

# The Texas A&M Battalion

Vol. 88 No. 1 USPS 045360 62 Pages In 5 Sections

College Station, Texas

Monday, August 29, 1988

## 38 killed as 3 jets collide at air show over U.S. air base

RAMSTEIN, West Germany (AP) — Three Italian fighter jets collided during an air show at a U.S. military base Sunday, and one crashed into spectators and burst into a ball of flame. At least 38 people were killed and hundreds injured, officials said.

Several children and the three aircraft pilots, members of a famed aerial stunt team, were among the dead, authorities reported.

West German officials estimated the size of the crowd at the air show at 200,000, and said most were Americans and Germans.

The ZDF television network showed a giant fireball engulfing spectators, many of whom ran screaming with their clothes on fire. It showed cars and trucks in flames at the Ramstein Air Base 60 miles southwest of Frankfurt.

Some people stood in shock as a thick cloud of smoke enveloped them, and others ran toward the scene to administer first aid.

"We saw the fireball racing toward us, so we first threw ourselves down on the ground," said Detlef Hossler, cameraman with the ARD television network.

The network footage had one man frantically shrieking "Tanya, Tanya" and thousands of others screaming and looking for friends and family members.

The ZDF network showed one jet as it veered toward the horrified

crowd out of control before bursting into flames that appeared to be at least 100 feet high.

The network said two other planes crashed away from the crowd of several hundred people.

U.S. authorities said it was unclear what caused the triple crash and the sequence of events that cause the disaster.

The three jets were part of a 10-plane Italian Air Force demonstration team, "Frece Tricolori," that was flying 65 yards above the ground, ZDF said.

The "Frece Tricolori," which means Tri-Color Arrows and refers to the three-colored Italian flag, was founded in 1930 as a school of aerobatics. Since 1956, it has been a separate unit of the Italian air force based at Rivolto.

Ramstein Air Base spokesman Doug Moore said "those dead on the ground are a mix of civilian and military."

AFN, the U.S. military radio network, said late Sunday the latest confirmed death toll was 38 people.

ZDF quoted officials as saying several hundred people had been injured, with 60 of them with life-threatening injuries, including burns.

"A large number has serious burns," said police spokesman Willi Hollaender in nearby Kaiserslautern.



### Yelling

David Williams, Class of '87, waves a flag to cheer for the Aggies as they enter Giant's Stadium for the 1988 Kickoff Classic. Williams traveled from Nashville to New Jersey for the game.

Photo by Tim Dorney

## Americans suspected in NATO spy ring

FRANKFURT, West Germany (AP) — Americans may have sold NATO defense secrets to Soviet bloc agents for decades before a former U.S. Army sergeant became active in a Hungarian-linked spy ring, a West German newspaper said Sunday.

West Germany last week announced the arrest of former U.S. Army Sgt. Clyde Lee Conrad, who since the late 1970s allegedly sold classified information to Soviet bloc countries from the Army base in Bad Kreuznach.

Officials said Conrad, 41, revealed secrets about nuclear missile bases, pipeline systems and troop strength to Hungarian agents, who passed them on to the Kremlin and other Soviet bloc countries.

But the spy ring may have been receiving NATO information long before Conrad became active, according to the *Welt am Sonntag* newspaper, which quoted information from unidentified U.S. investigators.

Conrad was in charge of safekeeping classified NATO documents, which were held in a safe at the Bad Kreuznach base.

The newspaper said U.S. security officers believe Conrad's predecessor at the base documentation center also worked for the Hungarian secret service.

The report said Hungary, a Soviet bloc ally, for years "systematically" targeted Americans in West Germany and that Conrad's predecessor was a U.S. military officer of Hungarian descent who sold NATO information to Hungarian agents.

It did not give his name and did not specify how long he worked at the base.

"There is the fear that for decades top NATO secrets have gone to the Soviet bloc from Americans in West Germany," the newspaper said.

Norm Medland, the duty officer at the public information office of the U.S. Army European Headquarters in Heidelberg, told the Associated Press Sunday that an investigation was continuing. He would not elaborate.

Medland also refused comment on the report in the Hamburg-based *Welt am Sonntag*, a conservative, nationally circulated Sunday newspaper.

Investigators said Conrad reported to a Hungarian "spymaster" living in Vienna and that two Hungarian-born Swedish brothers — Sandor Kercsik, 48, and Imre Kercsik, 34 — admitted working for the Hungarian intelligence service.

