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Study gauges AIDS in military

ATLANTA (AP) — The largest testing program yet in a specific group of Americans has found that just more than one in 1,000 active-duty military personnel have been exposed to the AIDS virus, lower than among the general population, officials said Thursday.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control said 2,232 of 1,752,191 people on active duty on April 24 had tested positive for antibodies to the virus which causes AIDS, a rate of 1.3 per 1,000.

The Defense Department began screening for AIDS exposure in January 1986.

The active-duty personnel AIDS infection rate "probably underrepresents the . . . prevalence in the civilian population for three reasons," the CDC said.

Those reasons are: homosexual men and injectable drug abusers are, because of rules, less common among military personnel than in the general population; hemophilia victims are not eligible for military service; and military recruits who test positive for AIDS infections are not enlisted.

Federal health officials have estimated that 1.5 million Americans are infected with the AIDS virus; that would be roughly five times the rate among active-duty military personnel.

Despite the differing infection rates for the two groups, the military data "can be used for monitoring levels and trends of . . . infection in the United States," the Atlanta-based CDC said in its weekly report.

For example, the agency noted, blacks in the military were 3.6 times as likely as whites to test positive for AIDS antibodies, and Hispanics were 2.5 times as likely.

The Defense Department plans to test all active-duty personnel for AIDS infections at least every year or two, the CDC said. "Therefore, the incidence of new . . . infection can be measured directly."

"This is the closest to a general population in which it will be possible to actually measure the rate of new infections," said Dr. Tim Dondero, a CDC AIDS specialist.

A September 1987 report showed seven new infections for every 10,000 Army personnel during a year, the CDC said.

The Pentagon reported earlier this year that in testing nearly 4 million people since October 1985 — both recruits and active-duty personnel — roughly 1.5 positive AIDS test results were found in every 1,000 people tested. That figure includes recruits who tested positive and then were not enlisted.



Winners all

Mark Watson, with raised arms, celebrates a victory in the State Aquatic Special Olympics at Kyle Field Thursday. Also placing were

(left to right) Larry Smith, Larry Dickerson and Elton Simmons. The olympic events will continue through Saturday at Downs Natatorium.

Photo by Sam B. Myers

Faulty valve delays shuttle tests

Delay disappoints personnel

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A computer spotted a valve problem and scrubbed NASA's test firing of space shuttle Discovery's engines in the final second Thursday, dealing another setback to America's 2-year effort to return to space.

Engineers said it will be three to seven days before they can try the test again. The postponement was the fifth in two weeks and made it almost certain that Discovery's flight will be delayed from late September into October.

"That's why we have flight readiness firings, to work the bugs out of equipment before we launch," said James Fletcher, the administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

No American has been launched into space since the shuttle Challenger exploded 73 seconds after liftoff Jan. 28, 1986, killing seven crew members.

The problem Thursday either was a valve that didn't close as fast as it was supposed to or a sensor that gave a wrong reading of the valve's open-closed position.

"We don't know whether it was a faulty indication or really a malfunction in the valve," said Joseph A. Lombardo, engine program director at NASA's propulsion facility in Mississippi.

Engineers were looking at the possibility that the sensor might have been affected by long exposure to the extreme cold of the liquid hydrogen fuel. The tanks were loaded for 10 hours, four hours longer than normal, so that special tests could be run on the fuel system.

To remain liquid, hydrogen must be kept at 423 degrees below zero.

Boyce Mix, engine manager at NASA's Mississippi engine test facility, said historically some sensors are more temperature-sensitive than others.

As the tanks were being drained, he said, the valve was tested and it

SPACE CENTER, Houston (AP) — Employees at the Johnson Space Center expressed disappointment Thursday after NASA aborted the test firing of the Space Shuttle Discovery's engines at Cape Canaveral, Fla.

But the employees, who have seen five such postponements in two weeks, said they would rather see the extra precautions than face another explosion like the one that destroyed the Challenger more than 2 years ago. The test is considered crucial for qualifying Discovery for the first shuttle flight since the Challenger disaster.

"Although we were disappointed today's test did not go full term, we were impressed with the professional manner in which the launch team responded to the situation," said Navy Capt. Rick Hauck, one of five astronauts slated to fly Discovery on the first post-Challenger mission who was watching the test firing.

"We are looking forward to learning the plan for resolving the problem, recognizing that such delays can occur. We maintain high confidence we'll get a good mission off in the near future," he said.

