

National

Witness protection program studied

Carelessness and stupid errors cited

WASHINGTON — An indignant senator wants government bureaucrats to explain why witnesses who testify against organized crime have so much trouble with the U.S. Marshals Service's protection program.

Sen. Sam Nunn, D-Ga., planned to ask three "protected" witnesses today about more shortcomings of the program, which others denounced Monday as riddled with carelessness and stupid errors, and plagued by lack of top control and inadequate funding.

Mrs. Frank Calimano testified that worry over the family's safety and financial problems caused her husband — a successful contractor until he testified against New York City mobsters in 1978 — to commit suicide last June.

"People like the Mafia — they've won again," Mrs. Calimano said bitterly. "We'd get better treatment from them, better protection." She

said her husband repeatedly said, "I was betrayed."

"I wouldn't want anybody to suffer the way we did," said her son, Steven, who joined her at the witness table. They were screened from the view of cameramen and spectators, and their new names and location were not revealed.

Mrs. Calimano said promised expert documentation for a new life came too late or never, they had to invent their own new backgrounds, and they got no help in getting credit. Calimano was unable to close his new business when their location became dangerous.

Mrs. Calimano said she would not recommend the program to anyone, although many would testify against mobsters if it were improved.

"I have to believe that. I don't think my husband was so unique," Mrs. Calimano said. But she added, "As it stands now, I wouldn't allow it."

Her son blamed their troubles on poor administration, not on the marshals assigned to them.

"Every marshal did his job — and well," Calimano said. "But they can only do so much. I know how they must have felt. They know they should be helping us, but they can't."

One of the biggest problems, according to Gregory Baldwin, the subcommittee's assistant counsel, is the Marshals Service's refusal to help the witnesses get credit, which is im-

possible without having any past records.

Baldwin testified that one-fourth to one-third of the witnesses his staff has interviewed voiced serious complaints. He said many, including some in prison as well as law-abiding witnesses, wished they had not testified.

Problems included careless errors in documents provided for the witnesses' new identities, failure to give witnesses sound advice or live up to promises, and assigning untrained

marshals to the sensitive jobs, Baldwin said.

These shortcomings are compounded by lack of cooperation from other government agencies, Baldwin said. The Social Security Administration will not routinely transfer payment records to a witness's new number, he said.

Although the new birth certificates are genuine, reflecting a legal change of name, 13 states, three territories and the District of Columbia refuse to issue them, Baldwin said.

Investigators find Medicare mail destroyed to cut backlog

CHICAGO — A federal investigation has found correspondence from thousands of Illinois Medicare patients was destroyed by the Electronic Data Systems Federal Corp. to reduce a backlog of unfulfilled claims, the Chicago Tribune says.

A federal investigation into the firm confirms the reports of a former data systems employee who said the company destroyed thousands of letters and hid thousands more to deceive federal monitors checking a huge Medicare backlog.

Bill Wright, spokesman for EDS of Dallas, which owns EDSF, said no correspondence actually had been lost because all the letters that were thrown away had been recorded on microfilm.

The results of the General Accounting Office investigation were to be released today by Rep. Paul Simon, D-Ill., the Tribune said in today's editions.

Medicare patients and others have constantly criticized EDSF for its failure to handle claims within a reasonable amount of time. Many patients

complain their queries or claims have gone unanswered for months since the company won the state's Medicare contract 20 months ago.

The firm has paid more than \$1 million in penalties for failing to meet government performance and contract standards.

Smithsonian given Kitty Hawk fabric

WASHINGTON — The original muslin fabric that covered one of the wings of the Wright Brothers' Kitty Hawk Flyer will become part of the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum's collection.

The plane, on display in the lobby of the museum, made the first controlled, sustained, heavier-than-air flight on Dec. 17, 1903.

Orville Wright ordered the original fabric replaced in 1916 after deciding it had become weather-beaten. He kept the original fabric, but most of it was cut up and given away during his lifetime.

Ivonette Miller of Dayton, Ohio, a niece of the Wrights and their only surviving relative, presented the fabric to the museum in a ceremony Tuesday.

The material measures approximately 127 square feet and was used to cover one of the wings. The fabric was a common type of muslin, known as the Pride of the West, bought by the Wrights at a Dayton department store.

"It is the only significant portion of the 1903 Flyer that the Smithsonian does not have," said Noel W. Hinners, museum director.

'Susan B.' may stage return

WASHINGTON — The Susan B. Anthony dollar, never popular, may be reincarnated with a new streamlined "tail."

Officials think changing the Anthony dollar's color could mean the biggest drawback by making it easier for the public not to mistake a silver quarter.

Treasury Undersecretary Bette Anderson confirmed that the color change has been drafted, but said "the legislation is still within the Treasury Department."

She said the Reagan administration would have to find a way to get changes on Capitol Hill, with the new bronze coin to include a new back design featuring a simple "1" instead of an eagle.

"I'm not convinced the legislation has a chance of being passed. There is a broad acceptance of the coin," said Curt Frazier, director on the House banking subcommittee on consumer affairs. Anderson thinks it will work. "After all, the only way to reap the benefits of reduced minting costs is to make it more money. A dollar bill costs about 2 cents to print and wears out in 18 months. A dollar coin costs about 3 cents to produce and lasts 15 years.

Treasury officials predicted initial savings of \$4.5 million over the prospect for additional economies as more coins were used.

The "Susan B." bombed after its July 1979 introduction. More than half of the 800 million coins minted before production was halted still in storage.

Alan Goldman, deputy director of the U.S. Mint, said part of the problem is that Americans are not used to paying attention to money. He said high-value coins are successful in foreign countries.

"The Germans are no more intelligent than we are, but they seem to tell the difference between a two-mark and a five-mark coin better than we do," Goldman said.

Goldman said new technology, not available when the Anthony dollar was conceived, will allow the mint to produce a bronze coin from an alloy of copper, aluminum and silicon, as opposed to the current mix of 75 percent copper and 25 percent nickel.

But even that has drawbacks. Goldman said the new alloy will tarnish to an unattractive mustard color.

Veteran benefits to be scrutinized

WASHINGTON — Sen. Alan Simpson, R-Wyo., the incoming chairman of the Senate Veterans Committee, could stir up a hornet's nest if he re-examines the basis on which veterans' benefits are dispensed.

Simpson, who takes over as committee chairman next month when the Republicans gain a majority in the Senate, said he intends to take a hard look at veterans programs, including those that have become sacred cows.

The senator said he was thinking about looking into the possibility of providing different levels of GI benefits "for those who served in the combat theaters of the fray, and those who never left the continental United States — those who might have served baking bread at Camp

Beetle Bailey, and those who served in Vietnam.

"I just think we can do a better job in benefits," Simpson conceded he is treading "emotional" territory, with telling him, "My God, Simpson can't possibly look into that."

Undeterred, Simpson said he even going to look into the veterans' care and benefits program. "I think we're going to start allocating and watching rams."

In the medical area, he wants to find a way to have government reimbursed for VA when a private insurer always pays costs, and consider whether should be providing medical health programs that are not related.

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