

News for Immediate Release

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Governor Corbett Signs Execution Warrants for Orlando Maisonet, Abraham Sanchez Jr. and Freeman May

Harrisburg – Governor Tom Corbett has signed execution warrants for three men, each of whom were convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to death.

Orlando Maisonet, Abraham Sanchez Jr. and Freeman May are all incarcerated at the State Correctional Institution at Greene.

Orlando Maisonet participated in the brutal stabbing death of Jorge Figueroa in September 1982 inside a Philadelphia home.

The murder was committed by members of a local drug organization. One of the group's members later cooperated with police, identifying the three men who killed Figueroa as brothers, Heriberto and Simon Pirela, as well as Maisonet.

Prosecutors argued that Figueroa, stabbed 20 times, was killed by the organization to prevent him from cooperating with police in the investigation of an earlier robbery-homicide.

The Pirela brothers were arrested and convicted. Both are serving sentences of life in prison. Maisonet eluded capture for nearly a decade until he was located in Puerto Rico in 1990 and extradited back to Philadelphia.

Maisonet, now 54, was eventually convicted and sentenced to death in Philadelphia County Court in February 2005. His execution has been scheduled for March 6.

Abraham Sanchez Jr. repeatedly shot Ray Diener in front of Diener's Lancaster County home during a botched robbery attempt in May 2007.

Sanchez and three friends were driving around, looking for a home to burglarize, when they noticed an isolated home with a light on and the victim sitting at a table inside.

While Sanchez and two others hid in the bushes, a co-defendant, Lorenzo Schrijver, rang the doorbell. Diener answered, Schrijver told him his car had broken down and Diener went to get his cell phone. He returned and handed it to Schrijver.

Sanchez came out of the shadows and ordered Diener to the ground at gunpoint.

According to court documents, Diener grabbed the gun, crying "No, no, no." He and Sanchez wrestled over the gun. Sanchez fired, hitting Diener in the groin area and fracturing his hip. Diener fell to the ground, pleading for help. Sanchez backed up and shot Diener in the chest.

Sanchez shot Diener a third time, hitting him in the neck and shoulder. The suspects fled and Diener was pronounced dead at the scene.

Several people told police that Sanchez talked to them about the shooting, bragging to one person that he shot the victim "for fun." Less than three weeks later, all four suspects were arrested. Schrijver and another co-defendant, Robert Baker, cooperated with police and identified Sanchez as the killer.

Schrijver and Baker were sentenced to 20 to 40 years in prison for third-degree murder. The third participant, Emru Kebede, was sentenced to life in prison for second-degree murder.

Sanchez, now 24, was sentenced to death in Lancaster County Court in March 2009. Sanchez's execution has been scheduled for March 7.

Freeman May stabbed to death 22-year-old Kathy Lynn Fair, a young mother who was reported missing on Sept. 4, 1982.

In 1988, six years after Fair's disappearance, skeletal remains were discovered in a remote, wooded area of Lebanon County. A pathologist identified the remains to be those of Fair, concluding that she died from multiple stab wounds to the chest from a short, single-edged weapon, most likely a knife.

Several months after Fair went missing, two young women, ages 15 and 19, were brutally and repeatedly stabbed by an assailant with a short, singled-edged knife in December 1982. One of the two victims was raped.

The teenagers were left for dead not far from the place where Fair's remains were discovered. Both survived the attack and identified May, who had given them a ride from a party earlier that evening, as their assailant. For this crime, May was convicted and sentenced to 15 to 35 years in prison.

Based on the similarities of the cases, including the weapon and the remote Lebanon County location, police focused their investigation on May. In 1990, May was arrested and charged with killing Fair.

During his trial, both May's brother and wife testified that he had confessed to each of them separately that he had murdered a girl by stabbing her and burying her body with brush in the woods. A jail house informant also testified that May admitted to him that he "did it."

May was convicted in Lebanon County Court and sentenced to death in March 1991. The sentence was reversed by an appeals court, but after a second penalty phase

hearing, May was again sentenced to death in December 1995. Once again, an appeals court vacated the sentence, and yet again, after a third penalty phase, May was sentenced to death in October 2008.

May, now 55, is scheduled to be executed on March 5.

Executions in Pennsylvania are carried out by lethal injection. With these three warrants, signed Wednesday, Corbett has now signed 24 execution warrants.

For more information about the death penalty process in Pennsylvania, visit the Department of Corrections website at www.cor.state.pa.us

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