

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

LOTTO

FANTASY 5

03, 07, 11, 16, 33

DAILY 3

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Evening picks: 9, 6, 8

DAILY DERBY

1st Place: 03, Hot Shot
2nd Place: 06, Whirl Win
3rd Place: 04, Big Ben
Race time: 1:48:95



NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

In April, students at the all-women's Smith College (Northampton, Mass.) voted to replace all of the female pronouns in the student constitution with gender-neutral pronouns. Although males are not admitted to Smith, many students apparently believe that using "she" and "her" is inappropriate for students who were admitted as females but who later identify themselves as "transgendered." According to Dean Maureen Mahoney, a student admitted as a female but who later comes out as a male would still be welcomed at Smith.



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"There's nothing for a case of nerves than a case of beer."

— Joan Goldstein



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City Hall deficit grows to \$16 million

State cutbacks are to blame, officials say

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

City Hall's \$12.1 million deficit grew by another \$4 million last week when Gov. Gray Davis released the state's revised budget.

With the city's budget sessions just a week away, officials announced Monday the deficit for next year is \$16.1 million. The city released its proposed budget this week and the Santa Monica City Council will adopt a final budget in June.

The city's budget deficit was estimated in January to be \$9.1 million. In February that estimate grew to \$11.2 million and when the United States was engaged in a full-blown war with Iraq, city officials in April revised the deficit to \$12 million, mostly because of revenue losses. At the time, they predicted the state's shortfall would be about \$4 million.

Funding from the state govern-

ment to cities throughout California will be cut back this year and upcoming years, leaving Santa Monica officials wondering how hard the hammer will fall. They already have some good guesses.

"We're fearful that cities such as Santa Monica, that are relatively better off, are going to lose additional revenues (from the state)."

— MIKE DENNIS
City finance director

Santa Monica will face a deficit of \$20.2 million in 2004-2005 and \$28.1 million in 2005-2006, officials predict.

"Basically the city has got three pretty tough years ahead of it," said City Finance Director Mike Dennis. "This is the

See DEFICIT, page 5

Activist personals go online

BY RON HARRIS

Associated Press Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — The ad might read something like this: "Tall, blonde, 'No Blood For Oil' activist seeks same. Help me hoist my banner before the cops close in at the next rally. Let's have fair-trade coffee sometime."

Online personal ads such as this fictitious one are in the offing thanks to ActForLove.org, a Web site matchmaking service launched Tuesday that looks to connect the hearts of progressive activists.

On its Web site, the fledgling Washington, D.C.-based service describes itself as the place to "Take action. Get action."

Pining activists can enter their profile and photos for free. Their profiles will be lumped in with 1 million other singles, activists or not, from personals compiled by Salon, The Onion and Jane Magazine — but advanced search features can filter out those less

politically inclined.

There's a \$1 fee to make initial contact with a potential match, said founder John Hlinko. A minimum \$25 worth of credits is required to begin contacting other members through the service, Hlinko said.

What will be the political leanings of participants?

"I'd say it's mostly progressive, to be honest," said Hlinko, who welcomed conservatives, too. "We love the idea of a good healthy debate."

Tim Kingston, a spokesman for the human rights group Global Exchange, said activists are a natural target audience for matters of the heart.

"Global Exchange has been involved in organizing many demonstrations and many campaigns and many relationships have also ensued," Kingston said. "Remember the old slogan, 'Make love, not war.'"

Polo anyone?



Jason Auslander/Special to the Daily Press
Polo season has begun at Will Rogers State Park. Polo matches are held every Saturday and Sunday.

Man accused of bribery in City Hall pleads not guilty

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Daily Press Staff Writer

A City Hall building inspector accused of soliciting bribes pleaded not guilty to charges of bribery on Tuesday.

Martin Aguirre, 29, appeared in front of Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Harkavy with his Santa Monica attorney, Dan Brookman. He entered his plea of not guilty to two counts of bribery.

Aguirre, a resident of Downey, was charged with the felony counts by the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office earlier this month.

Authorities allege Aguirre took a total of \$1,600 in cash from a Santa Monica woman and a local business owner in two separate incidents.

Aguirre allegedly told them they were violating the city's building codes but said he would ignore the infractions if they paid him cash.

The preliminary hearing is set for July 8 in downtown Los Angeles Superior Court. Aguirre, who posted bail after his Feb. 10 arrest, will

remain free on the condition that he not make contact with any witnesses involved in the case, said Richard Ceballos, deputy district attorney in the public integrity division of the DA's Office.

Aguirre was arrested by Santa Monica Police in a sting operation in February after he allegedly solicited a bribe from a business owner on Ocean Park Boulevard who was renovating his property.

Aguirre allegedly told the businessman he didn't have the proper construction permits but said he would ignore the issue if he paid him \$1,000.

