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Officials meet, discuss heat, drought plans

From Associated Press

Governors from 10 parched states held an emergency meeting Thursday to plot steps to help farmers survive the worst drought in 50 years, while forestry officials said the hot, dry ground was increasing the danger of fires.

By midafternoon, temperatures once again hit the middle 90s to around 100 degrees from the central High Plains through the lower Missouri Valley into the Tennessee Valley and mid-Atlantic states.

The devastating combination of extreme heat and record low rainfall also continued to stall barge traffic in the nation's midsection and increased the threat of forest fires. The weather eased in parts of the Northeast, however.

In St. Louis, the medical examiner's office said Thursday that a 99-year-old woman whose body was found in a sweltering bedroom the previous day had died from the heat. But a worker who collapsed and died Wednesday at an un-air-conditioned Chrysler Corp. plant in nearby Fenton, Mo., was found to have died of heart disease unrelated to the weather, officials said Thursday.

The worker's death had prompted others at the plant to walk off the job for a time, but work resumed Thursday, Chrysler said. Workers had also walked out briefly on Tuesday.

Temperature records were broken or tied in several cities, including Kansas City, Mo., where the 99-degree reading beat the 15-year-old record by 7 degrees. The 98 degrees in Washington, D.C., tied a record that had stood for 114 years.

In Chicago, Agriculture Secretary Richard Lyng told midwestern governors that the federal government

would "do what is needed" to aid farmers.

Governors discussed steps to aid their struggling economies, from the diversion of water from Lake Michigan to speed up the flow of barge traffic on the Mississippi to long-term measures to halt the drop in water tables in the northern and western states.

In a speech to the governors, Lyng announced a drought hot line for farmers and noted that existing crop insurance and disaster loan programs were available as farmers determine the extent of crop losses in the coming days and weeks.

"The situation is still fluid. . . . We'll need a little bit of time to learn what the losses are," he said. "But we will do what is needed to minimize the severity of the damage."

Opening the conference, Illinois Gov. James Thompson said that unless his state gets rain in the next 30 days, "we risk the loss of our corn crop and (soybean) crop. And all the governors here can tell much the same story."

Because barge traffic along the Mississippi River is so crucial to agriculture, Thompson proposed that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers seek permission to divert water from Lake Michigan to solve the problem.

That proposal, however, drew the fire of Gov. Tommy Thompson from neighboring Wisconsin, who said, "It might turn out to be more disastrous over the long term than the immediate salvation it provides."

Some 1,000 barges were halted along the Mississippi in Memphis, Tenn., area alone, and dredging of the channel continued Thursday.

Dry weather also raised the spectre of forest fires.



Kick it out

The hot Texas weather doesn't seem to affect the enthusiasm of members of the Denton Fillies as they practice a routine on the Quad

Thursday afternoon. The Fillies are at A&M as part of a summer camp for high school drill teams.

Photo by Sam B. Myers

Sales tax revenue improves outlook

By Janet Goode
Senior Staff Writer

Increases in sales tax revenue throughout Texas cities indicate economic recovery and are relieving fears of a national recession or sharp drop in oil prices, sources in the state comptroller's office said Wednesday.

Candi Manges, spokesman for the comptroller, said the sales tax revenue gain was sparked by an increase in consumer spending and general economic recovery led by manufacturing.

Texas' economic outlook should continue to improve with sales tax revenues increasing statewide through 1991 at a rate of more than 8 percent a year, Manges said.

City allocation checks this month showed a 23.5 percent increase over June 1987, which can be attributed to the broadened sales tax base along with increase in retail sales, Manges said.

Sales tax revenue increases also were evident for the cities of Bryan and College Station. According to a report by the comptroller's office, College Station's sales tax revenue for June 1988, compared to June 1987, increased 26.25 percent. According to the report, net payment this period for Bryan was \$194,958 comparable to payment the prior calendar year of \$170,954 — an increase of 14.55 percent. College Station showed an increase from \$180,951 to \$228,446.

Glenn Schroeder, deputy director of finance and budget for College Station, said the sales tax revenue, which goes into the general fund budget for the city's general operations, is slightly higher for the month than had been anticipated.

"The entire increase is based on two things," Schroeder said, "the economy is doing a little better and retail sales are increasing."

"It's one of those balancing factors. This will compensate for other short falls in revenue. Consequently, we will be able to operate on the same level as we have been in the past."

Scott McGough, director of financial services in Bryan, said that although these figures are encourag-

ing, it is hard to determine a trend from one month. One reason is that checks received quarterly from the state are relatively larger.

