Illegals linked to border drug trafficking

WASHINGTON (AP) — Several months ago, two Border Patrol agents were lying in ambush on the muddy banks of the Rio Grande River when they saw two men wading through the water from Mexico.

The agents called on them to stop, the two pulled out weapons, a gunbattle ensued and one of the aliens was killed. The other fled, dropping 40 pounds of marijuana.

The incident, recounted by Texas Border Patrol agent George Gunnoe, underlines the closely intertwined tasks of interdicting drugs and illegal aliens.

"Smuggling aliens and drugs go hand-in-hand," said Hugh J. Brien, chief of the Border Patrol, which is the paramilitary enforcement arm of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Last year, the agency intercepted more than 60 percent of the drugs caught along the southwestern border: 209,281 pounds of marijuana, 12,813 pounds of cocaine and some 50 pounds of heroin, according to figures supplied by the INS.

The rest of the drugs was apprehended mostly by the Customs Service, according to Customs figures.

The Border Patrol also stopped some 1 million illegal aliens, down from the 1985 high of 1.8 million.

But Brien pointed out that only about 7,000 of those intercepted along the border were caught with drugs — and some were American smugglers.

"Most of these aliens are decent people trying to better themselves," Brien said.

Ironically, the patrol is the only government unit taking part in an interagency anti-drug effort without earmarked funding.

The INS is working to change that and hopes to get some $60 million if Congress passes a drug enforcement bill later this year.

Counting on those funds to augment its $210 million budget, the Border Patrol has begun a drive to recruit 1,000 additional agents to patrol the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border against aliens and drugs.

Of the agency's 3,600 agents, 2,900 are on that border and the rest on the Canadian front.

"We're ideal for this job," Brien, a naturalized American of Irish origin, said. "We're on the border, we know the terrain, our agents are the best trackers around and they all speak Spanish."

Since 1986, when the patrol was included in an interagency campaign to interdict drugs, the number of its narcotics seizures has more than doubled.

Seizures were up to 2,751 in 1987.

From last October through April, the patrol intercepted 2,236 drug shipments from Mexico.

Brien, as well as officials from other drug agencies, believes the increased seizures are due partly to increased trafficking by smugglers pushed inland by the air and naval cordon that the Coast Guard has imposed along the Gulf of Mexico.

The U.S-Mexico border still accounts for about one-third of the cocaine entering the United States and 40 percent of the marijuana, according to the Drug Enforcement Agency.

Much of the cocaine is flown from Colombia to Mexico, where it is hidden in safehouses along the border until smugglers pick it up, Gunnoe said.

The traffickers often use illegal aliens as couriers in return for getting them across the border, he added.

One of the methods used by the smugglers, especially in the Arizona area, is mule trains.

Typically, Brien said, a train will consist of nine or 10 mules, each carrying 200-300 pounds of drugs, accompanied by four to six outriders armed with Soviet-made AK-47 automatic rifles.

As a result, the Border Patrol has issued its agents M-16 rifles.

The agents patrol on foot, horseback, light aircraft and all-terrain vehicles.

They also use sensors and low-light television cameras to monitor the border, Brien said.

"We don't have Star Wars technology" like the Coast Guard's balloon-mounted radars, Brien said, but the Border Patrol has 25 assets the other agencies don't: Belgian Malinois dogs especially trained to sniff out drugs and people.

Disputes challenge Mexican land reforms

COMITAN, Mexico (AP) — Land disputes that sparked more than 120 killings in the southernmost Mexican state of Chiapas in the past six years present a challenge to proposed reform policies of President-elect Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

Salinas, who will take office in December, has pledged to bring more democracy to Mexico and rid the country of rural land bosses or caciques, Indian for "chief," who are known to Chiapas residents as powerful political forces.

Over the years, such caciques — who have traditionally been mayors, businessmen and other community leaders — have wrested not only votes and land but also lives from the state's inhabitants.

"The problem is not only about land. We have to have justice with our peasants," Patrocinio Gonzalez Garrido, Salinas' choice for governor of Chiapas, told the *Dallas Times Herald* in Sunday's editions.

Gonzalez campaigned for his six-year post, promising to protect the state's peasants and indigenous people and end the rule of the caciques.