When Aguirre came back to the business owner a few days later to collect the cash, Santa Monica Police officers were waiting for him. The business owner, who the DA has declined to identify, had reported the alleged bribe solicitation to the SMPD. The SMPD provided marked currency to the business owner and then made the transaction with Aguirre, who was

See AGUIRRE, page 5



Martin Aguirre



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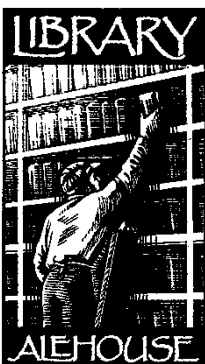
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♈ ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★★ Head where your friends are, whether you're in the office or at home. Groups prove to be unusually beneficial. Look toward moving a project off the back burner. Touch base with those in your immediate life. Tonight: Lead the parade.

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Take your bows, understanding what works for you. Sometimes you don't get the results you desire. Other times you do. Today, if you push hard enough, you'll get exactly what you want. Stay on top of a project, knowing what you expect. Tonight: Prepare for a late night.

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★★ Experiment and try something totally different. Your mind can be unusually dynamic. Use it! Others might have difficulty at first following a concept but will respond if you walk them step by step through the process. A partner does a reversal. Tonight: Reach for the stars.

♋ CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★★ A partner invites you down a path that could be risky. As long as you're both in this together, you might feel more secure. Reorganize your work with an eye to efficiency and greater flexibility. You will like the end results. Listen to feedback. Tonight: Dinner for two.

♌ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★★ Others run with the ball. Be wise and let this happen. Consider what might be workable and right-on. You're full of fire and get-up-and-go, but so are others. Others could be as creative as you if given half a chance. Loosen up with a decision. Tonight: Go along with another's request.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Pace yourself and take your time. Your imagination might go a little haywire, but great ideas come from this type of brainstorming. Take strong action and test the waters. You might need to revamp a little here and there, but it all works out. Tonight: Laugh away.

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★★ Let your imagination take you in a new direction. What you see and what might come up for you could be opposites. Use your high libido energy to create greater security for yourself. Love and life mix; just be careful how you blend them. Work is work. Tonight: Play away.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Evaluate and consider what might be obvious to others. Put an idea into words before acting on it if you want to keep down the anger and fighting on the home front. Think "options" and rethink your budget. You have it within yourself to make your immediate circle content. Tonight: Happy as can be.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Investigate possibilities, preparing to restructure your day's direction. A premonition will force you to take action. Demonstrate a newfound flexibility. Consider your options more carefully that surround a child or loved one. Tonight: Visit with your pals.

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ What seems like a strong investment might need some checking before you go with it. Walk a conservative line for a while longer. Don't allow pressure to dominate your actions. Trust your judgment, and follow through. Tonight: Treat yourself to a new summer item.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★★ Use some of that get-up-and-go to realize a long-term desire. Your goal might be a lot closer than you realize. Take the first step, and before you know it, you've hit a home run. A friend might be reactive. Take your time. Tonight: Celebrate the moment.

♓ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ By holding back and processing, you will gain. Someone close takes the lead and heads in a new direction. Your sense of well-being comes through thinking carefully. A boss might have a tyrannical side to him or her. Careful. Tonight: Get a good night's sleep. You're going to need it!

CORRECTION — The rates for the Ambrose Hotel were inaccurately reported in the May 20 edition. The rates run between \$160 and \$250 a night.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

SMC academic program gets national honor

By Daily Press staff

A special Santa Monica College program designed to encourage students to complete their coursework, improve their grades and stay in school has won a national award.

The National Council of Student Development, an affiliate of the American Association of Community Colleges, gave the 2003 "Best Practice Award" to SMC's Student Success Project, citing its effectiveness, quality, significance to the field and adaptability of strategies to other colleges.

"We're proud to have received this award," counselor Esau Tovar said. "We've worked hard over the past few years to design strategies that will keep students in college and on a path of success. We hope our program can be a model for other colleges."

The program was formally started in fall 1999 and has included about 850 students, all first-time freshmen, who were randomly chosen over its four-year history. Follow-up studies have shown:

- Approximately 90 percent of all the students in the program successfully completed their courses, compared to an overall rate of 68 percent of first-time SMC students.

- Students in the program had higher grade point averages than the SMC student population at large — 2.46 versus 2.35.

- Eighty percent of students in the program stayed in school the next semester, compared to 53 percent of the first-time student population at large.

- Twenty-eight percent of the students in the program went on academic probation, compared to 35 percent of first-time freshmen campuswide.

Tovar said the probationary rate, though lower than the campus at large, was still of great concern. Consequently, the program is now focusing its attention on probationary students.

The program employed a variety of strategies, including:

- Tutoring.
- Extended new student orientations, generally eight- or four-hour sessions, compared to the typical two-hour session. The sessions included ice breakers, role playing and more extensive academic counseling.

- Orientation sessions that also included "significant others," such as parents, siblings, boyfriends and girlfriends.

- Close tracking of students' academic progress by counselors, with extensive follow-up individual counseling throughout the semester.

- The involvement of professors, mostly English and math, who worked with the counselors and incorporated collaborative learning techniques in the classroom, assessed student learning and worked with first-time students to maximize their success.