McGough said the report is also in calendar years rather than fiscal.

McGough said that looking at a nine month period of the fiscal year from October to June, the sales tax gain for Bryan was 3.47 — an increase over the same time period for last year. The total sales tax revenue for the year for Bryan was \$740,653. McGough said this is still good news.

"The best thing about it is at least it looks like it has leveled off . . . and perhaps trending upward," he said.

No leads found in search for former A&M student

By Loyd Brumfield
Senior Staff Writer

Police still have no leads in the disappearance of a Texas A&M former student, but her mother says she's still hopeful something will turn up soon.

"Every little sign is encouraging," Billie Fowler says.

Her daughter, 24-year-old Audrey Cardenas, a May journalism graduate, has been missing from her job since Monday.

Cardenas, from Houston, was participating in a newspaper internship program for minorities and was working at the *Belleville News-Democrat* in Belleville, Ill.

Fowler is in Belleville working with the police department and the *News-Democrat* in an effort to find her daughter.

Fowler says the last few days have begun to wear on her.

"I'm kind of tired," she says. "A little bit was going on a while ago and it was keeping me occupied."

Fowler says she hasn't learned anything new in the case.

"Nothing has happened. The police are still questioning people, and we're getting quite a few calls from people who say they've seen her," she says.

"The police follow up everything and every call."

Word of Cardenas' disappearance has spread all over the country, Fowler says.

"A woman called and said she saw Audrey in Detroit trying to get a flight to Houston," Fowler says.

"The only thing that makes me doubt that is that she said the girl was speaking Spanish, and Audrey doesn't speak Spanish. She may know one or two words, but that's about it."

"You have to follow up everything. You can't assume people are wrong in cases like this."

She says St. Louis television stations are broadcasting reports and showing Cardenas' picture regularly.

Fowler, with the help of the *News-Democrat*, is distributing pictures and posters of her daughter around Belleville, which has a population of about 50,000.

"Her picture is all over town," she says. "Someone called from Houston saying she saw her picture in the (Houston) *Chronicle*."

"People in town have been very helpful. This town is about the size

of Bryan. People are very involved with one another here.

"It isn't like Houston, where you've got a couple of million people."

It's been about a month since she's seen her daughter, Fowler says, although they had been keeping in touch before Cardenas' disappearance.

"She called about two weeks ago and said she was settling in and working," she says.

"She said she liked her job okay, but they made her do drought stories and she didn't like that."

"She'd say, 'How much can you write about a drought?'"

One of Cardenas' professors has described her as a serious-minded student deeply interested in journalism.

Fred Ehrlich, assistant city editor for the *News-Democrat*, told *The Battalion* that Cardenas was one of the paper's best interns.

Her name has been entered in a nation-wide computer search for missing people.

Godwin: Frustration caused resignation

WASHINGTON (AP) — Caspar Weinberger's former colleague in private life — brought in to the Pentagon to get control of procurement — says he quit in frustration last fall because Weinberger and President Reagan failed to support his management reforms.

"I differ 100 percent with the (former) secretary of defense who said the system is fine but we have a few bad apples," said Richard P. Godwin, the former undersecretary of defense for acquisition who was brought into the Pentagon to carry out reforms recommended by another Californian, industrialist David Packard.

Godwin, the former president of Bechtel Civil and Minerals Inc., also said Weinberger, the former defense secretary, was "100 percent wrong" in defending the way the Pentagon buys weapons.

In a telephone interview Wednesday, Godwin called the Pentagon procurement process a "national crisis," as serious for the United States as drug trafficking and the AIDS epidemic.

"We have institutionalized a bad system," said 66-year-old Godwin, who worked with Weinberger at Bechtel before President Reagan's

election in 1980.

Bechtel Civil and Minerals was a division of Bechtel Group Inc., the huge construction company based in San Francisco. Between assignments in Republican administrations, Weinberger served as vice president and general counsel of the Bechtel Group. Secretary of State George P. Shultz was president of Bechtel Group from 1975-1982.

Weinberger said he thinks the Pentagon's weapons-buying procedures are generally adequate, but it is impossible to eliminate dishonesty on the part of some people.

Reagan said on Tuesday that although he does not condone misconduct, some corruption is "understandable" in an enterprise as big as the defense department, which spends \$160 billion a year on acquisitions and which, Weinberger noted Wednesday, lets more than 50,000 contracts a day.

Godwin said he accepted the job as the first undersecretary of defense for acquisition in 1986 with the understanding that he would stay only as long as he felt he was effective. The post was created by Congress in the wake of a report by Packard's presidential commission recommending changes in procurement practices.

