



# Department of Justice

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District of North Dakota

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## *Leonard Peltier Seeks Parole*

**FARGO** - United States Attorney Drew Wrigley announced today that convicted double-murderer **Leonard Peltier** had a parole hearing before the U.S. Parole Commission at 9:00 am EST today at the federal penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. **Peltier** is serving two consecutive life sentences for the June 26, 1975, first-degree murders of Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agents Jack Coler and Ronald Williams. **Peltier** murdered the agents on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. His trial was held in Fargo, North Dakota, after his attorneys convinced a federal judge to move the trial out of South Dakota.

Although parole was abolished for federal convicts in 1987, **Peltier** remains eligible because he was convicted before that time. The U.S. Parole Commission denied **Peltier's** 1993 parole request and set a 15-year reconsideration date before he could again be considered for parole.

The United States Attorney's Office for North Dakota, the FBI, members of the Coler and Williams families, and the Retired FBI Agents Association have opposed each

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of **Peltier's** parole requests for the senseless, cold-blooded murders of the FBI agents.

**Peltier** has neither accepted responsibility for the murders nor shown any remorse for his brutal and heartless acts of violence.

U.S. Attorney Drew Wrigley submitted a 17-page letter opposing parole.

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nd/pressreleases/2009/05-29-2009-Peltier.pdf>

Also available at: <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nd/>

In the letter, Wrigley argued that **Peltier** does not meet the prerequisites for parole under the parole statute because his release would depreciate the seriousness of the grave crimes he committed and promote disrespect for the law. Furthermore, it would jeopardize the public welfare to release a dangerous, unrepentant, violent criminal into society. (See Wrigley letter for details of factors supporting denial of Peltier parole.)

The U.S. Parole Commission hearing examiner is expected to make a recommendation on **Peltier's** parole request to the full Parole Commission within a few days. The Commission will make a final decision on **Peltier's** application for parole within 21 days of receiving the recommendation.

In the 1970s **Peltier** engaged in a string of armed violence across North America. **Peltier** had been charged with attempted murder in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1972, was released on bond, and failed to appear for trial in 1974, which resulted in a warrant for his arrest. He then murdered the two FBI agents in South Dakota in 1975 while a fugitive from justice.

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In November 1975, when **Peltier** was a fugitive for the FBI agents' murders, he fired a shot at an Oregon Highway Patrol officer following a traffic stop. **Peltier** then burglarized a ranch in Oregon, where he stole a rifle and a pickup truck. He later fled to Canada. He was heavily armed when arrested by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in February 1976, and said he would have blown the Mounties out of their shoes had he known they were coming to arrest him.

In 1977 **Peltier** was convicted for murdering FBI agents Coler and Williams. He later escaped from a federal prison in California. **Peltier** fired shots at pursuing Bureau of Prison employees, committed an armed robbery, and was in possession of a semi-automatic rifle and hiding in a tree when he was re-arrested by the FBI.

"Leonard Peltier's guilt is certain," said U.S. Attorney Drew Wrigley. "The evidence is overwhelming. And the loss suffered by the Coler and Williams families is equally overwhelming. He killed two men, endangered many others, and has never shown a hint of remorse. Peltier should be required to serve his life sentences."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott J. Schneider represented the U.S. Attorney's Office at the parole hearing in Pennsylvania.

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