

# Texas A&M The Battalion

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## NASA subcontractor sued by two women

HOUSTON (AP) — Two women who worked for a NASA subcontractor filed a \$5.2 million lawsuit Thursday alleging they were forced from their jobs after raising concerns about management abuses and violations that could harm the space shuttle and its crew.

Named as defendants in the federal lawsuit are the subcontractor, Unisys Corp., four Unisys employees and the prime contractor, Rockwell Shuttle Operations Co.

The suit claims Unisys overcharged Rockwell and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. It also alleges Unisys listed a fictitious person as an employee, violated security regulations in handling classified flight software, failed to check the safety of flight hardware and violated the Equal Pay Act.

Sylvia C. Robins, a former Unisys section supervisor who now works at Rockwell, said after she started working for Unisys in February 1986, she began questioning safety management of the company's work on the shuttle program.

"At every step of the way, my management pressed me to drop my concerns," Robins said in a news conference after the lawsuit was filed. She said she was demoted unfairly at Unisys and went to work for Rockwell.

The other plaintiff, Ria Solomon, contends she also was demoted unfairly and later fired unjustly from her job as a data clerk for Unisys.

The two women's claims involve work done after the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger, which ended seven.

Unisys, formerly System Development Corp., is the subcontractor to Rockwell Shuttle Operations, responsible for developing and distributing flight software, including verifying safety for the space shuttle.

Rockwell Shuttle, a subsidiary of Rockwell International, is the prime contractor to NASA and is responsible for providing flight hardware, flight software and overall operations and services to NASA for the space shuttle contract.

In the suit, Robins said she identified safety problems, management deficiencies, management abuses, security breaches and potential illegalities at Unisys. She claims she was harassed at Rockwell about her concerns, but the suit does not accuse Rockwell of safety and security violations.

Robins said the problems by Unisys occurred at the Rockwell facility in Houston, adding she thought they could pose serious "hazards to the safety of the (shuttle) crew."

However, she would not elaborate on what hazards a flight crew could face.

Solomon, meanwhile, said she was forced from her job because she would not agree to help manage-

ment "frame" Robins by falsifying time sheets to show Robins forced workers to do unapproved overtime. She also contended the company had a fictitious employee on the payroll.

"Sylvia Robins and I filed this suit today to stop continued harassment and intimidation of Unisys employees," she said.

Lynne Bernabei, the attorney for the pair, said her clients allege overcharges to Rockwell and NASA, but she did not have a specific amount.

Allan Eldridge, a former Rockwell employee, and James Carter, a former Unisys employee, joined the two women at the news conference to voice similar complaints. Neither, however, has filed suit.

The two women said they have discussed their concerns with the NASA inspector general.

Unisys spokesman Jim Lambeth said Thursday afternoon he was not aware of the lawsuit and had no comment.

Ed Kennedy, spokesman for Rockwell in California, said he could not comment on the suit because he had not seen it. He also said Eldridge brought concerns about possible safety problems to Rockwell officials and those were under investigation.

"Any time someone has concerns that involve the shuttle we take them seriously," Kennedy said.

Rockwell International came under fire in 1985 for mischarges on an Air Force contract in 1982. The company pleaded guilty Oct. 30, 1985 to 20 counts of fraud, primarily involving falsified employee time cards.

*"At every step of the way, my management pressed me to drop my concerns."*  
— Sylvia C. Robins, former Unisys section supervisor



Photo by Samuel Myers

## In 30 seconds or less

Responding to fierce competition, this company is going all out to deliver its pizza the fastest by acquiring new delivery vehicles. Actually, this race

car was on display Thursday at Rudder Fountain to help advertise the job-opportunity program Mobil was holding in Rudder Theater.

## Clements unveils plan to end prison crowding

AUSTIN (AP) — About 150 inmates will be released from state prisons daily to make room for a like number of incoming criminals, Gov. Bill Clements announced Thursday. Clements, along with members of the prison board and the Board of Pardons and Paroles, said the new management plan should end overcrowding problems that have

closed the state prison system to new admissions more than 20 times this year.

"The management plan will establish an equilibrium on both sides of the state prison doors," Clements said. "The plan will keep the prisons open to receive those inmates who have been duly and legally sentenced by the courts."

