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Oil rig worker says Iranians were 'going to kill anything that moved'

HOUSTON (AP) — A former Odessa man who was working on a Persian Gulf drilling rig, targeted by Iranian gunboats, said the attackers "were going to kill anything that moved."

Bob Jackson said the Monday attack was clearly in retaliation for the U.S. assault earlier on two Iranian platforms.

"I saw these gunboats about a half-mile away attack this tanker," Jackson told the *Houston Chronicle* from his home in Abu Dhabi.

"One of the small gunboats shot three or four rockets into the tanker," he said. "It was cut in half."

The boats then went toward an Iranian-controlled island in the gulf about 10 to 15 miles away, he said.

"I kept scanning over the horizon and looking that none came back before we all went back to work," said Jackson, 55, who retired after 28 years with Houston-based Cameron Iron Works and now works as a consultant for the United Arab Emirates' government-owned petroleum company.

"We're out there trying to make a living, that's all," he said.

"Then I saw a white wake coming over the horizon, and I could tell it

"Then they started machine-gunning us. They would rake the deck, trying to kill people."

— Bob Jackson, worker on attacked oil rig in Persian Gulf

was the gunboats coming back," he said.

It looked like they were returning to fire at the tanker, but they made an abrupt 90-degree turn toward the rig, Jackson said.

"They stopped maybe 200 yards away, and they just looked at us," he said. "Then they turned, and I said, 'Boy, this is it.'"

By turning, the gunboat was able to point its rockets at the rig, whose platform is about 80 feet above water.

The gunboat fired 10 or 12 rockets at the rig's legs, hoping to blow one apart to topple the rig, Jackson said.

"They hit us (with rockets) six or seven or eight or 10 times," he said. "When they hit the rig, it bounced me off the floor about two feet."

But none of the rig's legs toppled.

"Then they started machine-gunning us," Jackson said. "They would rake the deck, trying to kill people."

As the gunboats circled the rig, firing at those on the platform, Jackson said, the crew would run to the opposite side.

The U.S. Navy was alerted, but Jackson said he never saw any U.S. ships and did not know whether they may have caused the Iranians to withdraw.

The Iranians seemed to lighten their machine gun firing when chartered helicopters flew to the rig and evacuated the personnel, Jackson said.

"I think they were there to kill all of us," he said. "They were going to kill anything that moved. There were having fun, like children."

"They were there to hurt people; they were there to sink something,"

Jackson said, adding that the boats split an oil tanker in half, rockets before attacking the legged jacking rig Scan Baged by Houston-based Sterling Co. Ltd.

Marty du Broc, operations manager for the company, said the rig was owned by a Liberian firm and staffed by U.S. workers.

About 70 people, including Americans, were on board when the attack occurred.

"It was a miracle of God that one was injured," du Broc said.

He said those working in the Drilling are from Great Britain, Zealand, India and Pakistan.

"Everybody was very lucky," du Broc said. "I got a little wet but I did not go into the water. That's the last thing you want to do."

He said he is in no hurry to return to the rig as long as the possibility remains the Iranians will launch another attack.

"I'm not going back until the next few days, anyway," du Broc said.

Du Broc said the rig has been off site off Sharjah for about two weeks. The extent of damage was not known.

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Grumman Corp. could bring up to 2,000 jobs to Houston

HOUSTON (AP) — Grumman Corp. announced Tuesday it would build a Southwest Regional Development and Production Center here, bringing the city at least 1,000 new jobs in the next year.

The aircraft and aerospace company, which already employs about 500 people in Houston, said the job count could grow to 2,000 or more, depending on the outcome of several NASA and Defense Department programs.

"Grumman feels betting a large part of our company future on Houston is a good bet," J.J. Bussolini, Grumman vice president for business operations, said at a news conference.

"We have identified Houston as our next area of expansion," Bussolini said. "We think we have an economic advantage here."

Grumman, based in Bethpage, N.Y., selected Houston from among other potential sites in Pennsylvania, North and South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama, Bussolini said.

He said none of the new Houston jobs would be the result of transfers from other Grumman facilities.

Grumman, with annual sales of more than \$3.5 billion, employs 33,000 people worldwide.

An office building and several other structures will be built on a 66-acre parcel of land the company leased last year from the city at Ellington Field, a former Air Force base now owned by the city.

The land originally was earmarked for Grumman's civil space unit for NASA space station work. Grumman, however, lost the bid for the job when NASA selected rival McDonnell Douglas Corp.

The new project, which carries an initial investment of \$10 million over the next two years, was the culmination of efforts by officials of the Houston Economic Development Council.

"The loss of the space station contract was a serious setback to our corporate plan," Bussolini said, adding that Houston officials kept encouraging the company to add to its presence in the city.