- Extracurricular activities such as social events, theater excursions (linked to classroom material) and informal gatherings.

Assembly passes Pavley identity theft protection bill

By Daily Press staff

The full Assembly passed an identity theft protection bill authored by Assemblymember Fran Pavley on May 12.

The bill requires credit lenders to verify information on credit applications such as a person's name and social security number match the consumer's credit report. Current law requires that only the address be verified.

The Federal Trade Commission reported that consumer fraud complaints soared 73 percent last year. Identity theft accounts for 43 percent of the crimes tallied.

"Law enforcement cites sloppy lending practices as the number one preventative measure needed to stop identity theft," said Pavley in a press release. "Consumers deserve this added protection."



There were fun, waist- to chest-high waves in Malibu on Tuesday and you can expect more of the same today.

A mixture of fading NW wind swell and leftover SW swell has hit the coast. Northern L.A. spots should see two-foot-to-three-foot surf at many exposed spots and some bigger sets at best NW/combo breaks. South Bay spots see mainly wind swell with surf in the two-foot-to-three-foot range, with best breaks getting some sets to shoulder-high levels.

Today the water is:

57°

Sunrise: 6:00 a.m.
Sunset: 7:58 p.m.

	LOW TIDE				HIGH TIDE			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	5:10	-1.6	4:21	1.9	11:42	3.9	10:39	6.6
SUNDAY	6:04	-1.5	5:07	2.3	(12:48)	3.6	11:26	6.2
MONDAY	7:02	-1.2	6:02	2.7	N/A	N/A	2:05	3.5
TUESDAY	8:07	-0.8	7:22	3.0	12:19	5.6	3:30	3.6
WEDNESDAY	9:15	-0.4	9:13	3.0	1:23	5.0	4:46	3.8
THURSDAY	10:20	-0.1	10:57	2.6	2:43	4.5	5:40	4.1
FRIDAY	11:16	0.2	N/A	N/A	4:12	4.1	6:20	4.5

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The QLine

Santa Monica College announced last month that because of severe financial cutbacks on the state level, it is too broke to throw the city's only July 4th fireworks celebration. The \$50,000 event, which the college has put on for 20 years, won't happen this year.

Mayor Richard Bloom has spearheaded an effort to keep the event going and brought the issue in front of the City Council last week. There has been discussion about looking to the community

to help pay for it. A fund-raising effort is now underway.

This week, Q-Line wants to know:

"Is it important for Santa Monica to have a Fourth of July celebration? Would you help pay for it?"

Call (310) 285-8106 with your response before Thursday at 5 p.m. We'll print them in Friday's paper. Please limit your comments to a minute or less; it might help to think first about the wording of your response.



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OPINION

LETTERS

Parcel tax a sound investment

Editor:

Measure S is a sound investment for our community and the value of our property. The Santa Monica-Malibu public schools are terrific by any standard.

The district has consistently delivered excellent education through strong leadership and inspired teaching, resulting in high academic achievement, and accomplished sports and cultural programs. Most people in our cities take seriously their responsibility to provide a quality public education to our next generation. They also understand that the district's current financial problems are a direct result of the state's budget crisis and not district mismanagement of funds.

The Santa Monica-Malibu Board of Education cares deeply about our children and together with the district administration, works hard to manage money and prioritize effectively. They are assisted in that effort by an exceptionally well qualified citizen oversight committee headed by Michael Rich, vice-president of the prestigious Rand Corp. Consequently, outside auditors have consistently rated the district as "outstanding" in its financial management practices. In response to the state budget meltdown, a broad cross-section of our community members have rallied together to try to preserve the excellence of our public schools.

We are fortunate that our community leaders had the foresight to recommend that the school board place Measure S on the ballot on June 3. A district-wide parcel tax, Measure S will restore approximately 50 percent of funds lost by state cuts.

Altruistic reasons abound to justify voting yes on Measure S. The most compelling financial reason belongs to Santa Monica-Malibu property owners: A cut in the quality of public education is a cut in value of our real estate. Quoting a Princeton professor in a recent "Forbes" magazine article: "The attractiveness of schooling helps prop up property values. The two are completely intertwined."

We know that in Santa Monica-Malibu good public schools do in fact significantly increase the value of residential real estate prices. The same house that costs \$300,000 in Mar Vista will cost \$500,000 in Santa Monica, a short distance away.

There is also a direct correlation in Malibu between the resurgence of families moving into the community due to the excellent reputation of the public schools and property values. Savvy homebuyers, whether they have children or not, ask: "How are the public schools?" A positive answer results in increased property and homes values.

According to a January 2003 National Bureau of Economic Research paper, a \$1 increase in per pupil spending increases housing values by \$20. At \$225 per parcel per

year for just six years, Measure S will not only maintain our schools' core curricula, but also the economic value of our homes. Measure S is a very smart return on investment.

Vince Muselli
Santa Monica

Failure of parcel tax will spell disaster

Editor:

The future of our city is at risk. If Measure S fails, Santa Monica schools will be thrown into disarray. I should know. I've been teaching in the SMMUSD district for 29 years.

