

Texas spent \$6,951 per inmate last year

# Prison budget nation's lowest

**United Press International**  
 DALLAS — Texas prisons operated on less money than any prison system in the nation last year, according to statistics compiled by a national corrections organization. Statistics from the Criminal Justice Institute Inc. of South Salem, N.Y., show Texas spent \$6,951 per inmate last year — far below the national average of \$16,245. Alaska spent \$36,493 per inmate, more than any other state. The Texas prison system had one guard for every 8.1 inmates as of the first of this year. Only three states had fewer

guards per inmate, the non-profit group said. And corrections officers in Texas received less than half of the pre-service training of their counterparts across the nation. State officials have blamed prison understaffing for this summer's increase in prison violence. "When there is a shortage of guards there are problems," Phil Guthrie, a prison spokesman, said. "It definitely increases the potential for violence." Already this year there have been more than 260 stabbings in Texas prisons and 12 inmates have been killed by other prisoners.

Almost twice as many guards were assaulted in the first half of this year, compared with the same period last year. Prison officials said the state used to be able to operate with less guards by using a "building-tender" system in which selected inmates acted as guards. In his sweeping prison reform order, U.S. District Judge William Wayne Justice forbade the use of building tenders in the state's prisons after prisoners claimed they were brutalized. Prison officials said the resulting vacuum contributed to the violence.

"Six months ago, we didn't have control," said Jack Garner, of the Coffield Unit in East Texas. "The inmates were trying to get what they wanted to do." On July 18, the unit's 300 guards became most active as a veteran officer was seriously injured in the prison's third stabbing guard in three days. Coffield's guard staff has jumped from 375 to 520. "Things are better now," Gabbard, a Coffield corrections officer, said. "You just don't see much tension these days."

# Baby elephant fatally gores worker

**United Press International**  
 MIAMI — A 1,500-pound baby elephant fatally gored an employee of an animal trading company who harassed the elephant by prodding it with an ax handle, police said Sunday. The 3½-year-old African elephant, a female named Charlie, pinned William David Sharp, 27, of Grand Prairie against the side of its reinforced plywood pen. The elephant gored Sharp at least twice in the abdomen with its four-inch tusks, breaking the aorta, said Metro-Dade County homicide detective Woody Geisler. "The animal was being harassed and he was just protecting himself,"

Geisler said. "The elephant was just trying to butt him away." Sharp worked for Animal Trackers, a Dallas-based company that bought two elephants from Dr. Bernard Levine, a Miami veterinarian who owns the animal compound where the goring took place. "They had loaded this animal into a crate once. The crate fell over, so they released the animal and it went back into its pen," Geisler said. "They came back later, but this animal at that point in time was not going to go back into that crate. The victim tried to change the animal's mind with an ax handle," Geisler said. "He just got backed up against there. The elephant put its

head down and rammed him — gored him — two or three times." Levine keeps numerous exotic animals for sale to pet shops and zoos. He said up to six elephants have been housed in the compound in separate pens measuring about 12 feet by 25 feet. Levine said Saturday it was the first time he had ever heard of a baby elephant killing someone. He could not be reached for comment Sunday. "As far as we're concerned it was an accident. This is not a rogue animal or anything like that," Geisler said. Sharp was pronounced dead at Baptist Hospital.

"When we got the call, I was rather startled," Dorothy Kilgore, nursing shift supervisor, said. Kilian said she had often seen past Levine's animal compound in an area southwest of Miami. "I noticed there were 'strange animals' there." Among the animals at the compound are a goat, three ponies and three llamas. One of Levine's neighbors, Kessler, was very surprised about the incident. "I'm not aware of any elephant in the neighborhood," she said.

# Space-camp hopefuls vie for spot at school

**United Press International**  
 HUNTSVILLE, Ala. — A week after announcing a program to give adults a three-day simulated space shuttle experience, the earth's largest space museum already had inquiries from 600 would-be astronauts, and the requests keep coming. Alabama Space and Rocket Center officials in north Alabama say they suspect many of the applicants — ranging from grandpas to housewives — see the program as a way of being chosen for the real space shuttle — and they may be right. The rocket center last month announced an adult version of the popular U.S. Space Camp, a five-day program about space that in three years has attracted 4,000 children from across the United States. The first adult version will be Oct.

19-21 and is a trial run. Twenty adults — for \$200 each — will train at the space camp's simulated mission control and take part in a three-hour simulated space shuttle flight. Center director Ed Buckbee says the children who have participated in the popular U.S. Space Camp have probably sparked the interest of adults. That program is for children 12-16 who spend five days at the camp and are housed in dormitories. The children are taught the history and mechanics of rocketry, work with robot arms and run through four shuttle mission simulations. "I think we found out that all that enthusiasm has fired up an interest in adults," Buckbee says. "Six hundred people in the last

week have contacted us," said rocket center spokesman Lee Sentell. "They've ranged from housewives to (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) personnel." The center has sent out questionnaires and will select a cross-section of the population in the next week or so, he says. "One woman wants to give it as a birthday present for her husband, who's 61," Sentell says. "And a pilot in New Jersey offered to fly down with a check immediately." Sentell says there's little doubt folks asking about the space camp hope to one day get on the real shuttle, and he admits the experience could help their chances. "Anyone wanting to go on the shuttle will explore this possibility," he said. "It would not hurt their

chances of being selected." "Our program involves the shuttle how the shuttle operates." Buckbee agreed. "If you had experience in space camp, you would have a better chance of being selected." "It would be a plus." The adult program will be condensed with one mission in four and with the emphasis on historical factors. On the first day, there's a simulation session and an introduction to rocketry and life-support systems. Adult space campers will visit nearby Marshall Space Flight


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