

PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 175/04 (AMR 51/084/2004, 18 May 2004) - Death penalty

USA (Maryland) Steven Howard Oken (m), white, aged 42

Steven Oken was executed in Maryland shortly after 9pm local time on 17 June 2004. He was sentenced to death in 1991 for the 1987 rape and murder of 20-year-old Dawn Marie Garvin. He was the first person executed in Maryland since November 1998.

On 15 June, a federal judge granted Steven Oken an indefinite stay of execution after his lawyers challenged the lethal injection process and the state failed to provide the necessary information about that process in a timely fashion. On 16 June, the US Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit refused to overturn the stay. The state appealed to the US Supreme Court, which overturned the stay on the evening of 16 June.

Governor Robert Ehrlich denied clemency on 17 June. In a letter to Steven Oken's lawyers, the governor wrote: "Upon full consideration of the materials and other presentations to me, it is my decision not to overrule the judicial determinations of the sentence of death imposed upon Steven Oken, and this pursuant to my authority as Governor of Maryland, the Petition for Commutation is hereby denied."

Steven Oken became the 30th person to be put to death in the USA this year, and the 915th since executions resumed there in 1977. Maryland accounts for four of these executions.

No further action is requested. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.