Prosecutors say the brothers acted as couriers in the spy ring allegedly headed by Conrad.

The brothers were arraigned last week in Sweden.

The *Welt am Sonntag* reported that investigators believe Conrad was paid \$1.1 million by Soviet bloc countries for the information.

The Conrad family "had so much of everything," neighbor Johanna Horst told the unofficial U.S. military newspaper *Stars and Stripes*.

Horst said Conrad's wife, Antje, "had lots of gold jewelry and he just gave her a new car with her initials in gold."

*Stars and Stripes* said Saturday that Conrad, who left the Army in 1985, received a monthly pension of \$900.

West German investigators said they believe

Conrad kept the money in Swiss bank accounts, according to the CBS television network.

Swiss prosecutors Friday launched an investigation.

The former sergeant remains in prison and faces espionage charges that carry a maximum 10-year sentence.

Among other charges, he allegedly paid another U.S. soldier "a five-figure sum" for obtaining secret information, according to chief West German prosecutor Kurt Rebmann.

No charges have been filed against the soldier, who has left the Army but is still in West Germany, the *Die Welt* newspaper of Bonn said Saturday.

The former soldier apparently provided information leading to Conrad's arrest on Tuesday, *Die Welt* said.

U.S. Army officials said Conrad, of Sebring, Ohio, obtained a top secret security clearance in 1978 and kept it when he left the service.

## UH graduate at US, Soviet space centers

HOUSTON (AP) — It may not seem unusual that a former University of Houston student who worked at Johnson Space Center would return to her former worksite, but Amy Chretien's visits are indeed unique.

She now lives at a secretive cosmonaut training base outside Moscow known as Star City, regularly commuting between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Chretien, 25, is married to Jean-Loup Chretien, a colonel in the French Air Force who is also a cosmonaut. He trained as a backup crew member for a U.S. space flight several years ago at the space center, where he and Chretien met.

Jean-Loup will be going up to the Soviet Mir space station in November for a month's stay. While there, he will carry out two walks in space and then return with the two-man Soviet crew, which will have lived in space for a year.

She has lived with her husband at Star City more than a year in an apartment building inhabited by other cosmonauts and their families.

"For me, (Star City) is very much close to a second home," she said. "It's very quiet, and you have everything you need. I have friends, people I see every day."

Among their neighbors, she said, is Yuri Romanenko, the Soviet cosmonaut who holds a world record in space. He returned to Earth last Dec. 29, after living 365 continuous days in the weightless environment of the space station Mir, which means peace in Russian.

Chretien, whose Russian language skills are improving, says she has witnessed the reforms of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev unfolding.

She regularly mingles with Soviet space program officials with friendly ease.

## Police close charities, fear PLO association

JERUSALEM (AP) — Police shut down a federation of 108 Palestinian charities Sunday and accused it of being a PLO front.

In the West Bank, an alleged Arab collaborator with Israel was found burned and tied to an electric pole.

The raid on the charity association followed the closing last week of seven Arab professional associations.

The Nablus offices of a federation of 45 trade unions aligned with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction were also closed last week.

The crackdown was designed to keep the Palestine Liberation Organization from taking over organizations that were controlled by Jordan's King Hussein before he severed ties with the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip last month.

The Israeli moves were part of a larger effort to disrupt the grass-roots organization of the 8-month-old Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule.

The uprisings are based in territories Israel seized in the 1967 Middle East War.

The burned and blood-stained body of Samih Youssef Dababsi was found tied to an electric pole in the Harti Sheikh neighborhood of Hebron, Arab reports and an Israeli photographer said.

The victim was beaten on the head and his hands were tied to his side, the reports said.

Palestinian sources described the victim as a collaborator with Israeli authorities.

Police said he was a thief. An army official, speaking on the basis of anonymity, confirmed the killing.

The underground leadership of the uprising in the occupied territories has demanded that Palestinians working for Israel resign.

In the past week, Palestinians and alleged collaborators with Israeli authorities have clashed at least seven times.

Since the uprising began Dec. 8, 255 Palestinians have been killed, most by Israeli gunfire.

Four Israelis also have died.

In Jerusalem, police raided the Federation of Charitable Societies after West Bank military commander Maj. Gen. Amram Mitznech ordered it closed.

Mitznech ordered the organization to stay closed for one year.

The charity office distributed PLO finances "under cover of financial aid and charity," a government statement said.

Police also closed the Maktabat El Haya news agency for a year.

