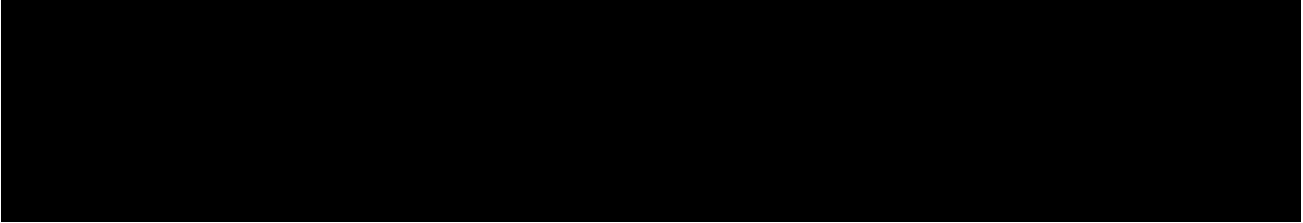


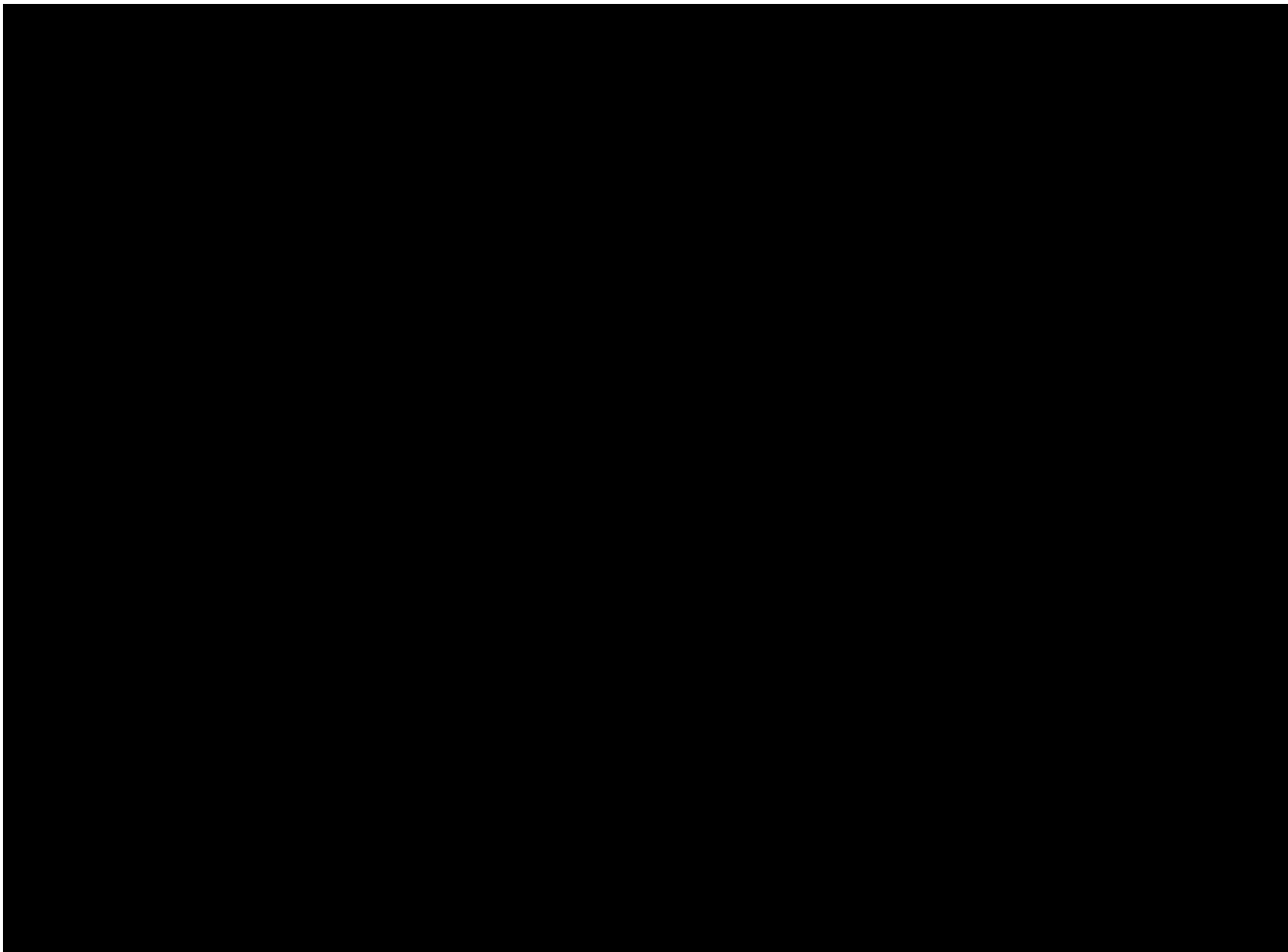
Maricopa County Sheriff's Office
Joe Arpaio, Sheriff



Date: May 2, 2008



**INMATE ON INMATE ASSAULT RESULTS IN DEATH IN
FOURTH AVENUE JAIL**



News Release

100 West Washington, Suite 1900, Phoenix, Arizona 85003
Phone: (602) 876-1801 Fax: (602) 258-2081
Media Contact: SheriffsMediaRequests@MCSO.Maricopa.Gov

In an unrelated matter, last night an inmate housed in the Fourth Avenue Jail was beaten to death by another inmate. This marks the first inmate assault resulting in death in the near five years since the Fourth Avenue Jail was opened.

At approximately 8PM, the victim, Robert Leroy Cotton (8-3-79) went against jailhouse regulations when he entered another inmate's cell. That cell housed the suspect, Pete Van Winkle (4-9-82).

Chief of the Custody Bureau, Jerry Sheridan, says that moments after his officers performed their security walk on housing unit 4-A and for unknown reasons at this time, Van Winkle followed Cotton into the cell and out of view of tower security, assaulted Cotton. So far our investigation shows that a video camera caught portions of the assault. The cell view was not on any of the six monitors inside the tower at the time of assault because nothing out of the ordinary appeared to be happening in or around that cell. Also no other inmates, even an inmate who walked by the assault three different times, made an attempt to contact detention officers. The assault was out of sight and sound of the security tower.

When Van Winkle then dragged Cotton out of the cell and attempted to throw him over the second floor railing, detention officers rushed to the scene. Upon arriving, the victim appeared lifeless and officers immediately performed CPR. The suspect, Van Winkle, gave himself up without resistance. He has been rebooked on first degree murder charges. A homicide investigation is currently underway.

Victim Cotton, a day labor carpenter, has a lengthy criminal record and was booked into jail by Mesa PD over one year ago. He did serve time in the state prison in 2002 and 2004.

Suspect Van Winkle was just out of prison when he was arrested by Phoenix PD on February 29, 2008 for attempted second degree murder charge and misconduct involving weapons. According to his booking information, Van Winkle has ties to the Aryan Brotherhood and had a number of assaults on staff and inmates while incarcerated with the DOC.

Sheriff Arpaio this morning went to the crime scene and personally spoke with staff about the incident.

“Jails house violent criminals. I am sorry this occurred and my condolences go to the victim's family and friends. They can be assured we will do everything we can in our investigation to secure a death penalty conviction against Van Winkle. This man deserves it.”

(Booking photos are attached.)

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