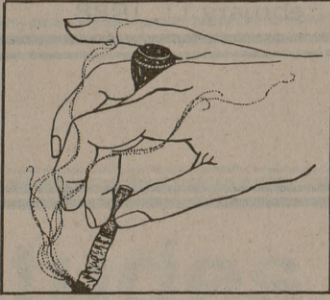


# Texas A&M The Battalion

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**Inside**  
*Aff Ease*  
Where there's smoke, are there students?

## Official says Noriega gave Contras help Leader worked with North

WASHINGTON (AP) — Panama's military leader, Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, provided military training for U.S.-backed Nicaraguan rebels after he met twice in 1985 with Lt. Col. Oliver L. North, a former top Panamanian intelligence official testified Wednesday.

North told Noriega in October 1985 that the Panamanian training bases were needed because U.S. laws at the time banned any direct U.S. help for the rebels fighting Nicaragua's leftist government, Jose I. Blandon said through an interpreter.

Blandon, who was fired last month by Noriega as Panama's consul general in New York, also told a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee that Vice President George Bush used Noriega to send a warning to Cuban leader Fidel Castro hours before the U.S. invasion of Grenada in 1983.

on terrorism. "Unfortunately, what I said is true."

Late Wednesday, the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee issued a statement saying he doubted Blandon's allegation on the CIA reports.

## U.S.-Panama relations hurt by Noriega

PANAMA CITY, Panama (AP) — The upheaval in U.S.-Panamanian relations centers on one man, Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, and Washington's efforts to break his tight hold on power.

Domestic critics of Noriega, chief of the Panamanian Defense Forces and the power behind the nominally civilian government, generally welcome the platform provided by the revelations about his alleged abuses unfolding at Senate hearings in Washington and in federal indictments in Florida.

Bush, who was asked at the White House if he ever called Noriega, replied, "Nunca — Never." "Nunca" is the Spanish word for never.

Blandon, testifying under oath for a second day, also repeated his assertion that the CIA regularly sent Noriega reports on the political positions and personal lives of some U.S. senators, including Sens. Jesse Helms, R-North Carolina, and Edward M. Kennedy, D-Massachusetts.

Yet memories linger among them that the general once was a welcome figure in the United States.

Ruben Carles, an editor at the opposition newspaper *La Prensa*, said the creation of the sometimes repressive 15,000-strong Panamanian Defense Forces headed by Noriega was a sore point with the United States.

"There is no reason in my heart and in my mind to invalidate what I have said," he told the subcommittee.

"These military boys were created, trained and supplied by the United States," Carles said.

## Researcher says experts are wrong about AIDS' cause

WASHINGTON (AP) — A researcher who says federal experts are wrong about the cause of AIDS but are embarrassed to admit error will receive the first public airing of his views next week before a presidential commission.

Dr. Peter J. Fischinger, a respected virus researcher at the University of California, Berkeley, will appear before the Presidential Commission on the HIV Epidemic at a hearing on Feb. 20 in New York.

that it might not be the one causing AIDS," Duesberg said in a telephone interview. "They don't want to admit error."

But Dr. Peter J. Fischinger, the Health and Human Services coordinator of the federal war on AIDS, said the preponderance of the evidence has convicted HIV as the AIDS villain.

It will be the first time, he said, for the federal government to acknowledge his suggestion that acquired immune deficiency syndrome may be caused by something other than the human immunodeficiency virus.

Duesberg said he angered colleagues at the National Institutes of Health when he questioned their conclusions about HIV in an article last March in the journal *Cancer Research*. And he said other researchers have declined to publicly debate the issue with him.

"HIV has become a billion-dollar virus and nobody wants to admit

the sum of the information is really incontrovertible now," Fischinger said. "Many of the reputable scientists in this field just don't want to go into a public forum and debate the issues because they don't think there is anything to debate about."

Duesberg said other researchers shun him because so much now is at stake that nobody wants to question the HIV-AIDS connection. All of the government testing and research, he said, is centered on HIV "and no alternative views are tolerated."