Think of a man asked to build a house. Imagine his only tool is a paintbrush. The man may manage to create a picture of a house, but this image will be two-dimensional, unable to support weight or offer shelter. So it will be for students and teachers. Without the proper tools — books, paper, desks, microscopes, calculators, computers, libraries — we can create a poor picture of education. The doors may remain open and classes continue to meet, but learning will suffer.

Back in the 17th century Cotton Mather proclaimed that "A good school deserves to be called the very salt of the town that hath it." For years Santa Monica's schools have indeed been the salt of our town. Generations of residents have sent their children to the same schools they attended, sometimes to the same teachers. The community supported its schools because it understood that without schools "wherein the youth may by able masters be taught the things that are necessary to qualify them for future serviceableness," a community founders, even one as rich in tradition as Santa Monica.

Mather goes on to explain that "the Devil cannot give a greater blow to the reformation among us, than by causing schools to languish under discouragements." Unfortunately, that is exactly what will happen if Measure S fails. How can a teacher hold her students to high standards when she has no books? Can you imagine a greater discouragement than the dismantling of Santa Monica's music program?

"Where schools are not vigorously and honourably encouraged, whole colonies will sink apace into a degenerate and contemptible condition, and at last become horribly barbarous. If you would not betray your posterity into the very circumstances of savages, let Schools have more encouragement." Invest in posterity. Support your schools.

Carol Jago
Santa Monica

Vertebrates long thought extinct discovered in Texas



INCITES

By Ed Silverstein

AUSTIN, Texas — In a breakthrough discovery researchers have uncovered evidence of Democrats with spines. These elusive creatures — until now thought to have been extinct — could revolutionize politics. The evidence also proved a long contested hypothesis that Democrats are in fact mammals, unlike their close relatives, the Republicans, who are widely believed to be part of the reptile family.

Texas Democrats exhausted by the recent demands of growing testicles, immediately left the ongoing legislative session and migrated to Oklahoma for a group vacation. Republicans claim the mass migration was actually caused by recent changes in the political climate that has made Texas too hot for Democrats. Those closer to events suggest that it was actually a brilliant ploy to prevent a Republican mating ritual known as gerrymandering. The ritual is one in which the dominant male, in this case House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, tries to push through a redistricting proposal designed to link distant regions in order to create an environment that promotes population growth of Republican congressmen. Conservationists complain that the increase of seven Republicans would

come at the expense of the Democrats who are already under consideration for inclusion as an endangered species. However, with Democrats flocking north earlier than expected, the House of Representatives finds itself without sufficient members for a quorum, thus disrupting another familiar Republican ritual, public preening.

This has left the Texas GOP squirming. Some have even resorted to stamping their feet, causing scientists to speculate that someday they might evolve into primates. Despite the massive budget deficit, Republicans mobilized Texas rangers, along with state troopers, to arrest the stampeding Democrats, only to discover that Oklahoma is a protected refuge outside of their jurisdiction. Outmaneuvered, Republicans attempted to shame Democrats into returning home by putting their faces on milk cartons as well as playing cards like those used in Iraq. Of course it was to no avail for, as any third-year biology student could have told them, the mapping of the human genome has proven once and for all that politicians lack the necessary gene to feel shame.

Lizz Ard, noted GOP animal behaviorist, believes that the aggressive behavior being exhibited by state Republicans is a result of their recent diet of sour grapes and humble pie. Ard further theorized that Republicans consider dirty tricks their province and will fiercely guard their territory. She offers as proof the recent Republican takeover of Texas state politics. The coup led by alpha male rat-

tlesnake, Karl Rove, the mastermind (and possibly only mind) behind Bush's success, widely used smear tactics, character assassination and false rumors to wound rival Democratic prey. Another of Rove's favored hunting techniques is the push poll in which carrion eating pollsters contact voters and ask leading questions such as "If you learned that John McCain had a homosexual relationship with a 12-year-old boy and used your taxes to pay off the boys parents how would that affect your vote?"

Push polls incapacitate the prey, not with a frontal factual attack, but by becoming fully submerged in the muck, then ambushing their victim with deceptive implication. There have been accusations that Rove has used more odious methods such as his alleged parasitic association with Greg Rampton, an FBI bottom feeder whose investigative diet consisted entirely of Democratic reputations and careers. But these and other charges will be more fully explored in an upcoming Scientific Americana Journal article on Rove titled: "Homo Defileus — Genius or Human Contaminate?"

Most Texas newspapers, including those usually favorable to Republicans, have come out in support of the Spiny Democrats, as they have been (just now) dubbed. Two other rare species: The Lone Star moderate and Texas independent, have also sided with the Dems, outraged that they were lured into what they thought was the Garden of Eden by deceptive Republican campaign promises

to engage in non-partisan cooperation while pursuing a moderate agenda. Instead, Republicans have embraced far right policies and have attempted to balance massive budget deficits by constricting programs such as school spending and health care for impoverished children, rather than raise taxes.

