Beat: News

Ohio executes man who killed security guard during robbery

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USPA News - The state of Ohio on Wednesday executed a man convicted of killing a security guard while robbing an adult bookstore in 1994 to be able to afford more cocaine, officials said. He was the fourth person to be executed in the United States so far this year.

Frederick Treesh, 48, was pronounced dead at 10:37 a.m. local time at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility in Lucasville, about 74 miles (120 kilometers) south of Columbus. The execution by lethal injection took place just days after Governor John Kasich denied a request for executive clemency as recommended by the state`s parole board. Treesh was convicted of the aggravated murder of security guard Henry Dupree and the attempted murder of Louis Lauver while robbing an adult bookstore in Eastlake in August 1994. It followed a multi-state crime spree during which Treesh and a friend allegedly robbed banks and businesses, stole cars, and committed sexual offenses. In a last statement before his execution, Treesh apologized to the family of Dupree but refused to apologize to other alleged victims. "I`m not here to say I`m sorry to any of these victims that are here. I`ve never been tried, never been charged with that crime," he said. "I`m here for Henry Dupree. I`d like to apologize to the family for what I`ve done. I`m sorry." He also told observers he wished a photo of his execution could be taken to convince others to stay away from drugs. "This is where drugs lead you. This is true life," he said. "I wanted [a witness] to take a picture of the execution. You can`t, but I`m sure you can go to the morgue to take a picture." In his last words, Treesh told the victim`s family they would find no closure after Wednesday`s execution. "You want closure? Closure only comes with a book, you close it and put it on a shelf," he told them. "There is no closure. Every holiday, every birthday, everything, you will think of the victim. So if you want me murdered, just say it." According to prosecutors, Treesh and three friends had been smoking cocaine for several hours when they decided to rob a business in order to afford more drugs. They eventually went to the Vine Street News adult bookstore in Eastlake where Treesh and co-defendant Benjamin Brooks walked in at around 11:30 p.m. After glancing at a few magazines, Treesh and Brooks approached the sales counter where Louis Lauver was working at the time. Treesh pulled out his nine-millimeter handgun, told Lauver not to move or call out for help, and ordered him to tell where the store`s security guard was. Treesh then walked through swinging doors into the rear portion of the store, where Treesh saw two customers behind a rack, looking at magazines, and saw Dupree sitting in a chair while watching television. Treesh testified that neither Dupree nor the customers appeared to notice his presence as he walked in. Treesh then took the handgun out of his pants, poked Dupree in the shoulder with it, and ordered Dupree to stand up. Treesh testified that he originally intended to take Dupree to the front of the store and tape him up with the clerk, but then noticed handcuffs on Dupree`s pants and decided to use them. According to Treesh, a struggle ensued when he reached for Dupree`s handcuffs, and the handgun discharged. While Treesh was in the rear of the store, Brooks ordered the clerk to empty the cash register. Lauver complied and, after shots rang out from the back of the store, both Brooks and Treesh quickly moved to exit the store. But before Treesh reached the door, he brought the handgun up, pointed it at Lauver, and fired two shots. The clerk, who stood by the counter with his hands in the air, was struck in the jaw and forearm. Treesh later testified during the trial in 1995 that he aimed these shots at a telephone on the wall behind the counter, not at Lauver. The clerk survived and, after briefly losing consciousness, was able to dial 911. Dupree, grievously injured during his encounter with Treesh in the rear of the store, managed to make his way through the swinging doors but collapsed on the floor behind the counter. An autopsy later showed that Dupree died as a result of two close-range gunshot wounds to his chest. A customer who had been hiding in a viewing booth and a witness across the street were both able to provide a description of the suspects and their vehicle to police. An officer of the Euclid Police Department, who received a dispatch about the robbery, later spotted the vehicle on Interstate 90, triggering a high-speed pursuit. With co-defendant Anthony Washington driving the vehicle at high speeds, both Brooks and Treesh fired shots at police officers involved in the chase. Washington eventually lost control of the vehicle and crashed, after which Treesh continued to fire at officers as he ran away from the scene. Brooks remained in the car and was taken into custody. Two officers from the Cleveland Police Department arrived at the scene soon after and pursued the suspects on foot. They eventually approached a garage where Treesh pointed his gun at officer Harold Pretel, who ordered him to drop the weapon. Treesh then dropped the weapon and, while attempting to jump over a fence, was taken into custody. Treesh, who claimed he could not remember shooting Dupree, later testified that he felt "high" and "paranoid" when he was questioned by officers after being taken to a police station. A Lake County jury found Treesh guilty of one count of aggravated murder with two aggravating circumstances, two counts of attempted aggravated murder, one count of felonious assault, and one count of aggravated robbery. They recommended a death sentence, and the trial court sentenced him accordingly. Treesh appealed the sentence to the Lake County Court of Appeals, which affirmed his conviction and death sentence. He also went before the Supreme Court of Ohio, but the court eventually affirmed the judgment of the court of appeals and also upheld the conviction and death sentence. During a hearing in January to request clemency, Treesh`s counsel Timothy Sweeney argued that Treesh was now a "much different person" than when he committed the robbery. He

said Treesh had "changed and improved as a human being" and, while recognizing the severity of the crimes, asked the state`s parole board to commute the sentence to life in prison without the possibility of parole. All eleven members of the parole board voted to deny clemency to Treesh. Treesh was the first person executed in Ohio so far this year and the 4th in the United States. According to the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, inmate Steven T. Smith is scheduled to be executed on May 1 for the brutal rape and murder of his girlfriend`s six-month-old daughter in 1998.

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