

EXTERNAL

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Further information on EXTRA 187/96 (AMR51/98/96, 6 December 1996) - Death Penalty

USA (ARKANSAS) Paul RUIZ
Earl DENTON
Kirt WAINWRIGHT

Amnesty International has learned with deep regret that Paul Ruiz, Earl Denton and Kirt Wainwright were executed as scheduled on 8 January 1997.

This is the second time that three men have been executed on the same day in the US under present death penalty laws; on both occasions Arkansas has been the executing state.

According to press reports of the executions, Kirt Wainwright who was executed last, spent about an hour strapped to the guernsey (mobile stretcher) waiting news on a last-minute appeal to the US Supreme Court, which was rejected. Prison officials reportedly decided to keep him strapped to the guernsey while a decision was made because they thought it would be cruel to take him back to his cell and then have to return him to the execution room. It reportedly took about 12 minutes for him to die. Earl Denton's execution was carried out at approximately 7pm, followed about an hour later by Paul Ruiz. Both executions are reported to have taken about four minutes.

Press accounts stated that the state corrections department favoured a triple execution because officials considered the impact would be less than having three separate execution dates, and reports that a prison spokeswoman said "The emotional toll is so high on everybody, the employees and the inmates".

Thank you to everyone who sent appeals. Letters expressing regret at the executions may be sent to the authorities listed in the original EXTRA.