Whatever the final outcome in Texas, the more important issue is how do we protect this new species of Democrat from becoming extinct? Some scientists have suggested taking their genes and implanting them into their Washington counterparts, while others feel it would be better to relocate the Texas Democrats to Washington. However, most scientists are not optimistic, citing exploding populations and competition from more aggressive species such as lobbyists, trade groups, PACs and political hacks, which create an environment that is not conducive to the survival of creatures with backbones.

In a related story, representatives for mammals and reptiles have filed lawsuits demanding that both Republicans and Democrats cease and desist from making claims that they belong to either class. Acting as spokesperson for the two groups, Ralph Nader reiterated his belief that both parties are actually members of a lower order of insects.

(Ed Silverstein is a freelance writer evolving in Santa Monica. Comments can be e-mailed to: edsincites@aol.com).

LOCAL



City budget sessions will address \$16 million deficit

DEFICIT, from page 1

toughest situation I've seen in the 20 years I've been with the city."

Jobs in City Hall will be eliminated, expenditures will be cut, funds will be diverted and revenues will be increased in order to meet the \$353.7 million proposed budget, Dennis said.

"When the dust settles, we're going to be losing about \$4 million (from the state)," Dennis said. "So we've already incorporated that into our estimates."

Though the state's \$38 billion deficit for this year plays into City Hall's shortfall, there are a number of other question marks in Sacramento that are having a detrimental effect on Santa Monica.

Among them are the long-term ramifications to the state of borrowing now to plug its deficit. Also a concern, Dennis said, is the possible effect on Santa Monica of preventative efforts by the state government to avoid a deficit in the future — like taking out loans, which officials worry will put it further in the hole down the road.

"We're fearful that cities such as Santa Monica, that are relatively better off, are going to lose additional revenues (from the state)," Dennis said. "It's highly fluid, very complex and we're just going to have to carefully monitor what happens and make sure our perspective is reflected in the process."

In an effort to reconcile the shortfall, managers throughout City Hall, with the exception of fire and police, were asked earlier this year to cut their departments by 5 percent this year and another 5 percent next year.

The city's proposed budget calls for the further elimination of 31 positions in 2003-2004 and another 19 the year after that, though Dennis said reassignments and early retirements will mean only a handful of people will actually be laid off.

Officials also propose that a portion of the money raised from the hotel bed tax

be used by the city for general operations instead of going to civic redevelopment programs, which would amount to \$1.5 million in revenue.

Another \$1.6 million is expected from reduced spending on capital projects and \$1 million can be recovered by halting capital projects that have already been approved, Dennis said.

"This is a painful period, requiring a strong partnership of council and staff, and our residential and business communities, with sacrifices by all."

— SUSAN MCCARTHY
City manager

Residents and visitors also can expect proposals for increases in business license and development fees, sales taxes, transit taxes, the hotel bed tax, parking fines and meter rates.

A trio of budget planning meetings at City Hall kicks off next week. The meetings, which allow the city manager and department managers to voice suggestions and concerns to the City Council, will be held at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of next week.

After hearing from the public on June 17, the council will adopt a budget for 2003-2004, which begins on July 1.

City officials said this week that the financial crisis will have wide-reaching effects throughout the city.

"This is a painful period, requiring a strong partnership of council and staff, and our residential and business communities, with sacrifices by all," said City Manager Susan McCarthy in a press release.

Alleged bribe solicitor faces up to eight years in prison

AGUIRRE, from page 1

arrested immediately afterwards.

A little more than a month earlier, Aguirre allegedly told a Santa Monica homeowner that her garage was illegally converted into an apartment but he wouldn't red tag her property if she paid him \$3,000 in cash.

Unable to provide the cash, Aguirre allegedly returned to the property a few days later, when he accepted her offer of \$28.75 from her purse and a \$200 child support check, which she cashed at a bank that he accompanied her to. He then told her he would be back in a week to collect more money, the DA alleges. Aguirre again accompanied the woman to the bank, where she gave him another \$300, Ceballos said.

The woman even offered the change out of her daughter's piggy bank and a Toys R Us gift certificate, but Aguirre didn't take it, Ceballos said.

Brookman, Aguirre's attorney, said his client denies all allegations against him. Brookman declined to comment on the specifics of the case.

Aguirre had been a contract employee at City Hall since October with an Ontario-based firm called JAS, which offers contract services to City Hall's building and safety department.

Aguirre worked as both a code compliance inspector and a construction inspector during December, January and the early part of February.

Aguirre's responsibilities included investigating building and safety violations, work permits, maintenance complaints, work-related noise complaints, zoning violations, nuisance complaints, sign violations, outdoor merchandising compliance and construction sites.

Aguirre faces up to eight years in prison and a maximum of \$4,000 in fines for both counts.

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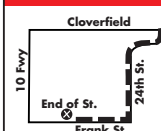


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STATE □ NATIONAL

Government has held fewer than 50 people as material witnesses in war on terror

BY CURT ANDERSON
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department had detained fewer than 50 people as material witnesses without charging them in the war in terror as of January and had gained 47 court-ordered delays in notifying people of search warrants, according to documents released Tuesday.

