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Expert insists Autumn Hills patient died of cancer

Associated Press
SAN ANTONIO — Extensive diagnostic testing on an elderly woman showed no signs of cancer seven months before she died at a nursing home, a prosecutor said Tuesday.

But pathologist Dr. Paul Radelat refused to say that 87-year-old Edna Mae Witt did not have some form of cancer and stuck with his claim she died of the disease in November 1978.

The testimony came in the murder-by-neglect trial of Autumn Hills Convalescent Centers Inc. and four of its current and former employees. They are charged with murder in the death of Witt.

Radelat, a Houston pathologist and the first defense witness, testified Monday that Witt died of a recurrence of colon cancer. She had undergone surgery for the disease three times previously.

Radelat said he based his opinion on the fact that Witt had bloody stools that sometimes appeared watery, diarrhea and a steady weight loss.

Prosecutor David Marks pointed out that during extensive diagnostic testing in April 1978, doctors found no evidence of blood in her stool. He also mentioned Witt had hemorrhoids, another factor that might have caused bleeding.

In earlier testimony, Radelat said he did not think Edna Mae Witt, another Autumn Hills patient, "was a reasonable candidate for recuperation" in late 1978.

The defendants also are charged with murder in the October 1978 death of Witt, but they are not being tried on that charge.

Radelat also said her physical condition made Witt susceptible to bedsores. Earlier testimony has indicated Witt developed several pressure sores while at Autumn Hills, with at least one of them becoming severely infected.

The doctor said the fact that Witt was immobile made her more prone to develop bedsores. He pointed to medical records showing Witt was turned every two hours while at Autumn Hills. Nevertheless, within five days, she developed her first pressure sore, he said.



Photo by JOHN MAKELY

Dropping In

Sky divers dropped to the field of Cotton Bowl Stadium before the Texas A&M-Auburn game on New Year's Day. This particular diver carries the Lone Star flag that was flown during the contest, which the Aggies won 36-16. See story page 5.

Reagan condemns business with Libya

Associated Press
WASHINGTON — President Reagan on Tuesday ordered all Americans and American companies to quit doing business with Libya, and pledged that unspecified "further steps" would be taken if Moammar Khadafy does not end his "longstanding involvement in terrorism."

Reagan said there was "irrefutable evidence" that the Libyan leader was involved in the Dec. 17 massacres that killed 19 people at Rome and Vienna airports. He declined to discuss this evidence.

Nonetheless, Reagan said Khadafy had aided the Palestinian group he said was responsible for the airport attacks and told reporters, "Khadafy deserves to be treated as a pariah in the world community."

In remarks at the beginning of a nationally televised news conference, the president appealed to America's European allies to "join with us in isolating him." Aides conceded that without such support, the sanctions might have little effect.

On other matters, Reagan told a questioner that he intends to ask Congress to raise the Pentagon's budget by three percent after inflation in the 1987 budget that he submits to Congress next month. At the same time he is expected to propose more than \$50 billion in politically painful domestic program cuts needed to meet the deficit reduction goals in new budget legislation.

Before the news conference even began, Reagan invoked national emergency authority and signed an executive order, which said that firms and individual Americans who remain in Libya or conduct business — import or export — with Libya will be subject to criminal prosecution.

Administration officials said several firms have continued to do business in Libya.

Administration officials said Reagan's order means that, for individuals, anyone other than a journalist who remains in Libya and buys or sells anything at all — including groceries — could face up to 10 years in prison and cash fines.

Reagan said Khadafy provided support for terrorists led by Abu Nidal, the Palestinian who Reagan said was responsible for the airport attacks.

Although Reagan called on other nations to join the U.S. trade ban, some officials, speaking on condition they not be identified, said there was little prospect that Italy, Libya's largest trading partner, and West Germany would cooperate.

Even so, officials said it was important that Reagan act to "eliminate any U.S. contribution to the Libyan economy."

Reagan said further steps would be taken if these didn't end Khadafy's terrorism but did not specify what those might be. But administration officials who briefed reporters at the White House said military action remains one option.

Reagan said, "The United States knows the location of training camps used by terrorists in Libya," and that Abu Nidal has moved his training camps there.

Asked about Khadafy's weekend vow to bring terrorism into the United States if he is provoked, Reagan said "how can you not" take it seriously?"

Tuesday's action was not the first sanction imposed by Reagan against Libya. The United States cut off imports of Libyan oil nearly four years ago and banned export of selected U.S.-made materials that could be used for military purposes or in oil fields in the North African country.

Reagan also had severed diplomatic relations with Libya, banned most travel to the country and urged Americans who live and work there to leave, although some 1,500 remain.

One senior U.S. official said the administration, trying to dramatize Libya's role in international terrorism, plans to issue a "white paper" to demonstrate the training and support Khadafy's government gives terrorists.

The official, who spoke on condition he not be identified, said some of the information came from friendly governments that intercepted and interrogated terrorists trained in Libya and some came from photographs. The precise number of training facilities is difficult to pin down because old ones are regularly disbanded and new camps established.

Agriculture Secretary Block resigns

Associated Press
WASHINGTON — Agriculture Secretary John R. Block, who has presided over the most difficult times for American farmers since the Depression, announced Tuesday he will resign next month.

Block said he had accomplished his foremost goal: pushing through Congress a five-year farm bill aimed at linking agriculture more closely to markets and less to federal subsidies.

"I've done a great deal, I've made a difference," a relaxed Block, his wife Sue at his side, told a room packed with reporters and department officials. "I believe that today, now, is the time to leave."