"We're trying to hit a steady flow, a steady rate, of about 150 that are coming in and 150 that are going out."

The program is scheduled to begin Monday.

Because the Texas Department of Corrections has filled its prisons to the population limit allowed by court rulings, its gates have been closed repeatedly this year.

The governor said the plan also should ease crowding problems in county jails caused when the TDC closes.

Clements said the new plan was only a short-term answer to the overcrowding crisis.

He and the other officials emphasized at a news conference that the long-range solution is building more prisons.

Charles Terrell, a member of the TDC board, said, "This plan is to keep the prisons open. It's a management program. It doesn't catch up. It doesn't keep people off the streets that we want to keep off the streets."

"We are incomplete in two areas. We don't have enough (prison) units going on line to keep up with keeping the hard-core, repeat offender that's dangerous to society in prison. And we don't have enough funds to initiate other programs outside of prison, like continuing education for people on probation or parole."

Terrell said Texas has more criminals on probation, 290,000, and on parole, 41,000, than any other state. California is second, he said, with 200,000 on probation and 30,000 on parole.

Clements proposed this year that the Legislature approve 19,000 more prison beds to meet needs projected through 1991.

However, only about 10,000 beds were authorized.

## Apartheid protestors at UT sentenced to jail

AUSTIN (AP) — Anti-apartheid protestors who took over the University of Texas president's office were sentenced to jail and fined Thursday by a Travis County judge who harshly criticized their actions.

Last October's brief takeover of the office "was beyond free speech and youthful exuberance," County Court-at-Law Judge Leslie Taylor told the 12 protestors. "Your acts were dangerous to yourselves and the community at large."

"This is not the way we address problems in our society."

The protestors are members of the so-called UT 16, who took over President William Cunningham's office to protest university investment in companies that do business in South Africa.

Taylor criticized the county attorney's office, which recommended that the defendants be given probation and be required to pay \$3,500 for damage to the president's office and perform 100 hours of community service.

The defendants also asked for probation and for community service restitution. They opposed paying the \$3,500, contending that police caused the damage to the president's office.

"There is not a dime's worth of difference between the state's recommendation and the position urged by the defense," Taylor said.

"Whenever that happens, the people of this community ought to wonder whether their prosecutor is doing his duty and representing the people's concerns that the laws be upheld," she said.

"To follow the state's recommendation would be an open invitation to others to commit these kinds of acts without fear of any serious consequences," she said.

Mike Denton of the county attorney's office said, "The facts of the case supported our recommendation. . . . We realize (the protestors) broke the law and went too far, but we're not blind to why."

## Official says faulty brackets cause bleacher to give way

By Drew Leder  
Staff Writer

In the Texas A&M Twelfth Man tradition, students were standing on the Kyle Field bleachers Sept. 5 for the A&M-Louisiana State University football game when a support bolt on a third deck bleacher gave way.

"Three or four guys really ate it," said Phil Korenek, a sophomore industrial distribution major who was on the bleacher when the accident occurred.

Billy Pickard, coordinator of training, equipment and facilities for the Athletic Department, said he knew of no injury reports resulting from the accident and was unaware of the accident until he discovered the faulty bleacher during a routine stadium check last Friday.

In fact, Pickard said, although an average of one bench breaks for every two games played at Kyle Field, he has never heard of an injury resulting from this in the 22 years he has been at A&M.

Almost all the bleacher problems occur on the third deck because the design of the metal bleacher supports on that level is different from those on the other two. The third deck was added in 1980.

"We will periodically have a problem on the third deck," Pickard said. "There are some (bleachers) that don't seem to be anchored in real good."

On the first two decks, the alumi-

num seats are held in place by metal brackets attached to the top of concrete seat risers, while on the third deck the brackets are attached to the side of the concrete.

"It doesn't seem practical to replace them all," Pickard said, so the Athletic Department replaces worn out brackets and bolts as they break.

"The stadium isn't in any danger of falling apart," he said.

A representative of the architectural firm that designed the third deck, Lockwood Andrews and Newman Inc., said the fact that Aggies tend to stand on the benches wasn't taken into consideration in the design. He said the position of the spectators' bodies, whether standing or sitting, should have no effect on the durability of the bleachers.