In addition, the FBI has conducted "fewer than 10" investigations involving visits to Islamic mosques, the Justice Department said. The department also said the FBI does not keep files on information collected at public places or events unless it relates directly to a criminal or terrorist probe.

The new details are part of a 60-page agency response to the House Judiciary Committee's request for information about the prosecution of the war on terror and use of the USA Patriot Act since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Committee Chairman Jim Sensenbrenner, R-Wis., commended the "timing and thoroughness" of the answers, but the panel's top Democrat, Rep. John Conyers of Michigan, said the Justice Department could "have been more forthcoming in terms of the manner in which and how freely the new powers have been used."

The number of material witnesses detained around the country without charges has been a closely guarded secret, with department officials repeatedly insisting that the law prevented the names and circumstances from being made public.

In the documents released Tuesday, Justice officials said that as of January, the number of people detained as material witnesses was fewer than 50, with 90 percent of those detained for 90 days or less and half held for 30 days or less.

The documents do not say how many are still being held as material witnesses, an arrangement prosecutors use with a judge's approval for people believed to have important testimony that might not be obtained otherwise. Sometimes the people are eventually charged, such as the conspiracy and terrorism support case brought in April against software engineer Maher Hawash in Portland, Ore.

The USA Patriot Act, passed by Congress shortly after the 2001 attacks, greatly expanded the government's surveillance and detention powers.

That law was buttressed last year when the secret Foreign Intelligence Surveillance

Court of Review backed the Justice Department's position that prosecutors and the FBI could share intelligence and criminal information involving spies or terrorists. Under previous guidelines, the government's criminal and intelligence sides were barred from directly communicating.

The Justice documents say that ruling led to a review of 4,500 intelligence files to determine if they could help bring criminal charges, with the information "incorporated in numerous cases" that were not further identified.

The Patriot Act also gave prosecutors a uniform standard for asking a judge to allow a delay in notifying the target of a search warrant as long as there is reasonable cause to believe notification might compromise an investigation or jeopardize human life.

The documents say officials had sought and been granted such delays 47 times as of April 1, with an additional 248 extensions granted beyond the usual seven-day delay. Similarly, Justice has been granted authority to delay notification of seizures of property and electronic information 14 of the 15 times the power was requested.

The one time a court denied the authority it was determined that photographs of items kept in a storage unit would be sufficient for the government in a credit card fraud case.

There has been considerable controversy over the FBI's ability to enter mosques and gather information in public places, powers given to agents by Attorney General John Ashcroft in new anti-terrorism guidelines issued a year ago.

The Justice documents say that an informal survey of 45 FBI field offices showed fewer than 10 had conducted investigations in mosques since the Sept. 11 attacks. All were "open preliminary inquiries or full investigations," not simply exercises in collecting intelligence.

The documents also seek to tamp down the notion that the FBI is routinely collecting and keeping data about ordinary Americans. "FBI agents who visit public places and events may not retain any information unless it relates to terrorism or other criminal activity," the documents said.

The Justice Department said it would privately provide the House committee with classified information on the number of Muslim or Arab males detained in FBI sweeps following the attacks. Justice officials also declined to publicly disclose the number of FBI aircraft used in surveillance in the United States and the type of work they do.

State security increased with heightened terror alert

By The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO — California Highway Patrol officers were ordered back to 12-hour shifts Tuesday, while security was increased at the state's bridges, borders and other potential targets.

Gov. Gray Davis ordered the precautions after the Bush administration raised the national terror alert level to orange amid fears the recent wave of terrorist attacks overseas will spread to the United States.

There is no specific threat against California, Davis said. The steps are the same the state took the last time the alert was raised to orange during the Iraq war.

Davis also thanked the federal Homeland Security Department for approving his request last month that the state and local governments be allowed to use a portion of federal homeland security money for overtime expenses during the heightened alert.

INTERNATIONAL



U.S., Britain, Germany temporarily close embassies

BY DONNA ABU-NASR

Associated Press Writer

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — The United States, Britain and Germany temporarily closed their embassies and consulates in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday following warnings of "imminent" terror threats.

A Saudi official said dozens of Muslim militants linked to al-Qaida are believed ready to volunteer for suicide bombings like the ones that targeted Westerners in Riyadh last week.

The Bush administration, meanwhile, raised the national terror alert level to orange on Tuesday amid fears the wave of terrorist attacks overseas will spread to the United States.

Saudi authorities said they were doing all they could to ward off violence and announced new arrests Tuesday.

Saudi security officials said three suspected al-Qaida militants were arrested Monday in the southwestern port of Jiddah following the near-simultaneous May 12 attacks on the outskirts of Riyadh that killed 34 people, including eight Americans, two Britons and nine attackers.

The security officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, gave no details on the arrests and it was unclear whether investigators believe the three men were connected to the May 12 suicide attacks, which officials have linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terror network.

