

# Property theft

## Students, staff victimized by 'opportunistic' thieves

By SARAH OATES  
Staff Writer

How often have you left your backpack or purse out on a desk or in a hallway for "just a moment" while you ducked into the bathroom or ran out to your car? If you've returned to find your backpack where you left it with your belongings accounted for, you're one of the lucky few.

Too often, people with an "it won't happen to me," attitude become victims of property crime, one of the worst problems at Texas A&M.

The rate of violent crime at Texas A&M is low; in the past year there were no reported murders, rapes or robberies on campus. However, the rate of property theft here is increasing each year.

"People are victimized by carelessness," said Bob Wiatt, director of security and traffic for the University Police. "They don't realize that thieves are opportunists."

University Police regularly make presentations to students warning them to be careful with their belongings, but Wiatt said students and staff members don't seem to take the problem seriously until they are directly affected.

"We try like evangelists to spread the message," he said, "but unfortunately, our words fall on deaf ears."

Individual officers make presentations about crime prevention to various organizations and to dorm residents about six to 10 times every month. Wiatt makes six or seven major speeches about crime prevention each year, usually to University newcomers, such as incoming freshmen, new resident advisors, the Corps of Cadets and students living off-campus. Pamphlets about crime prevention also are available at the University Police Department.

Wiatt said students are the most frequent victims of property crimes and wallets, backpacks and bicycles are among the most common objects stolen. Cars and computers are usually the most expensive objects stolen.

Wiatt said most thefts occur because people are careless and building security is poor. University police periodically make building security checks with the building proctors to point out vulnerable areas. Building proctors are responsible for security.

"We find hundreds of doors open each month as we patrol the buildings," he said. "There's a lapse between our pointing out a security vulnerability and people implementing better security measures."

Wiatt said that burglaries often occur because building keys fall into the wrong hands. For example, he said an employee might have a copy of a building key made up for a spouse.

"Pretty soon, there's hundreds of keys floating around," he said. "That is naive."

He said the risk of computer thefts could be diminished if commercial devices to "preclude theft susceptibility" were used, such as cables that lock a computer to the desk it sits on.

"The University will spend thousands of dollars to buy a computer," he said, "but they won't spend a couple hundred extra to secure them."

The computers stolen from the Blocker Building last week were not secured. In 1983, computer equipment valued at \$20,709 was stolen from the University, and in the first two months of 1984, equipment valued at \$16,031 has been stolen.

"No security devices were attached to any of these computers," he said.

"When everybody knows everybody else's combinations, it rips security apart," he said. "People in their little neophyte protective shells don't realize there are people out there doing these things, so we have a horrendous amount of property theft."

Property theft on campus has increased since last year. University Police recorded 439 separate property thefts for the academic year from September 1982 to February 1983, a total value of \$99,902 in stolen items. For the entire year, that value jumped to \$225,425.

From September 1983 to February 1984, 468 separate property losses were recorded, the total valued at \$174,253. Burglaries accounted for \$62,845, thefts accounted for \$72,608 and vehicle thefts amounted to \$38,800.

Wiatt said there are several "common sense" measures students can take to protect themselves against property crime:

- Don't leave personal belongings unattended in public places
- Lock your doors and keep track of your keys.
- Mark all valuable items with your driver's license number. This can be done either with engraving or indelible ink. The University Police Department has engravers available to students.
- Conduct a burglary prevention survey of your dorm room or apartment. Look for ways to improve lighting and eliminate potential hiding places.
- Don't leave anything valuable in your car and make sure doors are locked and windows rolled up when you leave.
- Register bicycles with the University Police Department and lock bicycles to racks with locks and chains.
- Report suspicious activity.

# Bilingual schooling endorsed

United Press International

AUSTIN — The state director of the nation's largest Hispanic organization Monday endorsed mandatory bilingual education for kindergartners as a step toward improving the education of Hispanics in Texas.

School districts must implement bilingual education beginning in the first grade but have the option of whether to offer it in kindergarten.

Johnny Mata, state director of the League of United Latin American Citizens, said the option gave some students an unfair advantage over others.

"Participation by a child who needs such instruction should not have to depend on which district that child resides in," Mata said at a Capitol news conference.

