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The Battalion

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Agent links bombings to TWA hijacking

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Two 21-year-old former convicts bombed an Islamic mosque to protest the holding of 39 U.S. hostages in Beirut, a federal agent testified Thursday in court.

However, a public defender said the two men merely used the hijacking of TWA Flight 847 as an excuse for their actions.

Daniel Allen Russell and Randy James Jones, both of Houston, appeared in a preliminary hearing Thursday before U.S. Magistrate H. Lingo Platter, who decided the case will be presented to a federal grand jury.

Russell and Jones were being held in lieu \$50,000 bond on charges of illegal possession of explosives. The charges stem from the June 22 bombing of the Daar US Salaam mosque in Houston.

Authorities previously said they believed the bombing was not in retaliation of the hijacking of the TWA flight and the 17-day captivity of its passengers.

But Curtis D. Williams, a Houston agent with the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, testified Thursday that Russell told authorities he helped bomb the mosque to express anger over the American captives in Beirut.

However, Tom Berg, a federal public defender representing Russell, said his client offered that explanation after the bombing "as a justification for his actions."

"I don't feel that it was retaliation, especially in light of all the other stupid stuff they were doing," Berg said, referring to previous bombings Russell and Jones claim to have staged.

Russell, an apartment maintenance worker, is on parole for a 1984 robbery and Jones, an air conditioning service worker, is on probation for a 1983 burglary.

Williams said Russell, Jones and a third man — who has been linked to the mosque bombing but not charged — have been experimenting with bombs for some time.

Russell and Jones told authorities that in April and March they bombed a portable toilet, trash dumpster, car, postal mailbox, newspaper box and a telephone booth, Williams testified.

Williams said he is pursuing charges against the third man that Russell and Jones implicated in the mosque bombing, which caused an estimated \$50,000 in damages.

Federal authorities arrested Russell and Jones June 28 after a confidential informant told them he heard the men bragging about the bombing at a Houston night club.

Steve Shaw, chief of the U.S. attorney's criminal division in Houston, said the two men could receive up to 160 years in prison if convicted of all the bombings to which they have admitted.

SHOE



No-pass, no-play ruling may not stop litigation

Associated Press

AUSTIN — A state Supreme Court ruling affirming the no-pass, no-play rule doesn't mean litigation on the controversial issue is over, the executive vice president of the Texas High School Coaches Association said Wednesday.

Donald Jay, who coached high school sports for 22 years, said, "That's just the state. I think it will go to the federal level now. "It's just a gut feeling, but somebody will go to the federal courts, probably during the football season. And then you've got a whole new ballgame."

But Anthony Sheppard, attorney for 45 students, and parents in the Houston area disagree with Jay. He said the federal courts are reluctant to address the issue of athletics. But Sheppard did agree that the case is probably far from over.

Sheppard said the Supreme Court's ruling stated only that extracurricular activities such as football or band are not First Amendment rights.

Coast may go unprotected

Associated Press

AUSTIN — Chairman Carl Parker of the Texas Coastal and Marine Council presided over the council's "last rites" Thursday, and immediately appointed a committee of five legislators to try to recreate the agency.

The 1985 Legislature failed to fund the 14-year-old council, and it will go out of existence at the close of business Aug. 31. The 16-member appointed council has a staff of four, and its current two-year appropriation totals \$394,665.

Sen. Parker, D-Port Arthur, said without the council there is no state agency dedicated to protecting Texas beaches and other coastal resources.

"We've been cut short at the very doorway of a very ambitious program for beach cleanup," Parker said at the final meeting of the council.

"The demise of the council is very shortsighted," he said, and added that he might be at fault for his failure to convince other legislators of the importance of the agency.

Parker named himself as chairman of a committee to re-establish the council and put on the committee four other legislators-council members: Sens. Carlos Truan, D-Corpus Christi, and J.E. "Buster" Brown, R-Lake Jackson, and Reps. Rene Oliveira, D-Brownsville, and Lloyd Criss, D-La Marque.

Truan told Parker, "I don't think anyone on this council or along the coast feels you ever let us down." He said that in the recent Legislature "the whole Texas coast was under siege from start to finish."

He said he had never seen so

The intent, to force students put academics first on their list, backfired, Jay said. He cited surveys indicating that in the major Texas cities, there were more failures in the second six-week period under the rule than the first.

Under the rule, a student is prohibited from taking part in any extracurricular activity for six weeks if he or she fails a course.

In the past year, the THSCA found instances of students who made five A's and one B but were ruled ineligible despite an overall plus average, Jay said. Other students would make 70s on all their courses but maintain their eligibility.

Austin High lost one baseball player last spring who was an excellent student but flunked an hour course.

"It's hard to tell a kid with a plus average who's sitting at home that somebody with a 70 average is eligible," Jay said. "They want to know if this is American justice."

Council loses funding

many bills in one session attacked the coast, and he blamed the demise of the council on a few "selfish, ignorant, narrow-minded people."

Truan suggested the appointment of a subcommittee to recommend ways to protect the coast, and said, "I'm not going to take this down."

Brown said he wanted to see Parker and Truan's remarks without the council to forecast problems, the state would react more and years later.

Council member George Rhoads Port Lavaca, said the Legislature's decision to kill the council is a perfect example of what he's said before, and that is, "If the Legislature met once every 25 years (rather than every two years), the state would probably be better off."

Authorities capture escaped prison inmate

Associated Press

BLOSSOM — Convicted kidnapper James Wesley Foote, who escaped from jail a week ago and walked his way across several North Texas counties, was captured Thursday here in his parents' hometown, authorities said.

Authorities tracked Foote down after being tipped that he was hiding in a house in this community outside Paris, about 150 miles northeast of the Johnson County Jail in Cleburne, Lamar County Sheriff's Lt. Jerry Robbins said.

Foote, who led a band of friends in the kidnapping of 13-year-old Amy McNeil, escaped July 4 by scaling a fence at that jail. The kidnapping ended in a shootout with au-

thorities Jan. 13, and Foote was sentenced to life in prison.

Lawmen credited the \$2,000 reward offered by the girl's father, Alvarado businessman Don McNeil, with leading to the arrest of Foote, who had earlier threatened revenge against the McNeil family and Johnson County authorities.

McNeil said the reward would be paid to an unidentified tipster.

"I'm relieved," Amy McNeil said from her Alvarado home Thursday. "We've had a guard outside all the time and I haven't been able to go anywhere since all this started."

Foote, 34, was wearing only drawstring trousers and was covered with chigger bites when he was arrested. He told authorities he was on

his way to see his parents, Robbins said.

Foote was returned to Cleburne Thursday afternoon, and Johnson County Sheriff Eddie Boggs said he would be transferred back to the Texas Department of Corrections Friday morning.

Lamar County Sheriff Jim Parker said officials surrounded the house, entered through an unlocked door, and found Foote in a bedroom. "When we opened the door, he had his hands stretched in the air," Parker said.

Foote had been in the state prison in Huntsville, but was returned to

Johnson County for questioning about an Alvarado robbery.

The escape plan, Foote said, came to him on the spur of the moment and was prompted because he feared authorities would try to take him with a Colleyville murder, which he said he did not commit.

McNeil, who had carried a pass while Foote was loose, said he was grateful and gratified "at the capture."

"It's good to have this press off," he said.

"What a load off my shoulders can't believe in the 20th century you'd have to be concerned about outlaws."

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