

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 51/128/95

28 September 1995

Further information (1) on EXTRA 103/95 (AMR 51/120/95, 11 September 1995)
- Death Penalty

USA (Virginia) Dennis STOCKTON, white, aged 54

Amnesty International has learned with deep regret that Dennis Stockton was executed as scheduled in Virginia yesterday, 27 September 1995.

On 25 September, a district-court judge ordered a 60-day stay of execution to allow for evidence to be introduced that the main prosecution witness at Stockton's trial, Randy Bowman, had admitted to the murder for which Stockton was sentenced to death. Defence attorneys had produced in court affidavits from Bowman's former wife and son, stating that he had admitted committing the murder to them. A Virginia newspaper also reported that Bowman had confessed committing the murder to a reporter.

On 26 September, a federal court lifted Stockton's stay of execution after hearing arguments from attorneys representing Virginia that Bowman was imprisoned in North Carolina at the time and could not have committed the murder.

According to witnesses, Stockton's last statement was a brief line from Isaiah 26:3 beginning: *"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace..."*

A new law introduced in Virginia on 1 July requires local courts to set an execution date within 70 days for any death row inmate whose appeal has been denied by the Virginia Supreme Court or the Federal Appeals Court.

Seven prisoners currently have execution dates scheduled in Virginia.

Thank you to everyone who sent appeals on Dennis Stockton's behalf. Letters may be sent to the authorities indicated in the original action expressing regret at Dennis Stockton's execution and concern at the large number of executions currently scheduled in Virginia.