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Philadelphia priest remains jailed because of flight risk

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NCR Today

For the time being, Msgr. William Lynn will remain in jail.

According to the Philadelphia Inquirer, Common Pleas Court Judge M. Teresa Sarmina has given conditional approval to release the 61-year-old convicted priest to house arrest, but the final decision will wait until lawyers can research what would happen should Lynn attempt to flee.

That plan could keep Lynn jailed until at least July 5.

The former secretary of clergy for the Philadelphia archdiocese was convicted on one of three charges -- one count of child endangerment -- brought against him for his role in supervising priests accused of abuse, and was acquitted on charges of conspiracy and another count of child endangerment.

His sentencing date is Aug. 13, and he could face up to seven years in prison.

During Tuesday's hearing, requested by Lynn's attorneys, a plan was outlined that would arrange a monitored house arrest program for the priest to stay at the home of the stepmother of Lynn's deceased sister.

More from the Inquirer:

But Sarmina appeared to be taken aback when Assistant District Attorney Patrick Blessington submitted an article from the Chicago Tribune newspaper reporting that 32 Catholic priests had fled court jurisdiction since 1985 and only five were ever returned.

Blessington noted that the Vatican does not have an extradition treaty with the United States.

Although Sarmina said the newspaper article was too vague as the source of a judicial ruling, she asked Blessington and Lynn attorneys Jeffrey M. Lindy and Thomas A. Bergstrom to research whether it would be possible - and effective - if Lynn signed a waiver of extradition before he is sentenced.

The Inquirer reported that Lynn stated he would sign any waivers the judge requested.

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