

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:**"LEONARD PELTIER MURDERED TWO
FBI AGENTS. HE DESERVES NO CLEMENCY."**

The Leonard Peltier Defense Committee has announced that November 1999, is "Freedom Month for Leonard Peltier." This Committee intends to deliver to President Clinton a petition asking him to grant clemency to Peltier. Leonard Peltier is currently serving consecutive life sentences in a federal penitentiary for the ruthless murder of two FBI agents. To commute the sentence of Peltier and allow him to be released would be a tragic injustice and a moral blow to the entire community of law enforcement professionals in the United States. The members of the FBI Agents Association and the Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI want the President and all Americans to be aware of all the reasons why clemency should not be granted to Peltier. Misguided efforts to obscure or dilute the truth must not undermine justice in the case of Leonard Peltier.

June 26, 1975, was a hot, dusty Thursday on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in southwestern South Dakota when two young FBI agents arrived from their office in Rapid City. It was about noon when Special Agents Ronald A. Williams, 27, and Jack R. Coler, 28, pulled into the Jumping Bull Compound area of the remote reservation seeking to arrest a young man in connection with the recent abduction and assault of two young ranchers in nearby Manderson, S.D.

Observing Peltier's vehicle the two agents pursued it. Unknown to Special Agents Coler and Williams, one of the three men in the vehicle was Leonard Peltier, a violent man with a violent past, a fugitive wanted for attempted murder of an off-duty Milwaukee police officer. Knowing the two vehicles pursuing him were occupied by FBI agents and believing they were seeking to arrest him on the attempted murder case, Peltier and his two associates abruptly stopped their vehicle and began firing their rifles at the agents.

Surprised by the sudden violence, outmanned, out-gunned and at an extreme tactical disadvantage, Coler and Williams were both wounded and defenseless within minutes. Coler sustained a severe wound, the force of a bullet nearly tearing his right arm off. Williams, wounded in the left shoulder and right foot, removed his shirt during the hail of incoming rifle fire and fashioned a tourniquet around the arm of Coler, who had fallen unconscious. Agents Coler and Williams were at the mercy of Peltier and his associates. But there was to be no mercy that day for the fine young law enforcement officers.

Not satisfied with the terrible injuries they had inflicted, Peltier and two other men walked down the hill toward the ambushed agents. Three shots were fired from Peltier's rifle. Williams, kneeling and apparently surrendering, was shot in the face directly through his outstretched, shielding hand. He died instantly. Coler, still unconscious, was shot twice in the head at close range. He died instantly after the second shot.

The crime scene examination testified to the brutality of the ambush. Coler and Williams had little chance to defend themselves. They had fired only five shots. In contrast, over 125 bullet holes were found in their two cars.

Following the murders, Peltier fled the reservation. In November 1975, an Oregon state trooper stopped a recreational vehicle in which Peltier was hiding. Peltier fired at the trooper and escaped. Coler's revolver, stolen when he was murdered, was found in a paper bag under the front seat of the RV. Peltier's thumbprint was on the bag.

When later arrested in Canada by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Peltier remarked that, had he known the RCMP officers were there to arrest him, he would have blown them out of their shoes. These are not the comments of an innocent man and portray the true character and violent nature of Leonard Peltier.

In April 1977, a jury convicted Peltier of the murders of Coler and Williams. A judge sentenced him to two consecutive life sentences. While incarcerated in the Lompoc, California Federal Prison, and with outside assistance, Peltier shot his way out of jail, using a smuggled rifle to make his escape. Several days later, after assaulting a rancher and stealing his truck, Peltier was captured. He was tried and convicted of the escape and of being a felon in possession of a firearm.

Peltier has since appealed his various convictions numerous times. Each time, the federal courts have upheld earlier court actions. The U.S. Supreme Court has twice denied Peltier review without comment. The record is clear. There are no new facts. The old facts have not changed and Peltier is guilty as charged.

Several times on national television, Peltier has admitted to firing at the two agents. In his most recent public interview Peltier has even reluctantly conceded what he had previously denied, that he had in fact gone down to where the agents were executed. Still, he openly states that he feels no guilt, remorse or even regret for the murders. Leonard Peltier has lived a life of crime. He has earned and deserves a lifetime of incarceration. Leonard Peltier is a murderer without compassion or feeling for his fellow man. In turn, he deserves no compassion.

Mr. President, there is no justification for relieving Leonard Peltier from his punishment. Our judicial system has spoken in this case, again and again. Leonard Peltier is a vicious, violent and cowardly criminal who hides behind legitimate Native American issues. Leonard Peltier was never a leader in the Native American community. He is simply a brutish thug and murderer with no respect or regard for human life. Our citizens, on and off the reservations, must be protected from predators such as Peltier.

Mr. President, since Leonard Peltier couldn't fool the federal courts, he is now trying to fool you and the public. He is shading and hiding the facts - and playing on sympathy. He and his advocates want to confuse the fact of his guilt with matters completely extraneous to that fact. Don't let him get away with it, Mr. President. Sympathy is appropriate only for the dead heroes and their surviving families. Don't let their sacrifice be forgotten. ☆ ☆ ☆

*The Federal Bureau of Investigation Agents Association, P.O. Box 250, New Rochelle, NY 10801.
The Society of Former Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, P.O. Box 1027, Quantico, VA 22134.*

The above organizations, which are professional non-governmental associations, represent over 20,000 active duty and former FBI agents.

*The Washington Post
P. A4
November 3, 1999*