Texas site part of theft investigation

CORPUS CHRISTI (AP) — An FBI agent said an investigation into the theft of 10 turbine helicopter engines from the Corpus Christi Army Depot is part of a federal probe that has recovered \$9 million worth of stolen military property in seven states.

In addition to the engines stolen from CCAD in 1986, the FBI inquiry involves stolen turbine engines from Fort Eustis near Newport News, Va., and Fort Campbell in Kentucky.

FBI Agent Joe Wolfinger said the investigation involves the largest amount of stolen government property in recent years.

The FBI revealed last week that it was investigating the theft of 10 T-55 turbine helicopter engines stolen from the depot in 1986. CCAD's stolen engines were seized by federal agents in the last month in Washington, Kentucky and Texas, the FBI said.

CCAD, the nation's largest helicopter repair facility, repairs helicopters from all branches of the military and is Corpus Christi's largest industrial employer with 3,800 workers.

A&M student killed in water ski accident

By Janet Goode
Senior Staff Writer

Funeral services for a Texas A&M student who died Monday evening in a water skiing accident in Austin will be Tuesday in Amarillo at St. Thomas Catholic Church.

Douglas Swafford, 23, last attended A&M in Fall 1987, and planned to return as a senior finance major in Fall 1988. His mother, Linda Swafford, said, He was living in Austin for the summer.

Senior Sgt. of Homicide Jim Kortan, of the Austin Police Department, said the accident took place on Lake Austin when the driver of the boat apparently was distracted for a second when

turning the boat around to pick up the skier and accidentally ran over him.

Swafford was found Wednesday by Austin Fire Department Divers, Kortan said.

The case is now to be presented to the district attorney who will determine if charges will be filed against the driver, Dax McCracken, 19, of Austin. Kortan said McCracken could possibly be charged with involuntary manslaughter. Kortan also said the accident was alcohol related.

Swafford was a member of the Texas A&M chapter of the Beta Theta Pi fraternity.

Linda Swafford said his fraternity brothers want to give Swafford a memorial service in College Station.

A&M research may help detect cancer

By Juliette Rizzo
Reporter

Texas A&M researchers are testing newly identified chemical substances carried by cancer cells that may provide a more effective way to diagnose deadly tumors in human kidneys.

Dr. John Kochevar, assistant professor of pathology and laboratory medicine at A&M, said doctors find it difficult to treat kidney cancer — renal cell carcinoma (RCC) — because the disease is often diagnosed in the "late stage," too late for effective treatment.

"These tumors are notably resistant to chemotherapy and radiation treatment unless they are spotted early," Kochevar said. "If the tumors are caught early, treatment through surgery can be effective."

In the medical science laboratories at Texas A&M, Kochevar has identified a chemical known as an RCC antigen carried by cancer cells in the kidney.

He said antigens associated with foreign organisms usually trigger the body's first stages of defense against disease and infection after the orga-

nisms are detected by antibodies produced by the immune system.

"The tumors develop unnoticed and go untreated, because the immune system's natural antibodies only weakly react the antigens in kidney cancer," Kochevar said.

"If the tumors are removed or destroyed early enough, a five-year survival rate of 90 percent or greater is given," Kochevar said. "But, if you have metastasis, spreading of the cancer cells away from the initial tumor, the five-year survival rate is 10 percent or less."

Because of Kochevar's discovery of the RCC antigen, an artificial antibody known as a monoclonal antibody has been produced to detect and fight the cells carrying the antigen.

Monoclonal antibodies are laboratory-produced substances that, by attaching to the RCC antigens, attack the tumor cells like antibodies produced naturally by the immune system.

Kochevar's research is aimed at developing the monoclonal antibodies to signal the presence of disease.

He says the ability of the monoclonal antibody to attach to antigens present in the blood and excrete themselves in urine can be a significant tool

in diagnosing the tumors early enough for treatment.

He expects that someday the monoclonal antibody might be used to improve the effectiveness of treatments for other tumors in the breast, lung and prostate glands.

A test that detects this molecule might someday be included in laboratory studies conducted as part of regular physical examinations, Kochevar said.

He said research has been encouraging but the antigen is still being tested.

"Since RCC is a tumor for which there is no treatment unless the disease is detected early, anything will be helpful to the patient who desperately needs treatment, but like lung cancer, you might be able to kill 90 percent of the cancerous cells but they might just grow back," Kochevar said.

Select patients are being experimentally tested at cancer treatment centers at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Washington D.C. and the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Hospital in New York City.

Kochevar pointed out that routine clinical use of these tests is still in the future.