When the benches do break, the Athletic Department calls in the Facilities, Planning and Construction Department to do the repair work. Pickard said there has never been a problem with a bleacher after it has been repaired.

The bulk of the work Kyle Field crews are faced with doesn't involve repairs, he said, but is the result of pigeons and high school students.

High school students who come to the stadium to watch their football teams play don't pay it the same respect Aggies do, he said.

"We don't ever have a problem with Texas A&M students at Kyle Field," he said. "I would rather have two college games with 70,000 peo-

ple than one high school game with 3,000."

Pickard said that following a high school football game there usually is a hefty amount of cleanup work, especially on bathroom walls.

Kyle Field was constructed in 1926 and consisted of one level of wooden benches on the west side of the field. Pickard said these benches frequently would fall apart because students stood and stomped on them. The wooden benches were replaced with fiberglass benches in 1967 and aluminum bleachers shortly after that.

The brackets used to support the wooden benches haven't been replaced since 1926, Pickard said.

Although the bleachers in the horseshoe area of the stadium, added in 1927, probably take the most punishment because of their use at yell practices, Pickard said none of the benches in that area have ever broken.

"Our stadium probably holds up as good as possible," he said.

The A&M tradition of standing during football games has roots in 1922, when the A&M football team, riddled with injured players, called on an A&M reserve player, E. King Gill, to come out of the stands and suit up to play. Although he didn't actually play in the game, Gill became known as the Twelfth Man, and out of that event grew the A&M tradition of standing during games to show support for the Aggie team.

## Millions of workers haven't filed W-4s, may face lower take-home pay

WASHINGTON (AP) — Less than a week before the deadline, millions of American workers have yet to file a new Form W-4 to adjust their tax withholding to conform with the overhauled federal tax code.

Under the law, enacted a year ago, workers must file a new W-4 with their employers before Oct. 1. Those who fail to comply could find their take-home pay sharply reduced.

The Internal Revenue Service, updating a survey completed by the Roper polling organization in late July, estimates that about 20 percent of workers have filed withholding forms this year.

Since the agency was expecting about 94

million to file, that means about 18 million have not.

"It's late, but there is still time to adjust your paycheck," IRS spokesman Johnelle Hunter said Thursday.

"It might be a good idea, even if you have filed a form earlier this year, to make the calculations again and, if necessary, file a new form to bring withholding in line with liability," she said.

The new withholding forms are necessary because the 1986 tax overhaul made many changes in basic tax provisions that affect many people.

On the plus side, rates have been cut significantly for most Americans. Standard deductions have been raised sharply. The

personal exemption has been almost doubled, to \$1,900.

On the other hand, the law repealed a special deduction for two-earner couples, affecting 50 million people.

More than 36 million couples and individuals deducted their state and local sales taxes last year; that deduction, too, has been wiped out.

Similarly, about 7 million couples and individuals have lost all or part of their Individual Retirement Account deduction because of the new law.

The 8 million people who received unemployment compensation in 1987 will be taxed fully on of income for the first time.

Deductions for interest on credit cards

and other consumer borrowing have been slashed, affecting about 27 million filers.

Cuts in medical deductions will affect more than 11 million filers and about 33 million filers have lost part of their miscellaneous deductions.

Those changes have been affecting the tax liabilities of American workers since Jan. 1.

There is a good chance that any worker whose withholding has not yet been adjusted to reflect the same changes is having too little or too much withheld from each paycheck.

Those who neglect to file a W-4 this year will not be hit with a big fine or jail sentence. But, depending on their circum-

stances, they could face a big increase in withholding on Oct. 1 or owe the government a lot of money — plus a penalty — when they file their tax returns next year.

Under the new law:

- A single person who does not file a new W-4 by the deadline will be given no more than one withholding allowance, even if otherwise entitled to more because of deductions or dependents. An allowance on the withholding form is equal to the personal exemption on a tax return; it exempts \$1,900 a year, \$158.33 a month or \$36.54 a week from withholding.

- A married worker will be authorized no more than two allowances until a new W-4 is filed.