

Texas A&M The Battalion

Vol. 82 No. 185 USPS 045360 6 pages

College Station, Texas

Tuesday, July 28, 1987

Skipper takes responsibility for not defending USS Stark

WASHINGTON (AP) — The captain and weapons officer of the USS Stark accepted responsibility Monday for the frigate's failure to defend itself against an Iraqi warplane and as a result, will be allowed to leave the service rather than face a court-martial, the Navy said.

Thirty-seven sailors died and 21 were injured when the Stark was struck by two Exocet missiles from the plane on the night of May 17 while on routine patrol in the Persian Gulf. Iraq called the attack a mistake, an explanation the United States accepted.

Capt. Glenn R. Brindel, the Stark's skipper, submitted a request to retire, the Navy said in a statement. Since he has served almost 22 years, he is eligible to request retirement with a pension, the Navy added.

Because he held the rank of captain only since January, however — less than the required three years — Brindel will have to retire at the reduced rank of commander. Officials said this will mean a loss of more than \$100,000 in potential retirement pay over his lifetime.

Lt. Basil E. Moncrief, 32, of Corpus Christi the tactical action officer, has served only about eight years in the Navy. As a result, he submitted a letter of resignation "and will be separated by the Navy," forfeiting his

commander, Naval Surface Force, Atlantic Fleet."

That means Kelso determined Gajan was less culpable than the other two officers and thus decided to delegate review of his case to a

higher level in the chain of command, officials said.

The letters of reprimand were issued after a disciplinary proceeding, known as an "admiral's mast," during which Kelso reviewed the circumstances of the May 17 attack on the Stark by an Iraqi warplane.

"Both (officers) accepted responsibility and both volunteered significant personal sacrifice in acknowledgement of accountability," the Navy said.

"Adm. Kelso, after a review of the investigation, felt that it was unlikely that any new facts would be uncovered in a (court-martial)" and thus agreed to hold an admiral's mast, the Navy added.

Such a proceeding is one step short of a formal court-martial and can result in various disciplinary sanctions, including a suspension from duty, temporary forfeiture of pay, a letter of reprimand or a letter of admonition.

Within the military legal system, a formal letter of reprimand "is a harsh penalty," said one Navy officer who asked not to be identified.

"For an officer, it's the same thing as saying your career is through. You'll never have a shot at command." Brindel and Moncrief did not appear in person before Kelso, as was their right, but "each admitted responsibility in writing," the Navy said.

"Capt. Brindel and Lt. Moncrief admitted and accepted accountability for the . . . inadequacy of measures taken to protect Stark on May 17, 1987."

— U.S. Navy statement

naval career without any opportunity to obtain a pension, the service said.

The decisions of the two men were announced Monday shortly after Adm. Frank B. Kelso, the commander-in-chief of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet in Norfolk, Va., issued letters of reprimand censuring them for their performance aboard the Stark two months ago.

The Navy said the Stark's executive officer, or No. 2 in command, Lt. Cmdr. Raymond J. Gajan, 35, of Rockville, Md., "has been referred (for) disciplinary action to the com-

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Bentsen stresses need to ease deficit with stronger trade bill

By Robert Morris
Staff Writer

In what was billed as a "town meeting," Senator Lloyd Bentsen stressed the need for further effort on the part of the United States to reduce the trade deficit, which he called one of the toughest issues facing Congress.

As head of the Senate finance committee, Bentsen is one of the most powerful figures in Congress and currently is using that power to gain support for a stronger trade bill. Most of the first part of his appearance at the Brazos Center before over 150 Bryan-College Station residents was spent discussing the bill's importance.

"The fact is over the last six years we've seen our trade deficit go from \$36 billion to \$166 billion," Bentsen said. "We've seen ourselves go, in the last four years, from the number one creditor nation in the world to the number one debtor nation in the world."

Bentsen placed the blame on a changing world economy.

"You don't see much free trade anymore; what you've seen is a return to protectionism," he said. "It's the return of mercantilism — meaning governments directing trade."

It is the non-tariff barriers around the world that keep U.S. products out, Bentsen said.