Farmland has always been scarce in Mexico — only 15 percent is deemed arable. Since the Mexican Revolution, more than 260 million acres of expropriated or newly developed land has been distributed to 3.5 million peasants through land reform programs.

But in the pine-covered mountains, vast jungles and fertile valleys of Chiapas, there is added racial and class tensions between the state's indigenous groups and the mestizo population, between independent peasant unions and the government, and among the various branches of government-sponsored, peasant labor groups.

But by far the most violent clashes have involved the landless peasants — most of them Indians — and the caciques.

"The last nine years have been a nightmare for the state," Gonzalez said. "What we have in Chiapas is a conflict between the people and the government. They are strong here because they have been able to link themselves with the political forces."

While the caciques' political clout generally has diminished throughout Mexico in recent years, it has strengthened since 1979 in Chiapas.

"Caciques last as long as the government and the people want," Gonzalez said. "And if our government has the support of the people, we will have enough power to put them aside."

But some peasant leaders are skeptical that the ruling Institutional Revoluntionary Party, or PRI, will be able to rid the state of their former political allies.

"We don't expect anything to change," said Luis Lopez, the state leader of CIOAC, an independent peasant organization linked to the Mexican Socialist Party. "That's just election talk."

CIOAC leaders, who claim a membership of 8,000 mostly landless peasants in Chiapas alone, argue that the problem is rooted in the continued existence of large landholdings, many owned by government-supported caciques, and by the acquiescence of the PRI-affiliated peasant groups.

But others, such as Jose Felix Frias, the state manager for the federal agrarian reform minister, say "there is simply no more land to be had."

Besides huge landholdings that have proved impossible to expropriate, Chiapas also has an abundance of land organized into ejidos, communally owned property in which each member has the right to farm a parcel of government land. The land may be passed on to the children of an ejido member but may never be sold.

Regents

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wanted to build the parking garage without infringing on any green space," McKenzie said.

Regent Weisenbaker said, however, that A&M is running out of room for parking and the golf course is a good solution to the problem.

The Board rejected the site earlier because they preferred to keep new construction west of Bizzell Street.

The Board has still not come to any final decisions concerning the location of the southside parking garage and the golf course site is still under consideration.

If the site is approved the garage will be built on the site of the golf course club house, the parking lot and the first tee, Weisenbaker said.

As a result, the first tee will be moved and a new club house will be built in one corner of the proposed garage, he said.

The garage will primarily serve *about* 1,200 students living in the new five-dorm complex in Parking Annex 24.

Parking locations

Garages and temporary parking lots will hopefully provide the long-term answer to the parking crunch, the Regents said. Duncan Field is one of the lots being considered for temporary parking.

A special committee on parking formed by the Board to evaluate the parking situation on the A&M campus presented its findings to the Regents on July 11.

Robert Smith said it is important to develop a parking system that provides convenient, secure and affordable parking. This includes providing a bus service for day students who are not able to park on campus, he said.

Mary Miller, assistant vice president for finance and operations, said the existing parking system provides 16,688 parking spaces. About 20 to 30 thousand permits are sold each semester, she said.

Miller, who has been involved with the parking and planning committee for six months, said the addition of parking garages will help, but the loss of about 2,000 spaces because of 1988-89 construction will have to be dealt with now.

The solution, Miller said, is to construct temporary parking lots on Duncan Field, adjacent to Olsen Field and around the southside aparment area. The lots will be constructed with gravel at a cost of $300 per space, she said. The proposed lot on Duncan Field would not be used during bonfire construction, she said.

Miller also said that, depending on locations chosen for proposed parking garages, A&M could gain up to 5,000 parking spaces.

A&M will gain 2,000 spaces from the construction of the northside parking garage, she said.

Two additional parking structures remain to be constructed, Miller said.

Building purchase

Chancellor Perry L. Adkisson, announced July 13 that A&M decided to act on a recurrent offer to purchase the unfinished Woodbine building behind the Hilton on East 29th Street.

Adkisson said that A&M has been offered the building several times before, but the price has never been right.

Purchasing this building would relieve quite a bit of space in at least three buildings on the main campus, he said.

James Bond, deputy chancellor for legal and external affairs, said a feasibility study, costing $14,000, is being done on the builing now.

Bond said that there is about 80-90,000 usable square feet in the six-story building and it would be a great place for administrative and other offices.

Completion and move-in costs, Bond said, would probably be about $4.5 million.

