



Department of Justice



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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT CLOSES INVESTIGATION INTO TRENTADUE DEATH

Forwards Findings to Inspector General for Possible Action

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- After an extensive investigation into the death of Kenneth Michael Trentadue at the Federal Transfer Center (FTC) in Oklahoma City, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division today ended its probe, determining that the evidence does not establish a violation of federal criminal law.

"We followed every lead, and we investigated every allegation about potential misconduct by prison personnel in the death of Kenneth Trentadue," said Isabelle Katz Pinzler, Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. "After a lengthy investigation, involving scores of interviews and volumes of documents, we concluded that the evidence does not support a federal prosecution."

The Criminal Section of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, drawing upon the resources of the FBI in Oklahoma City, opened an investigation into allegations that Trentadue may have been the victim of a federal civil rights crime.

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Trentadue, a federal prisoner, was temporarily housed at the FTC following his arrest for parole violations. On the morning of August 20, 1995, he asked to be moved out of the general population area of the facility and into protective custody in the segregated housing unit. During a scheduled cell count shortly after 3:00 a.m. on August 21, 1995, Trentadue was found hanging in his cell.

Career prosecutors from the Civil Rights Division gathered voluminous documentary evidence and details from witnesses regarding the facts and circumstances surrounding the death. Federal prosecutors worked with a grand jury in Oklahoma in conducting a careful review of the evidence. During the review, experts were consulted at the state and federal levels, and scores of witnesses were interviewed, including prisoners, correctional officers, prison officials, law enforcement investigators, forensic experts and medical personnel.

The investigation into all allegations and potential leads, however, failed to establish credible evidence that any Bureau of Prison personnel violated federal civil rights laws. Nor did it establish evidence that was inconsistent with a conclusion that Trentadue committed suicide.

This matter will now be referred to the Office of Inspector General to determine whether the conduct of any federal employee in connection with the death of Trentadue and its aftermath may have violated administrative rules and procedures. The Justice

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Department will also work cooperatively with state and local
officials including the appropriate Oklahoma state district
attorney in their efforts to determine whether state criminal
laws were violated.

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