A virus researcher for 25 years, Duesberg said, "I feel embarrassed for my own field. We are not giving this due scientific caution."

## Report: Soviet people gain more human rights in 1987

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Soviet government gave its people greater freedom and showed more tolerance towards dissenters in 1987 but with an all-powerful secret police still unchecked, there has been no "dawn of democracy" in the USSR, the State Department said Wednesday.

That finding was contained in the State Department's annual report on human rights around the world, which concluded that while there were positive changes in South Korea, North Korea was the most serious rights violator anywhere. The 1,358-page study covered 169 countries.

In its section on the Soviet Union, the report said the

changes in the Soviet Union under the leadership of General Secretary Mikhail S. Gorbachev were "more than cosmetic and less than fundamental."

While asserting that a majority of Soviet political prisoners remained in jail last year, "there was some relaxation of totalitarian controls," it said, adding that some political prisoners were released.

The report said that the Soviets also announced moves to end the "truly barbaric practice" of sending dissidents to psychiatric hospitals. There was also an increase in emigration levels of ethnic Germans, Armenians and Jews.

Plays and films dealt more honestly with the realities of Soviet life, the study said. But it said conditions at prisons and forced labor camps may have worsened during 1987.

"Life in prison continues to be marked by isolation, poor diet and malnutrition, compulsory hard labor, beatings, frequent illness and inadequate medical care," the report said.

Assistant Secretary of State Richard Schifter told a news conference Wednesday it is important to note both the progress which has been registered in the Soviet Union as well as the limitations.



### Shout it out

While tearing up the sidewalk across from Heaton Hall on Wednesday, ground maintenance workers Albert Englemann, right, and Neil

Morgan had to yell to be heard. They were tearing up the sidewalk to install handicap ramps.

## Former employees of Toys Plus seek payroll from bankrupt store

By Richard Williams  
Senior Staff Writer

The saying is "He who dies with the most toys wins," but several former employees of the defunct Toys Plus store in College Station say that the store can die with the toys — they just want their pay.

Toys Plus, a St. Louis-based chain, has filed for Chapter seven bankruptcy and has closed its stores.

The College Station store still has signs on the doors reading "closed for inventory," but company officials say the store closed permanently in December 1987.

Chapter seven bankruptcy is complete liquidation by a company.

Under Chapter 7 bankruptcy the company will liquidate its assets and use the proceeds to pay its creditors.

The amount of money raised will determine what percentage of each dollar owed will be paid to creditors.

Filing for Chapter seven bankruptcy differs from Chapter 10 or Chapter 11 bankruptcy because no reorganization or restructuring plans are adopted.

Mike Machen, a former Toys Plus employee, said the company paid the store's managers with cashier's checks, but it paid the rest of the employees with regular payroll checks.

The returned payroll checks were stamped "Refer to Maker" by the Mercantile Bank of St. Louis.

An employee in the bookkeeping department of Mercantile Bank said refer to maker means the account holder, Toys Plus, had ordered the checks be returned unpaid. It also means any questions about the check should be referred to the company, she said.

An employee at Toys Plus' main office in St. Louis said decisions regarding the payment of employees were made by management personnel.

The employee, who would not identify himself, did confirm the managers were paid in a different manner than other employees. He said no one involved with the decision could be reached at the current time.

The employee also said former employees with returned paychecks can file a claim against the bank-

rupty estate and "that claim will be a priority claim."

The employee said a priority claim would "put them in line in front of some of the other creditors."

It is not known where in line the former employees would be until the entire list of creditors has been composed, the employee said.

Machen, a Texas A&M student, said he has collected about \$800 worth of the unpaid payroll checks and plans to give them to the Brazos County District Attorney's office

within the next two weeks.

Machen also said he plans to file felony fraud charges against Toys Plus.

Machen said that depending on the outcome of the liquidation and bankruptcy proceedings the former employees might be able to get the entire amount the company owes them, but they probably will get only a percentage of the amount owed.

Charges already have been filed against Toys Plus by former employees of an Amarillo store who also had their paychecks returned.