"Those kinds of limitations we have to strike down," he said. "If you try to buy a piece of beef in Japan,



Sen. Lloyd Bentsen

Photo by Tracy Staton

you pay five times as much for it as we pay for it in the United States; rice cost six times as much."

The Japanese spend 24 percent of their disposable income on food and Americans spend 15 percent, he said. "With that kind of trade surplus (\$50 billion), you (Congress) should knock down some of those barriers."

In an effort to curtail the problem, Bentsen has introduced a trade bill that is co-sponsored by both Republicans and Democrats.

"It is not a situation of a Republican economy or Democratic economy, or presidential economy or

congressional economy," Bentsen said. "It is an American economy."

Bentsen said he did not believe Japan would retaliate with further measures.

"I spent sixteen years building a business and one thing I learned is you never run off your best customer," he said. "And we're too good customers."

Bentsen also said that the deficit must be reduced for economic expansion.

However, he said cutting the deficit by \$70 billion, as the president suggested, would create a nervous economy that could fall into recession.

"When you've got a deficit that has continued to grow and then you turn it around and cut it by \$35 billion and set it on the right path toward next year and the year after that, that is an adequate process," he said. "It will be a tough one but that is what we're going to try to do."

Bentsen opened the floor to questions after about 15 minutes of trade bill discussion and the forum became a scattershot account of recent events. Questions ran the gamut of current events, ranging from economic matters, largely concerning the plight of farmers, to aid to the Contras, which he supports, to tax revision, of which Bentsen said the country has had enough and instead needs stability in the tax laws.

But the issue that drew the most attention was Bentsen's possible presidential aspirations, which he did nothing to abate.

When directly questioned on the subject, Bentsen never gave a yes or no answer and instead replied, "The country could do worse and probably will."

Later, when asked who he thought would win the presidential race in 1988, he said "There is a rumor that I might run myself from the Senate and I'm trying to add some credibility to that."

Regarding his stand on President Reagan's controversial nomination of Richard Bork for the Supreme Court, Bentsen said he would remain neutral until after the confirmation hearings are completed.



Photo by Robert W. Rizzo

Putt-in' On The Hits

Dean Johnson, a senior agricultural economics major, brushes up on his putting for his beginning golf class at the Texas A&M golf course. Johnson says he really enjoys it and spends time outside of class practicing.

Reagan drums up people's support for budget policy

HARTFORD, Wis. (AP) — President Reagan on Monday defended his frequent-flyer appeal for public support on federal budget and tax policies, saying he has no intention of spending his last 18 months in "a potted-plant presidency."

At the same time, Reagan, in three campaign-style stops in this Midwestern enclave of Republican Party strength, signaled he will give his so-called "economic bill of rights" a top priority during the remainder of his term.

The president, who has boosted his schedule of out-of-town trips in recent months amid damaging Iran-Contra disclosures, seemed to be answering charges by congressional Democrats that he favors getting away from Washington over negotiating a compromise budget for the fiscal year starting Oct. 1.

Following a tour of the Broan Manufacturing Co. kitchen products plant here, Reagan told an enthusiastic audience of several hundred employees:

"Now, I've got to tell you, my decision to take our case to the people has gotten some of the seers and sayers back in Washington upset. They keep telling me that I'm walking down a fruitless political path, that the people don't care, and that I'd better let Congress conduct our finances."

"So, to those on Capitol Hill who keep telling me, 'Now, Mr. President, just take it easy, don't go out there and get the people all riled up,' I say, 'The people have a right to be riled up.'"

Reagan's visit to Hartford, West Bend and Port Washington was his fourth trip in five weeks. He previously had taken his tax-and-spend fight to Connecticut, Florida and Indiana.

At a news conference in Milwaukee, Rep. Jim Moody, D-Wis., said Reagan would be remembered for creating economic disaster.

"The Iran scandal will look like small potatoes in the long run compared to the economic scandal," Moody said. "He's proposed the biggest out-of-balance budget in history. Ronald Reagan is the Babe Ruth of budget deficits."

While Reagan insisted that the na-

tion has turned around economically during his presidency, Moody cited the loss of 45,000 manufacturing jobs in Wisconsin alone and 3 million manufacturing jobs nationally as evidence to the contrary.

