

Jailed man: confession was forced

ODESSA (AP) — A man awaiting trial in Presidio County on charges of marijuana possession claims he was beaten by Mexican police and forced to confess to drug smuggling after being arrested in a border town.

Andres Grado Orozco, 47, of Odessa claims police in the border town of Ojinaga, Mexico, beat him, tied his hands, covered his eyes and forced his head into a tub of water to elicit a bogus confession from him.

Orozco remains jailed in Chihuahua after being arrested in Ojinaga in March 2 on charges of drug smuggling.

Four other Odessa residents were jailed along with Orozco on charges of transporting 150 kilos of marijuana.

Commander Agustin Cabrera Castillo denied the allegations, saying that Orozco confessed to being a key player in a smuggling scam that involved the transportation of drugs from the southwestern Mexican state of Michoacan to Odessa.

In addition to Orozco, Jesus Fierro Garcia, Juan Antonio Calderon, Victoria Fierro Gonzales and Linda Fierro Ibarra, all of Odessa, and two Mexican citizens were arrested after they got off a bus with several suitcases and put the suitcases in a pickup truck, Castillo told the *Odessa American*.

Mexican authorities say Orozco was waiting for the pickup and suitcases to reach him in Ojinaga, where he would smuggle the marijuana into the United States.

Orozco said he didn't know the other Odessans until he met them in jail.

First RepublicBank CEO leaves in FDIC shake-up

DALLAS (AP) — Financially ailing First RepublicBank Corp.'s chairman resigned Tuesday as the nation's 13th-largest bank-holding company projected it would lose \$1.5 billion in the first quarter.

That figure, nearly three times what officials had predicted earlier, would be the sixth-largest quarterly loss in the country's history. It comes on the heels of a \$1 billion emergency loan the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. extended to the bank March 18.

Gerald W. Fronterhouse's resignation as chief executive officer and chairman of the board was part of a management shake-up arranged by federal regulators overseeing recapitalization of the company, officials said. He is the second top official to leave the firm in three weeks.

"It's a very big loss, and obviously it will require a recapitalization of the bank," said Comptroller of the Currency Robert L. Clarke, whose office last week completed a two-month examination of First RepublicBank.

After that scrutiny, "it was obvious to me and to my colleagues at the FDIC and the Federal Reserve Board that management needed to consider carefully the steps that would have to be taken to get on with the business of restructuring," Clarke said. "Certainly one of the steps that had to be considered was a change in the leadership of the company."

The board elected Albert V. Casey, 68, former chairman of the board of AMR Corp. and American Airlines to replace Fronterhouse.

"I made the decision to step aside

at this time because it is in the best interests of this institution and the community that I do so," Fronterhouse said.

Casey said Fronterhouse made a "great personal sacrifice" by resigning and said his goal is "to return to profitability and to provide the state of Texas with a stronger and much-needed banking institution."

Casey said he will spend the next few weeks reviewing the existing management team before making further changes at the company.

"We must adopt a program to return us to profitability," Casey said. "We must have a restructuring plan. The emphasis is going to be on the revenues."

The company said it anticipates a provision for loan losses and write-downs of foreclosed properties of approximately \$1.5 billion, largely attributable to its real estate portfolio.

First RepublicBank built loan-loss reserves in the first quarter primarily in recognition of the continuing impact of declining appraisals of current real estate market values, officials said.

But the FDIC's assurance of full protection of all depositors and other general creditors of the company's affiliate banks has enabled the banks to continue service without disruption, officials added.

On March 18, the FDIC made a \$1 billion six-month loan to First RepublicBank Corp. to quiet depositors' fears and halt a run on deposits. Only two days earlier, Fronterhouse had announced the firm would seek federal assistance "to provide a more stable environment for our company."

Reeling from the effects of nearly \$4 billion in non-performing loans in oil and real estate markets, the bank reported a loss of \$656 million in 1987. Still, year-end assets at the 134-bank holding company remained at \$33.2 billion.

Fronterhouse, 51, is a 26-year veteran of the banking firm, having spent his entire career there. He succeeded James D. Berry as chairman of predecessor RepublicBank in July 1986.

He is the latest top management official to leave the company since last month. Three weeks ago, Charles H. Pistor Jr., 57, chairman of lead bank First RepublicBank Dallas, announced he would leave in mid-April, and Fronterhouse was to assume his duties.

With Fronterhouse and Pistor gone, only vice chairman Joseph R. Musolino would remain of the trio who rose to the center of the bank's top management in the early 1980s.

Fronterhouse led RepublicBank when it acquired cross-town rival InterFirst Corp. in December 1986. The deal was designed to create an earnings machine through accounting, adjustments and cost-cutting, including the elimination of duplicate jobs — about 3,000 jobs in all.

Still bank industry experts said Fronterhouse's resignation was not unexpected, since the FDIC must face congressional scrutiny if it allows the holding company's management to remain as part of a bailout plan.

Part of FDIC's deal with First RepublicBank officials specified that its most senior executives would resign if asked to by the FDIC.

Explosives spark blaze, cause evacuation

GODLEY (AP) — Explosive charges being manufactured for oil drillers accidentally detonated Tuesday, sparking a blaze that destroyed the production plant, injured two workers and forced the evacuation of about 30 people, authorities said.

A series of explosions that began just after midnight and the ensuing fire flattened the Owen Oil Tools Inc. plant, which is about 25 miles southwest of Fort Worth.

"I walked outside and seen kind of a mushroom cloud, and I seen a lot of popping going on over there," said Danny Shrader, who lived in the

two-square-mile area evacuated after the blasts. "It looked like fireworks."

Two of the dozen workers on duty at the plant suffered minor injuries that required only brief hospitalization, officials said.

Authorities said they ordered the evacuations in the mostly rural area around the plant because they believed 20- to 30,000 pounds of Class A explosives were stored elsewhere in the plant area.

Firemen from several surrounding towns and volunteers battled the blaze, but were pulled back at times because of fears of possible additional explosions.

Owen said a charge being manufactured for use in oil-drilling operations detonated in an equipment press, triggering other explosions "and that started a fire, and fire just led to all the other buildings."

None of the plant's 34 employees will be laid off, he said. Instead, they will be involved in a clean-up and rebuilding operation.

The evacuees were taken to the Godley Fire Department, where they waited for several hours before being allowed to return home.

The manufacturing plant was located between Godley and Cresson, near the intersection of Texas 171 and U.S. 377.

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