

National News

Half of All Executions Took Place in Texas

So far this year, 90% of the executions in the United States took place in the South, and 50% of them in Gov. George W. Bush's Texas, the Death Penalty Information Center reports. The Aug. 16 execution of John Satterwhite in Texas marked the 60th execution this year, 55 of which have occurred in the South. Of these, 29 have occurred in George W. Bush's Texas, with three more scheduled for August alone. Last year, the United States set a post-1976 record of 99 executions.

Prior to Satterwhite's execution, the European Union under its French presidency, joined by Sweden, the next president, wrote a letter to Governor Bush urging him to commute Satterwhite's execution. The letter stated that executing the man would violate the United Nations Economic and Social Council Resolution 1989/64 of May 1989, and would be contrary to the UN's Commission on Human Rights' Resolution 2000/65, which specifically urges all states that still maintain the death penalty not to execute those suffering from any form of mental disorder. Satterwhite was both mentally ill and mentally retarded.

Gore, Sr.'s Civil Rights Record Exposed

The *Washington Times* on Aug. 17 covered a story that *EIR* readers have known about since our issue of Sept. 10, 1999: that, contrary to the lying claims of Al Gore, Jr., his father was no "fighter for civil rights," but actually voted with the segregationists against the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The lead editorial in the *Times*, titled "Al Gore and Family," reports:

"Repeatedly, Mr. Gore has been recalling his father as a hero in the civil rights wars of the 1960s. Throughout the convention in Los Angeles, moreover, the Democratic Party, in a bit of historical revisionism, has been extolling the 1964 Civil Rights Act as

the party's greatest achievement. Indeed, the Democratic Party platform asserts, 'Passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was one of the proudest moments of our nation's history and a sterling testament to our aspirations as a people.'

"But the very month President Clinton graduated from high school, the U.S. Senate was in the midst of a 57-day filibuster designed to prevent the 1964 Civil Rights Act from even coming to a vote. On June 10, 1964, 20 Southern Democratic senators voted to continue the filibuster. Sen. Albert Gore, Sr. was one of them, despite a personal plea from President Lyndon Johnson. The filibuster was finally defeated—no thanks to Mr. Gore's father, who, once again embracing the segregationist wing of his party, proceeded to vote against the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which passed nonetheless.

"Mr. Gore never seems to explain this version of his father's record, which he continues to revise for his own political benefit."

The whole story was exposed in the above-mentioned *EIR* article by Dennis Speed, "Al Gore, Jr. Caught in Another Lie: Gore, Sr. Opposed Civil Rights."

Opposition Grows To Jailing of Wen Ho Lee

A nuclear weapons consultant to Los Alamos National Laboratory, John Richter, told an Aug. 16 bail hearing for jailed nuclear physicist Wen Ho Lee, a former Los Alamos lab employee who is being held without bond on charges of violating security regulations, that "I think keeping him locked up is much more injurious to the reputation of the United States." Richter, according to the Aug. 17 *Washington Post*, said that the data Lee had downloaded from computers at Los Alamos would not harm U.S. security, even if they did fall into the hands of a foreign power. It would have "no deleterious effect," because no one could build a sophisticated nuclear warhead like America's miniaturized W-88 simply on the basis of the computer simulation codes in question.

Meanwhile, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* wrote in an editorial on Aug. 19 that the government's case against Wen Ho Lee

"may be going up in smoke."

"The case against nuclear scientist Wen Ho Lee has always had an odd, disconnected feeling to it," the editorial states, "as if something was missing, something not known that fueled the aggressive nature of the prosecution and a judge's decision to keep Lee in jail. Now we know what was missing—at least in regard to the judge's ruling. It was the truth."

Referring to the attempts to get the Taiwan-born scientist out on bail, the editors cite the rapidly changing testimony of FBI agent Robert Messemer. Messemer testified previously that Lee had failed to disclose his contacts with Chinese scientists during an authorized trip to Beijing in 1986. But, when confronted with the fact that Lee had filed a report on the trip, Messemer admitted that he had not consulted the report. The agent had previously testified that Lee had failed to disclose correspondence with Chinese scientists, allegations that were refuted when Lee's lawyers presented a transcript of an FBI interview last year in which that correspondence was discussed. Messemer previously testified that Lee had sent letters to "various foreign institutes—in scary places like France and Switzerland—seeking a job," the editorial states, but the FBI has no evidence such letters ever existed.

The editorial reminds the reader that the files that Dr. Lee downloaded into his personal computer were not even classified at the time, and concludes: "It is increasingly apparent that Lee is the victim of merciless and racism-tinged scapegoating. He had the misfortune to be a native of Taiwan and to get in the way of anti-China security hysteria unleashed by a gang of House Republican fanatics."