Reagan, ironically, picked up a complaint voiced during the Iran-Contra hearings to make his point

"There is much left to do in the next 18 months. And to borrow a phrase heard recently, I reject a 'potted-plant presidency.' I'm here to do a job."

— President Ronald Reagan

that he'll force members of Congress to pay attention to his arguments about budgets and taxes.

"There is much left to do in the next 18 months," he said. "And to borrow a phrase heard recently, I reject a 'potted-plant presidency.' I'm here to do a job."

Brendan Sullivan, attorney for Lt. Col. Oliver North, told the congressional Iran-Contra committees that his responsibility as a lawyer was to object to certain questions, not to act as "a potted plant."

Reagan was interrupted more than a half-dozen times with applause, particularly when he spoke of popular unrest with high federal deficits.

Accepting a Broan-made fan, Reagan was told to "blow some fresh air" in the direction of the Congress. He replied, "I won't aim it at the two sitting here," referring to Sen. Bob Kasten and Rep. James Sensenbrenner, both Wisconsin Republicans.

Reagan, who in 6½ years as president has not submitted a balanced budget to Congress, said he wouldn't back away from his high-profile push for fundamental changes in the way lawmakers make budget and enact tax hikes.

"I would like it to be said that once of the legacies of my administration was opportunity for Americans," he said.

Educators say SAT gets too much emphasis

DALLAS (AP) — The Scholastic Aptitude Test, designed for use in university admissions, gets too much emphasis and doesn't necessarily reflect academic excellence, say some college administrators.

"It's gotten away from us," Edward Boehm, admissions director at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, said. "The public tries to use the test to make an assessment. Students get caught up in the hype. Somehow we have to stop the cycle."

Students are taking intensive courses to beef up their performance on the SAT, used to measure college aptitude and also a yardstick

of institutions' academic excellence.

But four Eastern schools — Middlebury, Bowdoin, Bates and Union College of New York — have dropped the test as an admissions requirement.

Boehm says TCU nearly dropped the SAT as a requirement for admission. But he said he believes the test has some value in predicting academic success and he fears dropping it could be perceived as lowering standards.

"I worry that it takes a while for the public to get used to the idea of dropping the SAT," he said. "People think that if a college doesn't high-

light scores, it must be trying to hide something; there must be some problem."

Gerhard Fonken, vice president for academic affairs at the University of Texas, agreed. He said the educational system has been fascinated with quantitative ways of measuring a product.

But private tutoring companies specializing in test preparation are still doing a booming business.

At the Dallas branch of Stanley Kaplan, a nationwide test-prep organization, SAT course enrollment has increased steadily, administrator Ron Blumenthal said.

A. Kenneth Pye, incoming president of Southern Methodist University, said, "The problem is that there's a strong tendency by the public and the press to rate institutions by any standard they have, in this case the SAT."

"This test is created for a very specific, narrow purpose. The information it supplies is often misused."

He said he believes the test does help predict how prospective freshmen will fare, but he fears students and parents use a school's average SAT score too broadly to determine the quality of the college itself.

Border officials look for Middle Eastern terrorists

HARLINGEN (AP) — Officials along the U.S.-Mexico border are under a special alert to be on the lookout for a Middle Eastern hit squad reportedly out to kill a federal law enforcement agent, a district director for the Immigration and Naturalization Service said Monday.

Similar alerts have been issued during the past year, said Omer Sewell, director of the INS Harlingen District covering the southern tip of Texas.

"There were reports that there were groups coming up through Mexico intent on killing a

federal law enforcement officer," Sewell said.

Silvestre Reyes, chief of the Border Patrol's nine-county sector based in the border city of McAllen, added, "There was mention made of a connection with Islamic Jihad. Certainly, with the current situation in the Middle East and the way things have evolved in the past year or so, we're taking it very seriously."

Federal officers at all ports of entry and throughout the district have been informed of the alert, Sewell said.

"Of course, we alerted all of our officers to be careful, because I'm afraid that one of these days one of these reports, one of these alerts, is going to be a live one," Sewell said.

Officers in the area have not reported any incidents related to the special warnings, he added.

"With the last alert, we alerted our ports of entry and we went back and checked on our recent missions to see if there had been anyone admitted from the Far East, but we didn't find any suspicious entry," Sewell said.