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## **Lawyers and Experts Ask Gov. Easley to Grant Clemency to Vietnam Veteran suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**

Raleigh, N.C.----Lawyers for George Page, scheduled to be executed February 27, today called on Governor Mike Easley to grant clemency to the Vietnam veteran who has been suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) since he left Vietnam in 1969.

“The people of North Carolina do not want the state to execute a mentally ill man who served his country in Vietnam and is now suffering with this illness,” said Walt Jones, one of Page’s attorneys.” “Governor Easley should commute Mr. Page’s sentence to life without parole.”

Page is on death row for the 1995 shooting death of Winston-Salem police officer Stephen Levi Amos. On the day of the crime, Page was suffering from a flashback episode and began shooting out of the windows of his Winston-Salem apartment at other apartments, vehicles, and law enforcement officers who arrived on the scene, fatally wounding Officer Amos.

Despite being diagnosed by Department of Correction doctors as having PTSD, prosecutors and state psychiatrists maintain that Page does not have PTSD because he has no record of specific combat duty in his service in Vietnam and that he served primarily as a truck mechanic. But Page spent his time in Vietnam in 1968 stationed in Pleiku, the scene of numerous skirmishes and bombings that year.

Dr. Richard Kulka, a nationally recognized expert in PTSD and himself a Vietnam Veteran says Page may well have witnessed a specific traumatic incident and may have PTSD even if he didn’t.

“It is clear from well-documented government research that soldiers in various occupations with exposure to the war have demonstrated PTSD symptoms. A war zone is a war zone. You don’t have to be in combat to have PTSD,” said Kulka.

Kulka pointed out that the jury in Page’s trial never heard from an expert in PTSD. In fact, Page has never been evaluated by such an expert.

“The jury in this case simply did not have an accurate picture of Mr. Page’s battle with this illness,” said Jones. “Jurors never heard from a PTSD expert or from Page’s own family members who witnessed Page experiencing flashback episodes.”

Page's history of mental illness is long and complex, yet the defense was denied the opportunity to hire a qualified mental health professional to fully evaluate Page before his trial. Dr. James Hilkey recently conducted such an evaluation and found that Page suffers from the symptoms of PTSD, bipolar disorder, and shows signs of neurological damage. Included in Page's documented mental health history are attempts at suicide, hospitalization for overdoses on rubbing alcohol and lighter fluid, and treatment for major depression.

The request for clemency comes as a proposal for a temporary halt of executions is being considered by the North Carolina General Assembly, having already passed the Senate and now awaiting action by the House.

Rep. Earline Parmon says the Page case is just the latest example of a system that is not working properly.

"The jury should have all the information it needs before deciding on life and death, Parmon said. "We should not execute anyone else until we take an in-depth look at our capital punishment system."

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