

**MDOC Investigation of
December 6, 2000 Zip Gun Incident
Mississippi State Penitentiary (MSP)**

0900 a.m. Correctional officers moving high risk offenders to new cells in Tier 1, Unit 32-C when death row inmate Willie Russell asks to talk with Captain James Brewer. Captain Brewer advises inmate Russell that he will talk to him after correctional officers have taken him from his cell and searched him.

0940 a.m. During process of moving high-risk offenders, inmate Russell sticks a homemade weapon (zip gun) out of the porthole of the cells solid steel door and fires one shot at Captain Brewer. All staff on the Tier exit the Unit.

0950 a.m. Senior staff at MSP are advised of the incident and arrive at Unit 32 – C, including Unit 32 Warden and Deputy Warden, a Take Down Team, Internal Affairs investigators, and members of the K-9 team.

Unit 32 Warden notices death row inmate Jimmy Mack, whose cell is next to inmate Russell, has placed a blanket over his cell door. Warden asks inmate Mack to remove the blanket who refuses to do so. Inmate Mack then brings hands around sides of blanket and is holding an object believe to be a homemade weapon (zip gun).

Unit 32 Warden notifies Deputy Commissioner of Institutions, MSP Acting Superintendent, and MSP Chief of Security of additional homemade weapon. MSP Acting Superintendent and Chief of Security leave administration building and arrive at Unit 32.

1055 a.m. All inmates in Tier 1, Unit 32 – C are removed from their cells, searched, and escorted to and outside exercise area. Inmates Russell and Mack are only inmates left in their cells.

1057 a.m. Warden, Deputy Warden and Take Down Team enter Tier 1, Unit 32-C and rush inmate Russell's cell in order to block the porthole and prevent Russell from firing again.

Inmate Mack is asked to remove blanket again, he refuses. Order given by Warden to fire tear gas and rubber bullets into inmate Mack's cell. Inmate Mack is shaken but refuses to hand over homemade weapon. The Take Down Team enters Mack's cell, subdues and removes him from his cell. The homemade weapon (zip gun) is recovered at approximately 1100 a.m.

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1106 a.m. Warden orders inmate Russell to throw out what he has in his cell. Inmate Russell throws out a partially dismantled zip gun. Inmate Russell surrenders and is removed from his cell without incident.

1116 Incident resolved and both inmates Russell and Mack are taken to a holding tank to await transportation to the MDOC hospital for precautionary evaluation.

Search of Tier 1, Unit 32-C following incident shows recovery of one, twenty-two caliber bullet shell casing located in front of inmate Russell's cell next to a support beam. A projectile casing from a twenty-two-caliber bullet is found near the front center wall of the base of the tier.

One twenty-two-caliber bullet was found inside the makeshift chamber of the zip gun confiscated from inmate Mack.

Inmate Russell stated in an interview that he was angry with Captain Brewer for Rule Violation Reports (RVR) that had been filed against him and for denying him state issued items. Inmate Russell also stated being angry because he did not want to be housed with regular state inmates, citing he should only be housed with other death row inmates.

Inmate Russell stated he did receive the zip gun on December 6th, intact and loaded, but would not say who provided it to him. Inmate Mack refused to provide a signed statement.

MDOC is pursuing prosecution of both inmates for aggravated assault of a law enforcement officer.