

## High-Profile Davis Execution Raises Questions

### ANALYSIS

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – Controversy at home and abroad over the execution of Troy Davis, who was put to death in the United States late on Wednesday for the 1989 killing of a policeman, has renewed questions about the death penalty.

The U.S. Supreme Court rejected his last-minute plea for a stay of execution, and Davis, 42, received a lethal injection at a prison in Georgia.

“The Troy Davis case is going to bring a lot of doubt into people’s minds,” said Fordham University law professor Deborah Denno, an opponent of the death penalty.

“It gradually erodes the death penalty more and more ... public opinion is changing,” she said.

Defense attorneys had argued Davis was innocent, citing new evidence and witnesses who had changed or recanted their testimony, some even saying another man committed the crime. No physical evidence linked Davis to the killing.

All the judges who reviewed the case rejected Davis’s claim of innocence, upholding his conviction and death sentence.

Other death-penalty cases have included claims of innocence — like those raised by Davis — and racial claims. A defense attorney said a disproportionate number of inmates in Georgia’s prisons and on death row were black men, as was Davis. The victim was white.

A Pew Research Center opinion poll in 2010 found that most Americans — some 62 percent — supported the death penalty for convicted murderers, but Pew’s Michael Dimock said the figure had declined slowly over the last 15 years. The polls show a drop from about 80 percent in the early 1990s.

The U.S. is the only Western nation on an Amnesty International list of the 23 countries that imposed the death penalty last year. The countries were mainly in the Middle East and Africa, and China was believed to have the

highest number of executions, followed by Iran and North Korea.

The U.S. Supreme Court, with a conservative majority, generally has supported the death penalty and shows no sign of placing a moratorium on executions any time soon. The court reinstated the death penalty in 1976 after a four-year moratorium.

The number of executions in the United States generally has been trending downward from a high of 98 in 1999. There were 46 executions last year and 35 so far this year, according to the Death Penalty Information Center.

Richard Dieter of the center, a Washington-based group which opposes capital punishment, said the battle will focus on individual states.

Thirty-four of the 50 states have the death penalty, along with the U.S. government and the U.S. military.

“At some point, the Supreme Court might find that the standards of decency regarding this punishment have shifted, but for now the focus is on state reforms or state abolition,” Dieter said.

“Litigators will continue to fight for their individual clients, raising all the possible issues they can. Activists will seize on a few of those cases because they illustrate the broader problems that the death penalty presents,” he said.

Nearly 1 million people signed an online petition against the execution.

Despite attracting international attention, the case generated little comment from U.S. politicians, Republicans and Democrats alike.

Supporters of the death penalty, such as Kent Scheidegger of the Criminal Justice Legal Foundation in California, said a federal judge a year ago rejected the claims by Davis as “smoke and mirrors.”

“The Davis PR machine managed to whip up a froth of outrage anyway,” he said in a blog post. “Large numbers of people have a grossly-distorted view of the facts of this case, and that is not good.”

## Raoul Wallenberg Awarded Gold Medal



WASHINGTON, DC — Community and legislative leaders gathered in the U.S. Capitol to announce legislation to award Raoul Wallenberg posthumously with a Congressional Gold Medal. The gathering was hosted by the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission (RWCCC), and is a project spearheaded by the Friedlander Group. (L-R): Eric Fusfield, Director of Legislative Affairs at B'nai B'rith International, Board Member; the Honorable Yitzchok (Jules) Fleischer; Jonathan J. Rikoon, Luncheon Master of Ceremonies; Senator and co-chairman of the Helsinki Commission Ben Cardin; Board Member Leon Goldenberg; Kenneth S. Abramowitz, Luncheon Chair; Ezra Friedlander, CEO of the Friedlander Group and spokesman for RWCCC; Board Member Ben Hoffman.

## Tumbling Satellite Expected To Miss North America

CAPE CANAVERAL, FLORIDA (REUTERS) – A defunct NASA satellite the size of a bus that is expected to fall to Earth today will likely miss North America, NASA said.