## Athletic department stresses education for A&M athletes

Athletes at A&M  
Part three of a four-part series

By Tracy Staton  
Senior Staff Writer

Tennis can't be learned from a textbook, and grammar is no help in golf. But statistics about swimmers are figured after meets. And physics shows a tackler's force is proportional to his weight.

But do athletes use their textbooks? Do they have a grasp on basic grammar? Do they earn degrees from Texas A&M, or do they simply vanish when they can't compete any longer?

Don Hunt, the Athletic Department's academic counselor, says the department is an integral part of A&M's business — educating young men and women.

"We're all in this together," he says. "We don't work separately from the academic community."

If the Athletic Department disregarded the athletes' education, the quality of the athletic program would deteriorate, he says.

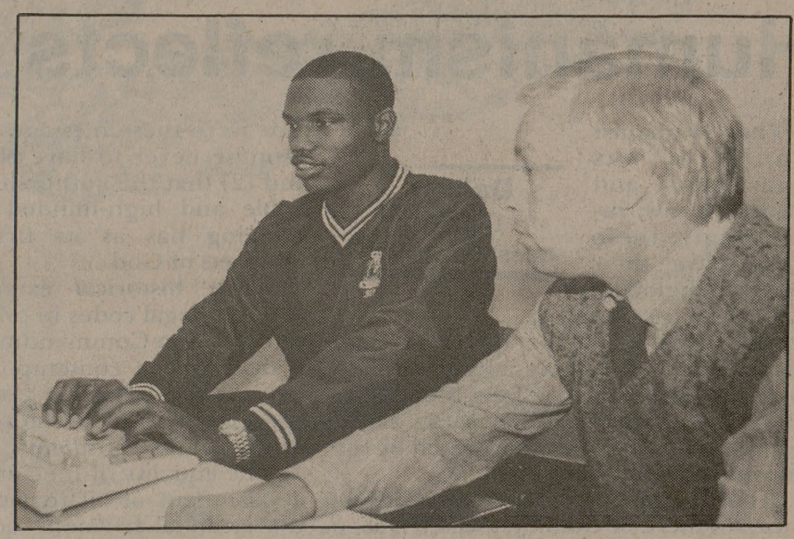
"Suppose kids came in here and we put them on athletics and ignore academics," Hunt says. "They'd go away without a degree and with no foundation for getting one. How long could we continue to recruit with that kind of an approach to academics? Not very long."

The National Collegiate Athletic Association requires athletes to be enrolled in a legitimate curriculum and to pass 24 hours per year toward their degree.

Lynn Hickey, associate director for women's athletics, says these rules were made to safeguard athletes from being used for athletics only.

"Athletes are in the mainstream classroom," she says. "There are no remedial classes for them. And if they don't compete academically, they lose their scholarships."

Hunt says 86 percent of football



Academic counselor Dan Hunt helps William Thomas, a freshman football player, work on a computer in a Cain Hall study room.

players graduate. And 91 percent of all other athletes earn degrees, he says. These percentages include the students who flunk out, and exclude those who transfer or quit school for personal reasons.

Between 65 percent and 70 percent of entering freshmen graduate from Texas A&M, Registrar Don Carter says. But the remaining 30 percent to 35 percent do include students who transfer or leave A&M for other reasons, as well as those who flunk out.

Hunt says he excludes the athletes who transfer because they were not forced to leave.

"I don't consider it my problem if a student leaves of his own free will," Hunt says. "Some have been here and performed well, but quit the program for whatever reason, so we

don't include those students in our statistics."

For the purpose of these percentages, the department allows athletes 10 full-time semesters to work toward graduation, Hunt says. The athletes must complete their degree requirements within this time frame, or they are included in the percentage of athletes who don't graduate.

"We don't consider four years to be the ultimate," he says. "We use ten semesters of full-time work as the time they should graduate."

"For example, Rod Bernstein was with us eight semesters, and he's back this semester taking six hours because he has to attend camps and workouts for the San Diego Chargers. We don't count this semester as

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