

Ohio inmate 'traumatized' after failed execution



By ANDREW WELSH-HUGGINS, Associated Press Writer

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COLUMBUS, Ohio – The lawyer for an inmate whose execution was halted after an unprecedented two hours said trying to put him to death again in a week could be a disaster.

Romell Broom is still recovering from Tuesday's prolonged execution attempt and is physically and emotionally traumatized, his attorney, Adele Shank, said Wednesday.

"It went so badly when he was walking in without injured veins, to go forward so soon afterward just seems to be inviting disaster," Shank said.

Gov. Ted Strickland's decision to stop Tuesday's execution and grant a one-week reprieve appeared to be unprecedented since capital punishment was declared constitutional and the nation resumed executions in the 1970s.

Inmates in several states have experienced delays with the injection of lethal chemicals, but those executions have always proceeded the same day.

Shank said one option was to ask Strickland to consider a request for clemency and to commute Broom's sentence.

Strickland said he is reviewing the incident and consulting with prison officials and others about the next step.

"That does not mean there will be a review of the larger issue of lethal injections," Strickland said Wednesday. "That's been settled. Obviously yesterday demonstrated that we have a problem with this particular set of circumstances."

A prison log released Wednesday blamed Broom's past drug use for problems finding a usable vein.

The log indicates that executioners made the observation at 3:11 p.m., more than an hour after first trying to find a vein.

"Medical team having problem maintaining an open vein due to past drug use," said the log reviewed by The Associated Press.

Broom said at one point he was a heavy heroin user, but then said at another time that he wasn't, prisons spokeswoman Julie Walburn said Wednesday.

Shank said she was unaware of any such drug use.

"If there's such a thing, it's got to be at least 25 years old," she said. "I don't think it should be having an impact at this late date."

Broom, 53, has been placed in a cell in the infirmary at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility in Lucasville where he is on close watch similar to the constant observation of death row inmates in the three days before an execution.

"It was the right place to keep him," Walburn said. "The less we can transport an offender, the better."

Death row inmates are housed in a Youngstown prison and executed in the death chamber at Lucasville. There's no precedent for housing an inmate whose execution didn't work.

The night before his scheduled execution, Broom told his brother over the phone that he was ready to die.

"He is tired of being in prison and having people tell him what to do everyday," according to the prison log.

Broom was sentenced to die for the rape and slaying of a 14-year-old Tryna Middleton after abducting her in Cleveland in September 1984 as she walked home from a Friday night football game with two friends.

Richard Dieter, director of the nonprofit Death Penalty Information Center, said he knows of only one inmate who was subjected to more than one execution.

A first attempt to execute Willie Francis in 1946 by electrocution in Louisiana did not work. He was returned to death row for nearly a year while the U.S. Supreme Court considered whether a second electrocution would be unconstitutional.

In 2007, the Georgia execution of inmate John Hightower was delayed for several minutes while officials struggled to find a suitable vein in his left arm.

Florida halted executions after the death of Angel Diaz in December 2006 was delayed for 34 minutes because needles were accidentally pushed through his veins, causing the chemicals to go into his muscles instead. Florida resumed executions in 2008 under new procedures.

In Texas in 2000, the execution of Claude Jones was delayed by about 30 minutes because of difficulties finding a vein in either arm to insert the drugs. Authorities used a vein in his left leg instead.

Problems accessing veins also delayed Ohio executions in 2006 and 2007.

In 2006, the execution of Joseph Clark was delayed for more than an hour after the team failed to properly attach an IV, an incident that led to changes in Ohio's execution process.

The state also had difficulty finding the veins of inmate Christopher Newton, whose May 2007 execution was delayed nearly two hours.

Since Clark, the state's execution rules have allowed team members to take as much time as they need

to find the best vein for the IVs that carry the three lethal chemicals.

Ohio has executed 32 men since Wilford Berry in 1999, an execution slightly delayed also because of problems finding a vein.

Associated Press Writers Stephen Majors in Lucasville and JoAnne Viviano in Columbus contributed to this report.

(This version CORRECTS Corrects day of scheduled execution to 'Tuesday' from 'Wednesday' in graf 4. MULTIMEDIA: For Ohio members, copies of the governor's reprieve and a letter asking the Ohio Supreme Court to intervene are in the state folder at <ftp://ftp.ap.org>.)

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