, and currently no legal impediments prevent their executions, which will take place at U.S. Penitentiary Terre Haute, Indiana. Additional executions will be scheduled at a later date.

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