Engineers hoped to ready the shuttle for another attempt on Sunday, but one official said the delay could be as much as a week. The delay threatened to further push back Discovery's launch, planned for late September.

Hugh Harris, launch control center commentator, said the shuttle's master computer "did not see that the engine bleed valve had fully closed" and automatically sent a shutdown signal.

Engineers were trying to determine if there was a faulty valve or if the sensor had given an incorrect reading, he said. The bleed valve vents excess gases.

worked sluggishly the first time but normally after it warmed up.

The computer, which controls all operations in the final 31 seconds of a launch countdown, received an indication that the valve still was partially open, which would allow high-pressure gases to enter areas unable to accommodate them, possibly causing a rupture and explosion. The computer reacted as it was supposed to.

"The actual start commands to the engine were never given," Lombardo said.

If the sensor is at fault, Lombardo said, a change in computer commands might be a way around the problem.

John J. Talone, who manages scheduling for Discovery said swapping out the sensor and the valve could take three days to a week.

Joseph Lombardo, the main engine program manager said the engines had fired with the valve open, excess pressure might have built up in the fuel line and caused a rupture that could have led to an explosion.

For 21 teachers attending a workshop at the Johnson Space Center, the test firing was to be the finale of their two-week program.

"I was really disappointed, so I can understand how they feel," said Sandra A. Dyson, a science teacher from Kennebec, S.D., who along with the other teachers attending the NASA Education Workshop for Math and Science Teachers got up at 5 a.m. to witness the test.

"It was going to be our finale and being on the inside it would have been thrilling," she said about watching the testing from the media center at JSC.

For the past two weeks, the teachers from six states, have been saturated with information about the space program and all were looking forward to applying their new knowledge to the test firing.

"Gradually, in about a week we've been able to know what would be going on," Dyson said. "We knew that something happened because we learned about five computers and how it takes so many to say 'Now, shut down.' We didn't know all the particulars, only that it was shut down."

Roger Kassebaum, regional coordinator of the teachers' program, said the aborted firing was a letdown but said it was good so many precautions were being taken.

"We can't afford another accident," Kassebaum said. "NASA has to be very careful this time. They're going to be watched like a hawk and that's good so we can save lives and not have another Challenger disaster."

"We just don't have all the answers this early," Lombardo said.

The valve operated perfectly in earlier tests but "sluggishness is what we determined today," he said.

During the test, the shuttle is secured to the pad by bolts three inches in diameter and three feet long. The two solid booster rockets that flank the orbiter and the huge fuel tank are not fired in the test.

Jury convicts Biaggi in Wedtech Scandal

NEW YORK (AP) — Rep. Mario Biaggi, a one-time hero cop, and four other people were convicted Thursday of racketeering for turning the now-defunct defense contractor Wedtech Corp. into an enterprise that paid out millions in bribes to public officials.

"We're obviously disappointed, and we're going to appeal," Biaggi, 70, said outside the courtroom. His attorney, James LaRossa, said Biaggi would make a full statement at a news conference Friday.

The verdicts came in the fifth day of the jury's deliberations.

Biaggi, a city police officer from 1942 to 1965 and at one time the most decorated policeman in the country, was convicted of all but one of the 16 counts against him, including conspiracy, extortion, tax evasion and receiving bribes. He was acquitted of one count of mail fraud.

Also convicted of racketeering were former Bronx Borough President Stanley Simon, 58; Wedtech founder John Mariotta, 58, of Scarsdale; Peter Neglia, 40, of Armonk; and Biaggi's former law partner, Bernard Ehrlich, 59, of Bedford.

Biaggi's eldest son, Richard, 39, of Fort Lee, N.J., was acquitted of racketeering charges but convicted of bribe receiving, mail fraud and tax charges.

Mario Biaggi faces up to 20 years in prison on the racketeering counts, which are the most serious charges. He previously was sentenced to 30 months in prison for his 1987 conviction in Brooklyn for obstructing justice and taking an illegal gratuity.

Biaggi, sitting closest to the jurors, never looked at them during the verdict. After his conviction on the first count, he spoke quietly to his attorney. He then removed his glasses, rubbed his eyes and shook his head.

Later, Biaggi went to the building nurses' office and his private physi-

cian was called to examine him. He later left the building by a side entrance to avoid photographers.

The staff of the House Ethics Committee recommended earlier this year that the New York Democrat be expelled for the 1987 conviction, but the committee put off action until he could defend himself.

House Ethics Committee spokesman John Davison said Thursday he could not comment on the new conviction or its possible impact on the committee's schedule, although he noted that the committee was to meet Tuesday on pending business.

