

# European death drugs to be used in two US executions next week

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**UPDATE: Cary Kerr was executed last night (3rd May 2011) using Lundbeck pentobarbital.**

**Drugs supplied by European pharmaceutical companies are set to be used to execute two US prisoners on the 3rd and 6th of May.**

Anaesthetics from Denmark-headquartered Lundbeck and UK-based Dream Pharma will be used in the respective executions by lethal injection of Cary Kerr in Texas and Jeffrey Motts in South Carolina.

Several states are in possession of large supplies of sodium thiopental, the anaesthetic due to be used in the execution of Jeffrey Motts, which they were able to acquire from the UK in the delay before the British government imposed export controls. There are serious concerns that the drug, bought through back-channels from a tiny firm in an office in a driving school in Acton, may be faulty – leaving prisoners in severe pain during their executions. Three botched executions using the drug have already been carried out.



Meanwhile, Lundbeck continues to supply the barbiturate pentobarbital through a facility based in the USA. The barbiturate was not intended for use in lethal injections and has never been clinically tested for the purpose. The new protocol hastily adopted by Texas (in less than three weeks, without scientific or medical consultation) is recognised to be particularly dangerous. It calls for pentobarbital followed by pancuronium bromide and potassium chloride: a combination so risky and inhumane that vets explicitly outlaw it in the practice of animal euthanasia.

The execution of Cary Kerr on Tuesday will be the first in Texas using this lethal injection cocktail, and, if the state Department of Corrections (which boasts the busiest execution chamber in the USA) has its way, the first of many.

Death rows in the US have been looking abroad for execution drugs ever since the only domestic supplier ended production of sodium thiopental, the first stage in the (until recently) widely-used three drug execution cocktail.

Appalled by the prospect of complicity in US executions, Governments and pharmaceutical firms in Britain, Italy, Austria and India have found ways to prevent the use of their drugs for killing prisoners. Lundbeck has failed to take similar action and the

Danish Government appears incapable or unwilling to exert any effective pressure.

**Reprieve Investigator Maya Foa** said:

“With two executions looming, Lundbeck should be doing everything in their power to mitigate the damage done in their name. Delays are fatal, as the execution of Jeffrey Motts using British drugs on Friday will show. There are many simple and common mechanisms Lundbeck could use to prevent their drugs being used to kill people. Their continued reluctance to employ them is shameful.”

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**Notes for Editors:**

For further information please contact Donald Campbell at Reprieve's press office on +44 (0)20 7427 1082 / 07791 755 415

**Reprieve**, a legal action charity, uses the law to enforce the human rights of prisoners, from death row to Guantánamo Bay. Reprieve investigates, litigates and educates, working on the frontline, to provide legal support to prisoners unable to pay for it themselves. Reprieve promotes the rule of law around the world, securing each person's right to a fair trial and saving lives. Clive Stafford Smith is the founder of Reprieve and has spent 27 years working on behalf of people facing the death penalty in the USA.

[http://www.reprieve.org.uk/2011\\_04\\_27Europedeathdrugs](http://www.reprieve.org.uk/2011_04_27Europedeathdrugs)