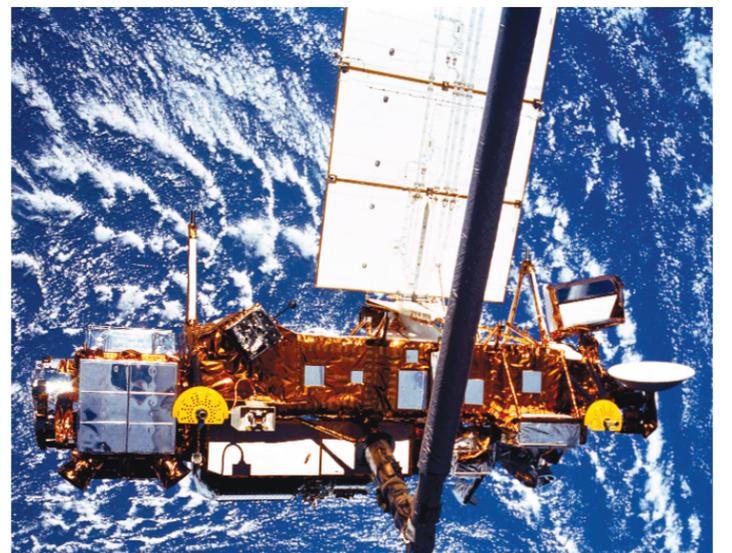
The agency’s 13,000-pound Upper Atmosphere Research Satellite, or UARS, has been slowly tumbling from orbit since its mission ended in 2005. It is expected to re-enter Earth’s atmosphere and break apart on today.

Most of the debris will incinerate as it plows through the air, but about 26 pieces, weighing a total of about 1,100 pounds, are expected to survive the fall and land somewhere on Earth.

Because the science satellite is tumbling, NASA and the U.S. Air Force, which tracks space debris, are not yet able to make an exact prediction about when and where UARS will return to Earth.

With 75 percent of the planet covered by water and vast regions of desert and other uninhabited regions, NASA said the odds that a person will be hit by a piece of debris from UARS are about 1-in-3,200.

The satellite flies over most of



REUTERS/NASA/Handout/Files

The Upper Atmosphere Research Satellite (UARS) is deployed by the Space Shuttle Discovery (STS-48).

the world as it orbits between 57 degrees north and 57 degrees south of the equator. Its altitude yesterday was about 115 miles above the planet.

NASA said on its website yesterday that re-entry was expected sometime this afternoon.

“The satellite will not be passing over North America during that time period. It is still too

early to predict the time and location of re-entry with any more certainty, but predictions will become more refined in the next 24 to 36 hours.”

The 35-foot-long, 15-foot diameter satellite was launched into orbit aboard a space shuttle in 1991 to study ozone and other chemicals in the planet’s atmosphere.

## Death Toll in Cantaloupe Outbreak Rises to 8

WASHINGTON (AP) – The death toll has risen to eight in an outbreak of listeria traced to Colorado-grown cantaloupes, officials said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that a person in Maryland died from eating the tainted produce. Four deaths have been reported in New Mexico and two in Colorado, and one person has died in Oklahoma.

The CDC said 55 people in 14 states have now been confirmed as sickened from eating the cantaloupes. On Monday, the CDC reported four deaths and 35 illnesses in 10 states.

The death count — the highest in a known food outbreak since tainted peanuts were linked to nine deaths almost three years ago — could go even higher. The CDC said illnesses in several other states potential-

ly connected to the outbreak were under investigation.

The illnesses have been reported in California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Colorado has the most illnesses with 14 sickened, followed by New Mexico with 10, Texas with nine, and Oklahoma with eight.

The outbreak has been traced to cantaloupes from Jensen Farms in Holly, Colo., which recalled the tainted produce last week. The Food and Drug Administration said Monday that it had found listeria in samples of Jensen Farms’ cantaloupes taken from a Denver-area store and on samples taken from equipment and cantaloupes at the farm’s packing facility. Tests confirmed that the

samples matched strains of the disease found in those sickened.

Jensen Farms said the recalled Rocky Ford-brand cantaloupes were shipped from July 29 through Sept. 10 to Illinois, Wyoming, Tennessee, Utah, Texas, Colorado, Minnesota, Kansas, New Mexico, North Carolina, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Arizona, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.

The FDA said it is possible the company distributed to other states as well.