The statement said the agency was used to advance the goals of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The Popular Front is a Damascus-based PLO faction headed by George Habash.

Ellen El Araj, deputy head of the charity group, denied the organization had political goals and said many of the group's projects would be hurt by the closing.

She said its activities include helping the poor and handicapped and providing funds for youngsters to attend pre-schools.

Araj said the federation includes 108 charities in Jerusalem that are funded by Arab charitable organizations in Jordan and by Aramco, the Saudi Arabian oil company.

Col. Renaan Gissin, deputy army spokesman, said the charitable groups acted as a conduit for PLO funds and that the trade unions tried to recruit and organize for Fatah.

## IRS: Bank cash from drugs?

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — Federal officials say the swollen coffers of this city's biggest banks are largely a result of large deposits by drug dealers along the Mexican border, an El Paso newspaper reported.

"I can assure you a pretty big chunk is drug money," said Mike Grubich, chief of criminal investigation for the Internal Revenue Service in Dallas.

Fueled by such suspicion, the IRS said it has doubled its criminal investigations staff to 10 in El Paso over the past 18 months, and will soon add two more.

But El Paso bankers denied the IRS contention, telling the *El Paso Times* that most of their large deposits are made by firms involved in legal commerce.

El Paso banks have a combined cash surplus last year of \$399 million, up 27 percent from 1986.

The surplus was the fifth-largest in the nation, behind Miami, Los Angeles, Jacksonville, Fla., and San Antonio, and stands in sharp contrast to the many struggling banks in Texas.

Grubich and others say that when they trace suspicious big deposits made to El Paso banks, more often than not they lead to drug dealers.

"There's no doubt that a lot of dope comes through El Paso," said Ted Houghton, executive vice president of El Paso's largest bank, MBank-El Paso.

Houghton also said since most buying and selling is done else-

where, it is unlikely El Paso banks would receive much drug money.

Richard Hickson, chairman of Texas Commerce Bank-El Paso, said his bank obeys the federal law requiring banks to report deposits and withdrawals of \$10,000 or more.

Hickson said his bank's location near the border explains many of the large transactions, because Mexican companies doing business with U.S. companies must maintain accounts in American banks.

Phil Jordan, special agent in charge of the Drug Enforcement Agency in Dallas, said border banks historically have been attractive to the drug lords of Mexico.

## Polish strikes continue despite talks

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Communist leaders Sunday criticized the government and debated economic problems behind the strongest wave of strikes since 1981. Solidarity leader Lech Walesa was slightly injured in a scuffle with police.

Talks ended a stubborn mine strike in the south, but 10 strikes continued at ports, shipyards, factories and one mine. There were no reports of police attempts to dislodge workers in occupation strikes.

Solidarity estimated about 8,500 people still were occupying workplaces, striking for higher pay and legalization of Solidarity, the Soviet bloc's only independent union federation.

Police blocked about 400 protes-

ters trying to march on the strike-bound Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, where Solidarity was born in 1980. The federation was crushed with the imposition of martial law in 1981 and banned in 1982.

Walesa left the shipyard Saturday to confer with advisers amid signs that talks proposed Friday by Interior Minister Czeslaw Kiszczak might provide a way for the government to meet with Walesa about the labor unrest.

When Walesa tried to enter the cordoned-off shipyard at around 7 a.m. Sunday, a police officer tried to stop him, said a Walesa aide who spoke on condition of anonymity. Walesa pulled away but lost a shoe

and scratched his hand when he climbed over the 7-foot fence into the yard, the aide said.

A Mass at the nearby St. Brygida's church drew about 10,000 worshippers who spilled into the square in front of the packed church.

"From this place we have the right as free Poles to call for freedom and the arrival of government authorities for roundtable talks in the shipyard," the Rev. Henryk Jankowski, a Walesa adviser, told worshippers. "Let anyone who has a package of solutions for the current situation sit at this table."

After the service, about 400 people tried to walk the five blocks from the church to the shipyard entrance,

but they were blocked by massive lines of police in riot gear. The crowd dispersed peacefully.

The 230-member Central Committee of the Communist Party finished debating economic problems on the second day of a meeting dominated by harsh criticism of the government of Prime Minister Zbigniew Messner.

"The discussions have reaffirmed that certain justified workers' demands have been ignored," Politburo member Mieczyslaw Rakowski, in charge of propaganda, said. "Many of them could have been sorted out before to have defused discontent which was exploited by our political opponents."