The arrests were in addition to an earlier announcement that four suspects apparently linked to al-Qaida were in custody for the Riyadh car bombings.

"The embassy continues to receive credible information that further terrorist attacks are being planned against unspecified targets in Saudi Arabia," warned a statement posted Tuesday on U.S. Embassy and consulate Web sites.

"In response to information that some strikes may be imminent, the embassy in Riyadh and the consulates in Jiddah and Dhahran will be closed." The statement said diplomatic offices would close Wednesday and reopen Sunday.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said relatives of mission staff and non-emergency personnel were leaving the country. "Those who remain have their movements restricted to essential travel only. Mission children are not going to school," he said.

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said the embassy and consulate closures were "a precaution."

"We have concerns dealing with the security situation there and we are taking the proper steps, the wise steps necessary to protect Americans," he said.

In London, the British Foreign Office announced its embassy in Riyadh, its consulate in Jiddah and a trade office near Dhahran would close over the same period.

The German Foreign Ministry said it was closing its embassy in Riyadh and another mission in Jiddah until the end of the week. No other details were given.

A Saudi official said Tuesday that investigators were aware of about 50 militants, some now dead, believed to belong to three Saudi cells, including the one that carried out the May 12 bombings. Another cell has fled Saudi Arabia and the third is at large in the kingdom, said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The official said the surviving militants were ready to volunteer for more suicide

strikes, were tied to al-Qaida and had hard-core sympathizers numbering "in the low hundreds."

Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Washington, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, said in Riyadh, "there is chatter, a high level of chatter regionally and in other international spots" about possible new attacks in Saudi Arabia or America.

An FBI bulletin sent to state and local law enforcement agencies around the United States said: "The U.S. intelligence community assesses that attacks against U.S. and Western targets overseas are likely; attacks in the United States cannot be ruled out."

"We have concerns dealing with the security situation there and we are taking the proper steps, the wise steps necessary to protect Americans."

— ARI FLEISCHER
White House spokesman

The Riyadh attacks have been seen as not only an attack on U.S. and other Western interests, but also a strike on the Saudi government for its close ties with America and its decision following the 1991 Gulf War to allow American troops to be stationed in Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi-born bin Laden said the U.S. presence defiles the country, which is custodian of Islam's two holiest shrines.

The United States announced last month its air operations base would move from Saudi Arabia to Qatar.

Also Tuesday, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, said his country was increasing security measures to prevent further attacks. Speaking at a news conference, Saud said removing the cause of terrorism was an international responsibility and suggested that resolving the Palestinian issue would remove "a great part of the reasons for terrorism in our region."

Crown Prince Abdullah held a palace reception Tuesday for the families of those killed and wounded in the bombings, and vowed the "apostates" responsible for the attacks would be caught and punished.

"All the necessary steps will be taken to achieve this goal and prevent those hateful people from damaging the kingdom," the official Saudi Press Agency quoted him as saying.

More than 60 FBI and other U.S. investigators are assisting Saudi authorities with the probe into the attacks.

Interior Minister Prince Nayef says investigators have identified three of the badly mangled bodies of nine Saudi men thought to have carried out the Riyadh attacks. The three were among 19 suspects sought in connection with a weapons cache found May 6 linked to al-Qaida.

The government had said the 19 were believed to be receiving orders directly from bin Laden and had been planning to use the seized weapons to attack the Saudi royal family and American and British interests.

Al-Qaida has been blamed for the Sept. 11 attacks and the October 2000 USS Cole bombing off Yemen that killed 17 American sailors.

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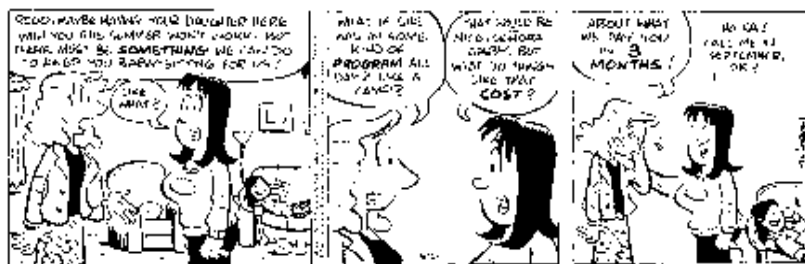


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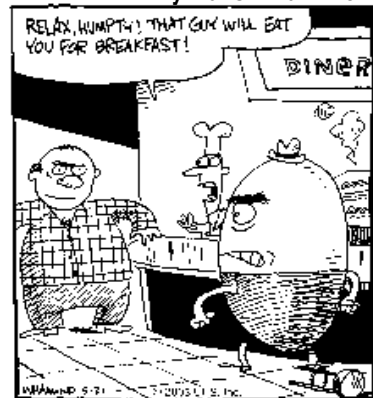