Thurman Role on AIDS Noted in South Africa

President Clinton said in Michigan on Aug. 15, where he was campaigning for Al Gore, that "AIDS is now the leading cause of death in Africa, and increasingly threatens Asia and the former Soviet Union. It is reversing hard-won advances in life expectancy and economic growth, and it imperils the stabil-

BUDGET CUTS have damaged Federal firefighting capability, according to Lester Rosenkrance, the fire program director of the Bureau of Land Management, in a January memo. The cuts have limited BLM fire preparedness budgets to less than 85% of their previous efficiency level, he said. "We knowingly ask our firefighters to work longer hours in more dangerous circumstances. To do so, in the name of budget cuts, is simply unconscionable."

PRESIDENT CLINTON signed a bill on Aug. 19 to create a global AIDS Trust Fund, but the amounts of money proposed are insignificant. The World Bank AIDS Trust Fund will include \$300 million for the U.S. AID program of education, voluntary testing, and other care for people in Africa; \$50 million in new funding for the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations; \$10 million for the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative; and \$60 million to fight tuberculosis.

COLUMBIA/HCA, the largest hospital corporation in America, will close San Jose, California's only downtown hospital by 2005. This will leave one hospital for the entire east side of San Jose, which houses the majority non-white populations with the lowest incomes in the county, the largest number of at-risk seniors, and sizeable numbers of homeless people.

TWENTY-FOUR STATES with relatively low electricity rates, members of the Low-Cost Electricity State Initiative, are lobbying Congress to oppose any Federally mandated electricity deregulation. They are being spurred on by the electricity crisis on the West Coast.

ROBERT BORK, the former Federal judge who championed the impeachment of President Clinton long before anyone had ever heard of Monica Lewinsky, now says that an indictment of Clinton after he leaves office would set a bad precedent and should be avoided.

ity and security of nations. Sandra Thurman, who currently presides over the White House National AIDS Policy Office, will use America's growing efforts as leverage to encourage other countries to expand financial commitments" to fight the disease. The statement was reported by the South African Press Agency (SAPA) on Aug. 15, under the headline "Clinton Names First U.S. Envoy on AIDS."

Speaking at the AIDS conference in Durban, South Africa in early July, Thurman said: "It is true that we will never win the battle against HIV/AIDS unless we reduce poverty. But it is also true that even in the absence of poverty, we still have HIV/AIDS." Thurman said that South Africa has to make use of every opportunity it has to fight the disease. "We have a brief window of opportunity to turn the tide here in South Africa and elsewhere, but that window is closing fast. Every single day brings an avalanche of new infections, especially among the poor," she said. She added that the United States saluted South African President Thabo Mbeki's pledge to intensify South Africa's efforts to combat HIV/AIDS.

Commercial Jets Used for Target Practice?

An account of what may have happened to cause the July 1996 crash of TWA Flight 800 was provided by an unusual source on July 20: a columnist for Biztravel.com, who says that he was told the following by an executive of an international airline, the day after the downing of TWA 800.

"It was a missile," the executive, himself a former military man, said. "Friendly fire. We kept telling the military this would happen one day. And the bastards just kept doing it and doing it."

His theory was as follows, as recounted by columnist Joe Brancatelli: "TWA 800 took off, it was picked up on radar by U.S. fighters, and then made the 'target' by a giddy pilot. As so often happens, this military pilot was playing an ad hoc war game: lock onto a commercial jet, make believe it is an enemy plane, then blow it out of the sky. Only this time, the executive suggested,

something went terribly wrong and the game turned real.

"For years, we've been complaining about the military locking onto commercial jets and using them for target practice," the executive said. "We go down to the Pentagon and bitch and they promise it'll never happen again."

Brancatelli adds that no airline executive with whom he has discussed this conversation, thinks that the allegations are strange, and they all worry about how many times *their* aircraft have been "targets" of military jets playing war games.

McDermott Warns of AIDS Chaos in Africa

U.S. Rep. Jim McDermott (D-Wash.) warned on Aug. 11 that if AIDS in Africa is not brought under control, the United States "will become involved in all kinds of chaos that will happen in Africa," the South African agency SAPA reported. Speaking at the end of a five-nation HIV/AIDS fact-finding mission, McDermott called AIDS a threat to stability on the continent, and said that it was in the best interest of the United States that stability in Africa be maintained.

McDermott was reported to be "critical of the way he perceived some African governments were implementing programs to combat AIDS." He is quoted: "Programs controlled from the top down are not working. We have to get to the grassroots with our aid. The message has to come from the top, but it has to empower the people at the bottom." He conceded, however, that he did not know what to do about the problem, except to "educate" people. (*EIR's* cover story on Aug. 11 has a comprehensive approach to finding an effective solution.)

McDermott, who is chairman of the U.S. Congressional Task Force on AIDS and co-chairman of the Africa Trade and Investment Caucus, said that in October he will put a bill before Congress to ask for money for AIDS education and testing programs aimed at the grassroots. He said that this would be in addition to the \$1 billion already spent by the United States to fight AIDS in Africa.

His tour took in Nigeria, South Africa, Angola, Swaziland, and Botswana.