"Implementation of this program on a mandatory basis will

save taxpayer dollars in the long run by accelerating the process of learning English and shortening the time period necessary for a complete and successful transitional bilingual education course of instruction for each child."

Mata also called for higher pay for science, math and bilingual education teachers to alleviate teacher shortages in those subjects.

## Correction

An article in Monday's Battalion incorrectly reported that Sul Ross scholarships for Corps of Cadets members are worth \$15,000. The two-year scholarships are now \$2,000, or \$500 per semester. Beginning this fall, Sul Ross scholarships will be \$2,400, or \$600 per semester. The \$15,000 figure is how much it costs to endow the scholarships. The Battalion regrets the error.

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## Gemayel bows to Syrians

# Lebanon cancels accord

United Press International

BEIRUT — President Amin Gemayel, bowing to Syrian demands, canceled the May 17 peace accord with Israel Monday and agreed to form a national unity government to give Syrians a broader role in ruling Lebanon.

In other action, unidentified gunmen shot and wounded a U.S. Marine colonel on the waterfront near Beirut's U.S. Embassy, and attackers in a speeding car fired a rocket-propelled grenade at French troops, killing a French peacekeeper. Israeli warplanes also staged twin strikes on suspected Palestinian guerrilla bases in the mountains southeast of Beirut.

In Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir condemned the abrogation of the accord as a "death sentence to

Lebanese independence and sovereignty" and vowed Israel would decide "the best ways" to guard against terrorism in southern Lebanon.

Israeli troops invaded Lebanon on June 6, 1982, to oust Palestine Liberation Organization guerrillas from its northern border.

Syrian Prime Minister Abdel Rauf Qasbi gloated in Damascus that his government has "convinced America and Israel that Syria is a mighty roadblock that cannot be trespassed easily."

Despite a truce arranged Sunday, artillery and mortar shells slammed into east Beirut, killing at least one person and wounding seven others in spill-over fighting from the "green line" dividing Christian east from Moslem west Beirut.

Scattered fighting between Lebanon's warring factions also shook the Shouf mountain village of Souk el Gharb, a key army outpost guarding the approach to Gemayel's presidential palace.

Even before cancellation of the Lebanese-Israeli accord was formally announced, witnesses said they saw angry Christian residents ripping up posters of Gemayel that line the streets of east Beirut.

Syrian President Hafez Assad and his rebel Moslem allies had demanded the accord be scrapped as a condition for a cease-fire in Beirut and a resumption of national reconciliation talks aimed at broadening the Moslem role in Gemayel's minority Christian government.

In a long-awaited meeting, Gemayel and Cabinet ministers

agreed to cancel the May 17 accord, reopen national reconciliation talks in Switzerland and form a new government of national unity.

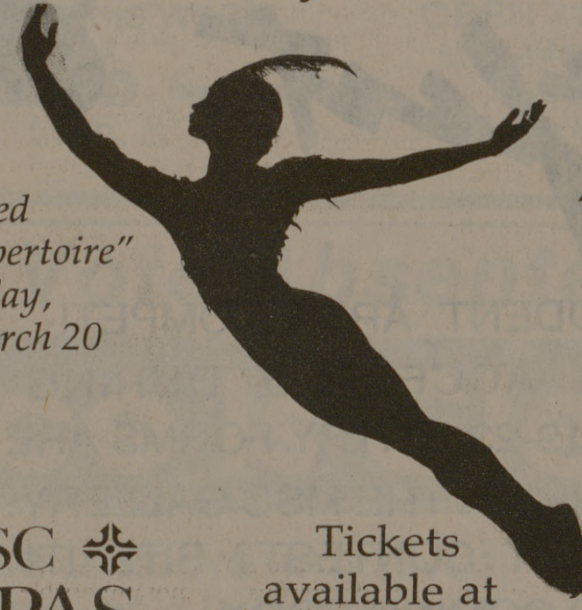
Chefik Mneimne, secretary general of the 10-man caretaker Cabinet that resigned Feb. 5, formally announced abrogation of the agreement in a statement carried by Beirut radio.

Mneimne said the Cabinet considered the U.S.-mediated accord, which was never ratified, "void as if it never existed and agreed to the cancellation of everything depending on it."

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