Biaggi was convicted of extorting \$50,000 in cash and stock once worth more than \$3 million from Wedtech in exchange for his political clout. He also was convicted of filing false financial disclosure statements and income tax returns to cover up his illegal profits.

A seventh defendant, Ronald Betso, 40, of Brooklyn, a former city police officer, was acquitted on all counts.

U.S. District Judge Constance Baker Motley scheduled sentencing for Nov. 18. All six of the convicted defendants remained free on bail.

Prosecutors also sought forfeiture of ill-gotten gains by the defendants convicted of racketeering. After huddling with defense lawyers, they agreed that Biaggi and Ehrlich would have to pay \$350,000 each; Simon \$25,000 and Mariotta, who was convicted of numerous tax evasion and bribery charges, \$11.7 million. Neglia did not have to forfeit any money.

The trial, which began March 11, generated nearly 20,000 pages of transcript over four months of testimony from over 130 witnesses and a week of closing arguments.

Bush: Dukakis military, foreign policies lacking

Associated Press

George Bush and his GOP allies painted Democrat Michael Dukakis as weak on military and foreign policy Thursday while Dukakis campaigned in the South, seeking votes where Ronald Reagan won in 1980 and 1984 and where Jesse Jackson did well in this year's Democratic primaries.

Prominent Democrats and Dukakis' doctor, meantime, suggested that political motivations were behind a rumor that Dukakis had been treated for mental problems — a rumor both Dukakis and the doctor denied.

And the Bush campaign received its strongest "No, thank you" yet from a man frequently mentioned as a prospective running mate, California Gov. George Deukmejian.

Bush, in Corpus Christi, Texas, told a group of Hispanic veterans that Dukakis'

positions were "a rejection of America's role as a world leader and a repudiation of the Truman doctrine and the vision of John Kennedy."

Dukakis' opposition to new nuclear weapons such as the MX missile were part of a policy for "unilateral disarmament," Bush told the G.I. Forum.

President Reagan lent Bush a helping hand earlier this week by vetoing a defense bill passed by the Democratic-controlled Congress. Although the bill provided an agreed-upon \$299.5 billion for the Pentagon, Reagan said it was too restrictive, especially on his "Star Wars" missile defense program.

Republicans in the Senate Thursday were pushing for more money for arms to the Contras, at least in part to embarrass Dukakis. The Massachusetts governor's running mate, Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, D-

Texas, disagrees with Dukakis on that issue and usually supports Contra aid.

Dukakis, in Philadelphia, Miss., repeated his theme of making the military spend its money more wisely. And he told reporters it was "nonsense" for Bush to suggest he favored disarmament.

"The fact of the matter is we have a massive survivable nuclear deterrent right now, 12,000 strategic nuclear warheads," he said. "What we don't have is the kind of strong conventional defense capability we must have, and that is going to be my top priority as president."

Asked whether he still supports a nuclear freeze, Dukakis said, "Sure, and a comprehensive test ban treaty."

Dukakis spoke to a mostly white audience estimated at more than 6,000 at the Neshoba County Fair, where eight years ago

Reagan launched his campaign as the Republican presidential nominee.

Elsewhere, Democrats expressed anger about a rumor that Dukakis had problems with mental depression in the 1970s, first following the death of his brother and then with his 1978 primary defeat for re-election as governor.

"I think there's something significant about what the Republicans have done here, the fact that they would use Lyndon LaRouche to get this thing started, the fact that they would get negative, that they would get so irrelevant so early," said New York Gov. Mario Cuomo.

At the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta two weeks ago, supporters of LaRouche, a political extremist and fringe presidential candidate, distributed fliers suggesting Dukakis was unstable.

Dukakis' doctor for the past 17 years, Gerald R. Plotkin, said, "I would have to as-

sume that the rumors are political. I don't know whether the term is dirty tricks, but I think certainly the allegations . . . have no basis in fact."

The issue became widely publicized Wednesday after Reagan called Dukakis "an invalid" during a news briefing. Reagan later said he was trying to make a joke but "it didn't work."

Bush told reporters Thursday that he "would thoroughly disapprove of it" if anyone from his campaign was involved in the rumor-making.

His chief of staff, Craig Fuller, said that on Wednesday campaign manager Lee Atwater "admonished everybody to stay out of this story, stay out of the rumor business."

Fuller also confirmed that Treasury Secretary James A. Baker III would leave his post and become campaign chief before the Aug. 15 start of the Republican convention in New Orleans.