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 - Frank McCourt book
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 - Adroit
 - Conditions
 - Present oneself
 - Puppy pest
 - Change over time
 - Ran, as color
 - Make plump
 - Place in water
- DOWN**
- Remove
 - "La Scala" song
 - Ends of voyages
 - Sort
 - Wading bird
 - Thatcher's party
 - Part of AD
 - Doctor's charge
 - Cat coat
 - Bond, for one
 - Outlaw
 - Similar
 - Dumping sites
 - Choir member
 - Lowly worker
 - Smack
 - City car
 - Bin contents
 - Avoid an accident
 - Go bad
 - Many a time
 - Blockhead

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Yesterday's answer

- Lowly worker
- Smack
- City car
- Bin contents
- Avoid an accident
- Go bad
- Many a time
- Blockhead
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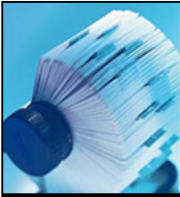
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Watch for future newsstands at a location near you!





BACK PAGE



A 'rocky' road

By The Associated Press

McLOUTH, Kan. — A reminder of the last ice age is embedded in the middle of a residential street in this northeast Kansas town.

It's a gnarled red rock so big, so deep and so stubborn that local officials couldn't remove it.

So they paved around it.

"That is why they call it Granite Street," said McLouth resident Mary LaMar.

No flashing signs or billboards point the way to the rock, which reaches only halfway up a car's door now, thanks to decades of paving that have raised the level of the street.

The town has never tried to make a fuss about the stone. Years ago, a high school student printed bumper stickers that read "McLouth: Not just another rock in the road." Few sold.

But almost everyone in this town of 868 knows about it or has a story about it.

"My grandfather told me he used to stand on that rock to direct cattle drives, because it was tall enough for him to be seen over the cattle," said John Bower, a 91-year-old McLouth native who spent 24 years in the Kansas Legislature.

Most folks seem content to leave the rock as it is: unadorned, unfenced, unfazed by modernity.

"It's McLouth's little thing," Connie Hedgepath said proudly.

World's biggest cookie

By The Associated Press

FLAT ROCK, N.C. — A humongous cookie broke a world record over the weekend before a crowd of 1,500 hungry onlookers.

It took eight hours and a cookie sheet the size of a basketball court to bake the 100-foot, 20-ton chocolate chip colossus. The cookie was baked in an oven bag that released the smells of chocolate and warm, sugary dough when opened.

"It looks like a giant mud pie," said 18-year-old Sarah Fantle.

The curious crowd that braved a steady drizzle for a glimpse of the cookie Saturday soon began nibbling it down to size for \$10 a slice. Ten percent of the proceeds will go toward building a craft museum.

Immaculate Baking Co. owner Scott Blackwell and a team of 70 volunteers built the cookie from 6,500 pounds of butter, 30,000 whole eggs and 5,000 pounds of sugar.

Jonathan Collins, a representative of the former record holder, Cookie Time of New Zealand, witnessed the event. Cookie Time set the previous record in 1996 by baking an 82-foot wide cookie.

Blackwell said the record belongs in American hands because the chocolate chip cookie is an American invention.

Women want to be drafted

By The Associated Press

BOSTON — A group of Massachusetts teenagers have filed a lawsuit to force the government to include women in the draft.

Combat roles played by women soldiers in the war with Iraq show the all-male selective service system is discriminatory, lawyers for the plaintiffs argued Monday.

"Women were dropping bombs on Baghdad. Women were being captured, shot at," said lawyer Harvey A. Schwartz, who is representing his 18-year-old son, his 17-year-old stepdaughter and two other teenagers.

Lawyers for the Department of Justice tried to have the case thrown out, arguing that a 1981 Supreme Court decision already upheld the Selective Service System that drafts only men.

"Why we should have a draft and who should be drafted should be left to Congress," attorney Rupa Bhattacharyya told the court.

Judge Edward F. Harrington did not rule in the case, but asked Schwartz whether America is prepared to draft 18-year-old women.

"I tend to disbelieve at this stage this is what the American public wants," he said.

Stinkiest flower in bloom

By The Associated Press

FULLERTON — It smells like road kill, stands 6 feet tall, and last bloomed three years ago.

Tiffany, one of the world's biggest, stinkiest flowers, is expected to unfurl its petals Tuesday at the California State University, Fullerton Arboretum. It will be the first *Amorphophallus titanum* to bloom in Southern California in a year.

A similar plant bloomed in July 2002 at Quail Botanical Gardens in Encinitas, where crowds gathered to smell the odor that gives the plant, also known as Titan Arum, its unappetizing nickname, the "corpse flower."

Native to Indonesia, Titan Arum blooms only a few times in its 40-year life span and rarely blooms in cultivation. For eight hours, it emits a nauseating odor to attract pollinating, cadaver-eating beetles.

The plant has been seen in bloom only about 15 times since its first U.S. display in New York in 1937. About 63,000 people flocked to the Huntington Library in San Marino when a Titan bloomed in 1999 and hundreds went to the arboretum in Fullerton in 2000 to inspect Tiffany.

In June 2002, thousands lined up to see and smell the corpse flower at the University of Wisconsin.

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