

# I GUESS THE COMFY CHAIR WAS NOT AN OPTION

This will be an uncharacteristically short post for Emptywheel, but I would like to note the news yesterday that Utah death row inmate Ronny Lee Gardner has chosen to be executed by firing squad. Due to the age of his case, Gardner had the option of either lethal injection or firing squad. After being supplied with technical descriptions of how both death methods are administered, Gardner designated firing squad as his choice. From the New York Times:

Ronnie Lee Gardner had a quarter-century to ponder his choice, whether to die by lethal injection or take four bullets in the heart.

In a Utah courtroom Friday, 25 years after he was sentenced to death for killing a man during an escape attempt, he declared his preference to the judge: "I would like the firing squad, please."

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Procedures for the last two such executions in Utah, which officials said would largely be followed with Mr. Gardner, had five unidentified officers using identical .30-30 hunting rifles from a distance of about 20 feet. One rifle – which one unknown to the shooters – was loaded with a blank. The condemned man was strapped into a seat while wearing a black jumpsuit and a hood, with a white cloth circle placed over his heart to provide a target.

Unlike many fellow liberals and progressives, I do not have any particular outright ideological or philosophical objection to the death penalty. That is not, however, to say I endorse its wholesale and common use as occurs in many

jurisdictions (can you say Texas); I absolutely do not. Rather my objections are strident based on the fact it is economically inefficient – it simply costs the government and taxpayers far more to kill death eligible inmates than to imprison them for life. I also think it is far too easy to impose the death penalty and it happens in too many cases where there are sufficient questions of identification and other germane facts; the death penalty should never be imposed where there is any question whatsoever outstanding.

All of the above said, in situations where death has been properly and legally imposed, I really don't care how it is done. If Ronny Lee Gardner wants the firing squad, so be it. There is always fascinating discussion to be had on this subject, and I thought I would throw open the floor for just that.