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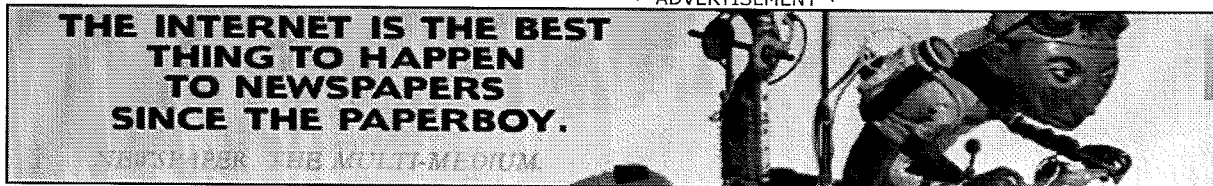
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May 9, 10:45 PM EDT

McDonough concurs with panel's findings on lethal injection

By BRENT KALLESTAD
Associated Press Writer

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) -- The death chamber at Florida State prison is being doubled in size to give execution teams more space to do their jobs while the same lethal drug cocktail used in a botched execution five months ago will continue to be used, prisons chief Jim McDonough said Wednesday.

The Gov.'s Commission on Administration of Lethal Injection recommended Florida explore other chemical mixes in its final report to Gov. Charlie Crist earlier this year. The panel was created after a botched execution in December at Florida State Prison.

"We took a close look of the solutions themselves, what was the concentration of the chemicals in the solution," McDonough said in comments referencing 37 recommendations by the special panel. "We determined that the three drug cocktail that currently is being used here and I believe in virtually every other state was in fact the protocol we're going to stick with."

Crist told The Miami Herald he's ready to start signing death warrants now that McDonough has reported changes.

"I need to carry out my duty as governor," Crist told the newspaper.

Florida received materials from 17 of the 36 other states that use lethal injection in addition to federal authorities.

"The Department will continue to monitor developments in pharmacology to determine if and when it is appropriate to substitute other chemicals into the process," McDonough said in his formal written response to Crist.

The solution favored in most states, including Florida, is a mix of sodium pentothal, pancuronium bromide and potassium chloride.

McDonough said the primary objective is to assure "a human and dignified death."

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The state should be able to resume executions by the end of the month, he said.

McDonough cited a beefed-up training schedule for members of the execution team, including exercises in anticipation of an "extraordinary event." Two wardens from prisons outside FSP and teams of roughly a dozen who will supervise the executions have received training from officials at Terre Haute, Ind., where rare federal executions are held.

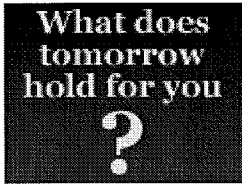
The prison boss also agreed with the recommendation that at least one member of the team can communicate in the primary language of the condemned inmate and said the clock in the execution chamber has been positioned where it will be visible to all officials and witnesses.

Crist's predecessor, Jeb Bush, created an 11-member panel to find out what went wrong with the Dec. 13 execution of Angel Diaz, 55, who took 34 minutes to die - twice as long as usual - and recommend how to prevent a reoccurrence.

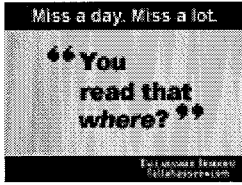
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