"We wanted to assure them Houston was very enthusiastic," Mayor Kathy Whitmire said.

Grumman said work in Houston will include civil space programs, manufacturing and development on Air Force missile programs and engineering support for Grumman programs throughout the country.

Bussolini said Grumman was convinced to select Houston because of incentives to locate at Ellington Field, a strong work ethic shown by employees at its existing Houston operations, an excellent pool of potential employees and cost savings for construction and operations of new facilities compared with other parts of the country.

"The Grumman announcement is further proof of Houston's commitment to diversify," U.S. Rep. Mike Andrews, whose district includes the job site, said.

Lee Hogan, president of the Houston Economic Development Council, said Tuesday's announcement was the most tangible evidence of the oil-dependent area's efforts to get more involved in aircraft and aerospace industries.

"We are now as interested in that as the price of oil," Hogan said.

Hearing set for city to lead nuclear project

AUSTIN (AP) — A hearing agreement to get Austin out of South Texas Nuclear Project has been scheduled for June 20 by Public Utility Commission.

The hearing was set on by Administrative Law Judge Smith, who is presiding over the case.

Smith told participants that he would make every effort to assure PUC action on the case by a Sept. 1 deadline.

The agreement, signed by Austin and Houston Light & Power Co. officials last month, called for the approval of the PUC and federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission to become final.

The agreement calls for the take over Austin's 400,000-share of the nuclear project. Austin to obtain 400,000 shares of the project, which would have a capacity of the Limestone generating plant, a lignite-fueled plant owned by HLP&P in Lampasas County.

Austin also would receive a \$137.5 million and drop a 5-year-old lawsuit against HLP&P, the project's partner.

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Few amnesty applicants accept offer of free bus transportation

HARLINGEN (AP) — Few amnesty applicants have responded to an offer of free bus transportation to the legalization center, and if ridership doesn't pick up, the stalled ride program may have to be dismantled, an immigration official said Tuesday.

Only four aliens showed up Tuesday for the 35-mile trip from McAllen to the Immigration and Naturalization Service's lower Rio Grande Valley legalization center in Harlingen, INS spokesman Virginia Kice said.

On Monday, the first day of the ride program, only seven took the 90-mile trip from Rio Grande City on the 47-seat bus chartered from Valley Transit Co.

"I don't know if they're mistrustful," Kice said. "Maybe they don't want to ride on a bus we're sponsoring. I'm real disappointed."

She said the program was started after immigration lawyers reported that a lack of transportation from some of the more remote areas might be keeping some people from applying.

"I thought there was a need out

there for some type of transportation," Kice said.

She said the bus trips were widely publicized in the local Spanish media.

Other publicity in the past two months helped to more than quadruple the response at the Harlingen center, Kice said.

Those events included remote radio broadcasts, a live three-hour telethon, Boy Scouts distributing INS fliers in neighborhoods and airplanes pulling banners advertising the deadline.

With the May 4 deadline approaching, applications at the Harlingen center have jumped from 250 a week in January to more than 1,400 last week, she said.

But nationwide, the turnout is lower than expected.

INS critics say the cost of applying has hindered many applicants, who are among the poorest people in the nation. The agency charges \$185 for adults, \$50 for children, and a maximum of \$420 for an entire family.

"We can't waive the fee, because that is not in our power," said Kice.

Jerry Sewell, INS district director in Harlingen, said it is too early to talk about discontinuing the ride program.

"If we don't get anybody on there, we may have to take another look at it," Sewell said. "We're not going to waste taxpayers' money if it's not being utilized."

Another trip was planned for Wednesday from Brownsville to Harlingen, with repeat trips scheduled from Rio Grande City, McAllen and Brownsville next week. Total cost of the bus program was about \$1,500.

"Two or three years from now, I hate to look back and think 30 miles came between someone and a chance for U.S. citizenship," Kice said.

The one-time amnesty offer is part of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which was designed to pay for itself through application fees.

An INS spokesman in Washington said 1,581,593 had been processed nationwide as of April 14.

Group scolds for conviction without trial

AUSTIN (AP) — The State Bar of Texas Tuesday announced a public reprimand of a Bell County judge for the peace who found a man guilty without conducting a trial.

According to the commission, the defendant charged with derelict conduct was brought to the Peace Floyd L. Campbell courtroom on 22, 1987. The man pleaded guilty, but Campbell immediately convicted him.

The judge, contacted Tuesday at his Belton office, did not have the commission's account of the facts.

"That was an old boy running down the highway at 100 mph," Campbell said. "The way patrolman, the deputy sheriff and the game warden headed him off and stopped him at gunpoint to get him to stop."

"He had several other charges filed against him. He pleaded to all the other charges. This disorderly conduct charge took it on myself to find him guilty."

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