

Stun gun's use halted after prisoner's death

RICHMOND (AP) — Virginia prison officials imposed a moratorium on the use of the Ultron II stun gun after an autopsy raised questions about the role of the device in an inmate's death.

Lawrence Frazier, a Connecticut inmate being held in the infirmary at Wallens Ridge state prison, died July 4 after he was shocked with the stun gun during a struggle with guards.

An autopsy completed this week concludes that Frazier died of "cardiac arrhythmia due to stress while being restrained following stunning with Ultron II device. The manner of death is natural," said Robert Holloway, regional administrator of the state Medical Examiner's Office in Richmond.

That finding is at odds with last summer's review, commissioned by the state Department of Corrections, that determined the stun gun had nothing to do with Frazier's death.

"Prior to the receipt of the medical examiner's report, all indications were that Frazier died of nat-

ural causes, brought about by his underlying chronic medical condition," Corrections Director Ron Angelone said in a written statement.

The Department of Corrections has not said publicly how many times Frazier was shocked with the stun gun during a June 29 disturbance in the Wallens Ridge infirmary, or how long he was tied hand-and-foot to a bed before he was found unconscious.

Frazier, a 50-year-old convicted rapist, lapsed into a coma and died five days later at a Richmond hospital.

The Ultron II is a hand-held device that delivers 50,000 volts of electricity. The department has issued a statewide moratorium on the use of the Ultron II "until issues regarding the device are clarified," Mr. Angelone said.

The FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice are investigating allegations of excessive force against inmates at Wallens Ridge and Virginia's other super-maximum-security prison at Red Onion.