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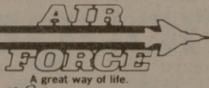
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## Customs service sued third time

United Press International

BROWNSVILLE — An American cargo pilot has filed a lawsuit that the U.S. customs Service was responsible for his plane being shot down in Mexico.

Pilot William E. Nelson of Laredo; his engineer, Conrad Smith of McAllen; and Reo Leasing Inc. of Brinkley, Ark., have filed a \$1.55 million federal lawsuit stating that their constitutional rights were violated on Aug. 12, 1983, when their DC-3 was shot down 73 miles south of the border. It is the third such lawsuit filed by American pilots.

The lawsuit, filed earlier this week, said Nelson was transporting a bonded shipment of merchandise from McAllen to Torreon, Mexico, and had filed proper papers with U.S. Customs.

The lawsuit alleges that U.S. Customs officials at Miller International Airport in McAllen purposely delayed the plane's takeoff until Mexican authorities had been notified of the flight so the plane could be intercepted.

The plane was attacked by rapid small arms fire from a Piper Navajo Chief aircraft that continued to fire upon them even though the pilot lowered the DC-3's wheels, an internationally understood sign of surrender, the suit said.

The plane crash landed in a field, and Nelson and Smith were prepared to surrender, the suit said.

However, the Piper Navajo Chief and another aircraft continued to fire upon the two men while they were on the ground, the suit further charged.

The suit said the men "ran for their lives" and hid before separating and making their way back to the border.

The allegations against U.S. Customs are similar to those contained in a federal lawsuit filed last February in Brownsville by pilot Billie Baker, of Jefferson, La., and in a \$2.8 million claim filed last year by Laredo pilot Bill Humphries.

U.S. Customs spokesman Charles Conroy of Houston has defended a policy of giving departure information on Mexico-bound flights to Mexican authorities in compliance with a 1977 agreement for exchange of information.

Under the agreement, Mexican customs relays information to U.S. officials on narcotics smugglers. U.S. Customs reciprocates with information on exports to Mexico useful in Mexico's crackdown on smuggling of electronics equipment and other goods.

Texas pilots have said that a rogue Mexican customs officer at Chihuahua, known as "El Fantasma" (The Phantom), is responsible for shooting down several American cargo planes.

## Cotropia

(continued from page 1)

her father had the biggest influence on her.

"My father's probably insane," Cotropia said. "In my family, we spend most of the time making each other laugh. It's such a comfort being around each other because we're all so weird. My mom is the only sane one in the family, but we refuse to recognize it."

Cotropia tells a story about one of the "different" things that her father, a retired Army major did while teaching at Howard Payne University.

"We're all overweight in my family," she said. "My father weighs over 300 hundred pounds. He and another man dressed up in pink and green tights and tutus and entertained an assembly (of students) at Howard Payne."

She laughed just as she had

through much of the interview.

"He also sells hotdogs at Texas Stadium for the Lions Club," she said, "and he's an admiral in the Texas Navy."

Cotropia sews many of her own clothes. She is, by her own admission, a fairly accomplished seamstress.

"Carl (her husband) and I have a common philosophy," she said. "Don't spend money on things you think you ought to have. Spend money on things that you want. Don't pay to have things done if you can do them yourself. I rarely buy clothes. I do all the painting and wallpapering in our house, too. I'm fiercely independent."

She will over-extend herself at times. Her desire to be creative requires that she take on many challenges. Her schedule stays full.

"I think it's so neat to be on something creative," she said.

## Man 'out of control' in shooting, wife says

United Press International

DALLAS — The estranged wife of Abdelkrim Belachheb, accused of killing six people in a restaurant, testified Wednesday that her husband "had no more control than a freight train out of control" during the shootings.

Joanne O'Brien Belachheb was the first defense witness in the trial of her husband, who is charged with killing four women and two men and wounding a seventh person June 29 at Ianni's Restaurant and Club.

A jury of eight women and four men is hearing evidence against Belachheb, who has pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity. Wednesday was the third day of testimony before state District Judge Gerry Holden Meier.

Also testifying for the defense was a Dallas specialist who said Belachheb suffered from severe culture shock and delusions that he was in control of every situation.

Mrs. Belachheb, questioned by defense attorney Frank Jackson, listed at least four cases in which her husband beat her or threatened her and said he often entered an "altered state of consciousness" when he became violent.

She said that after an argument June 19, 10 days before the Ianni's killings, she told Belachheb she did not want to hear from him or to speak with him again.

"I knew what was going to happen, and I knew it was not safe for me to be around," she said. "I knew this man was sick enough to kill."

## Ship

(continued from page 1)

because it would "alter the balance" of power in the region.

"A U.S. warship came into our territorial (Pacific) waters off Corinto, and it has subsequently proceeded to withdraw up to about 12 miles from the shore and it began to unload speedboats from the ship," d'Escoto said.

"Simultaneously, American planes began to fly over our territory in that area," he said in an interview from Managua with Britain's Independent Television Network news. He did not say when the incident took place.

He said, "Not in the past, not in the present, not anywhere in the future, is it true that there are any boats on their way to Nicaragua with any MiG aircraft."

Speedboats from CIA mother

ships have been used by U.S.-backed anti-Sandinista rebels for raids and mining of Nicaraguan ports.

Hours before the Soviet ship docked, an unidentified plane flew over the port city and was fired on by Sandinista gunners, who missed. Lt. Jose Santos said he believed the plane was spying on the freighter.

A Pentagon spokesman denied any U.S. warships were in the vicinity.

But a congressional source with access to classified information told United Press International a U.S. frigate penetrated Nicaraguan territorial waters Wednesday, and a U.S. surveillance aircraft flew over Nicaraguan territory, apparently to monitor the Soviet ship.

"The overflights of unknown aircraft began this morning," the source said, who cautioned the origin and type of the U.S. vessel were not clear.

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