Block, 50, said he planned to leave his \$86,200-a-year job by mid-February, but he specified no date.

Sources said Richard E. Lyng, a former deputy to Block, was his likely successor.

Throughout his five-year tenure, Block has been a controversial figure as he carried the Reagan administration's free-market banner and alienated many farmers, and as he himself dealt with financial problems on his large Illinois hog farm.

"These have been stressful times for our farmers," Block said, adding that his own farm was now doing better under the management of his son. He said he did not plan to return to the farm and had made no final decision on what he will do.

Speculation has been that Block plans to take a job with a Washington organization in the food and agriculture area.

"I do believe we are starting to turn the corner," Block said of the farm economy, which has been in a serious slide nearly since he first took office in 1981.

Block declined to talk about who his successor would be, saying he would discuss that only with President Reagan. But he said he believed a decision would be made soon to avoid disruption of farm programs.

Block's departure will leave only three members from President Reagan's original Cabinet still on the job.

Terrorism in U.S.? Senator: Surveillance activities are thwarting conspiracies

Associated Press
SAN ANTONIO — Many terror plots in the United States have been circumvented because of surveillance activities which include tracking a number of Libyans, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee says.

Richard Lugar, R-Ind., said Libyans involved in such plots have been apprehended and most Libyans in the country are under constant watch.

"We've had most Libyans in this country under surveillance," Lugar said Monday at a luncheon meeting of the World Affairs Council at a San Antonio hotel.

Lugar made the comments only a day after Libyan strongman Col. Moammar Khadafy threatened to bring terrorism to American streets.

He did not elaborate on the circumstances surrounding the thwarted attacks or the surveillance activities.

In a telephone interview with the San Antonio Light, Immigration and Naturalization Service spokesman Duke Austin said about 3,200 Libyans are currently in the United States with temporary visas — about 1,200 of whom are students.

But FBI spokesman Bill Carter said only those Libyans suspected of terrorist activity are being watched by the FBI. Carter would not say what percentage of the Libyans in this country fall into that category, the newspaper said.

In 1985, 23 potential terrorist incidents were unraveled by U.S. agents, and some of those involved Libyans, Carter said.

Lugar, responding to questions at the luncheon and at an earlier news conference, said he favors a "surgical strike" against whatever countries or individuals trained and supported the terrorists who attacked airports in Rome and Vienna on Dec. 27.

But he said the United States does not have enough information now to "isolate" the terrorists and attack them without endangering innocent bystanders.

"I do favor a surgical strike," Lugar said.

But first, the government must determine with precision what countries, organizations and individuals were responsible, he said.

"You isolate the cancer and then deal with it," he said.

Lugar said the process of gathering intelligence to find a target in Libya or elsewhere is continuing. The effort "may lead to Libya, it may not," he said.

Lugar said the ability of the United States and allied government to gather intelligence on terrorist organizations has improved.

Fall grades delayed, mailed on Monday

There's good (or bad) news for Texas A&M students who have been searching their mailboxes for their fall semester grades — they were sent out Monday.

The two-week mailing delay can be traced back to the fall, said Don Carter, associate registrar of admissions and records. A&M President Frank E. Vandiver approved a Faculty Senate resolution giving faculty 72 hours after the last final exam to turn in grades to the registrar's office.

Carter said the extension also pushed back the registrar office staff's processing timetable. The grade reports would have had to be processed Dec. 23 and 24, he said, which was during the staff's holiday.

"We did not feel it would be right to ask the staff to work two days of their holiday," Carter said.

Therefore, the staff did not begin processing the grade reports until Jan. 2 and 3 when the members returned to work.

Lobby proposes financial penalties for schools

Associated Press
AUSTIN — School districts whose students perform poorly on the new high school graduation test should be penalized with a cut in state funds, Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby said Tuesday.

"Fiscal incentives are the best device I know," Hobby told a Texas Education Agency symposium.

The lieutenant governor tossed out the idea during his brief closing comments. He started by asking the educators to listen to what he said some would perceive as a "wild idea."

"If 10 percent of the candidates for graduation from high school in package includes a mandatory high school graduation test, recently administered for the first time. That test could be an unprecedented tool to guarantee "accountability," Hobby said.

"If we're going to have an accountable system, let's use it. Why should the taxpayers of the state — that pay roughly 60 percent of the cost of operating each school district — continue to put state aid into a school district that doesn't educate its kids?" he said.

A Texas Association of School Boards official called the idea "different."

"We would like to see a firm plan before we have any definite comment," said Betsey Bishop, TASB's manager of governmental relations.

She said the Texas Education Agency's accreditation process does an effective job of gauging school district success.

"They have a list of current districts that are performing poorly," she said. "It's a very small percentage."

Hobby also talked about penalties for districts that graduate students who later need remedial help on subjects they should have learned in high school.

"If they have graduated from 'XYZ' independent school district and is admitted to (college) and requires remedial work, why shouldn't

"If a high school graduate is admitted to college and requires remedial work, why shouldn't that cost be charged back to the school district that failed to provide that student with those skills?" he said.

That proposal brought raised eyebrows from spectators, including Gov. Mark White.

After the symposium, Hobby said he is serious about the penalties, but has not worked out specifics on how they would be administered.

No pass, no pay would bring quick and effective results, he predicted.

"I think they'd shape up in about 24 hours . . . by spending the money that's there more wisely," he said. "If they can't, somebody else can."