The building was originally to be a multiple-occupancy building with a bank on the ground floor, but the plan fell through and the building became an investment property aimed at multiple-occupants, he said.

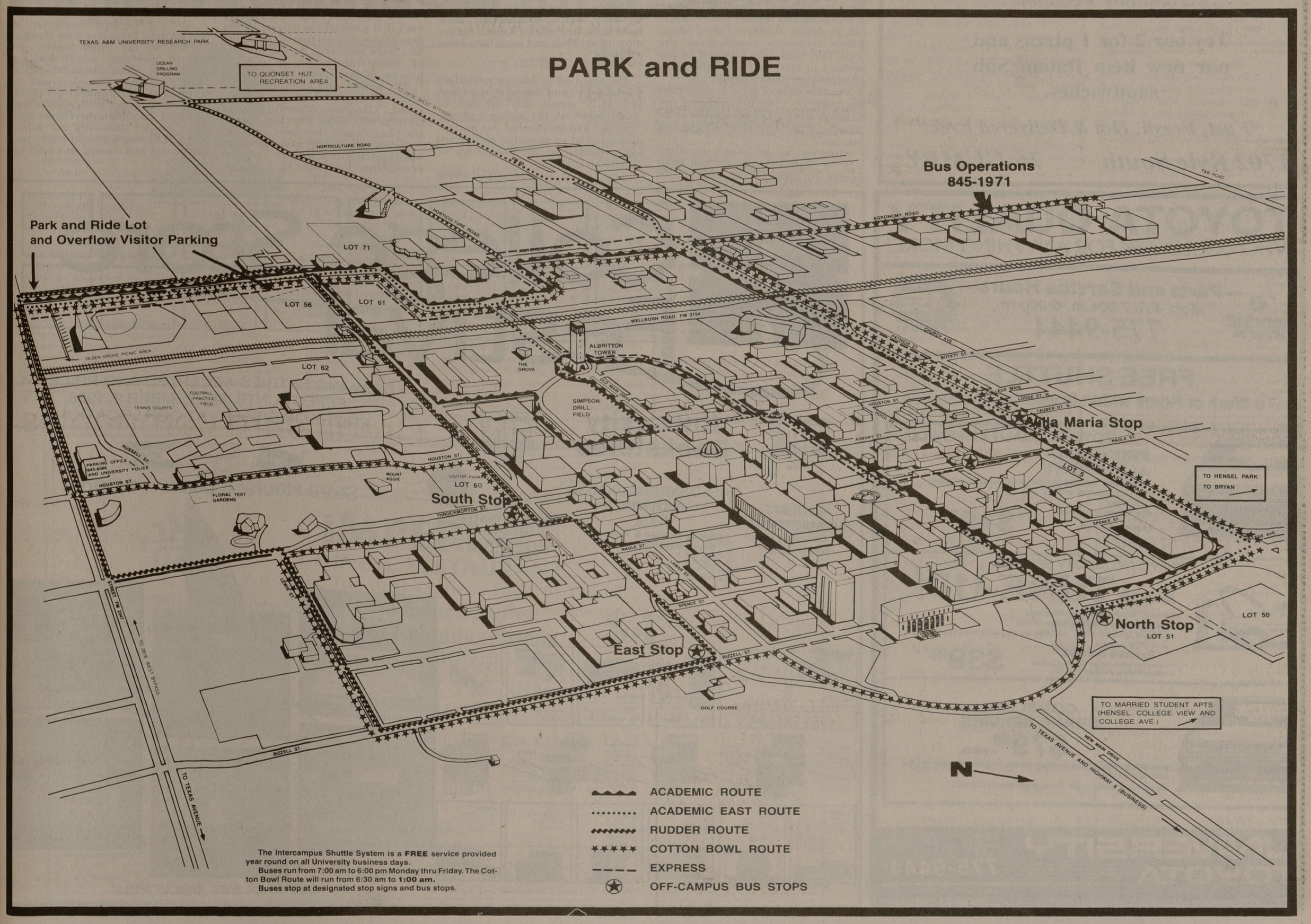
Enrollment plan

Provost Donald McDonald told the Board on July 18 that the enrollment management plan is working.

Enrollment, however, will still pass the 40,000 mark this fall for the first time, McDonald said. He anticipated a fall enrollment of 40,280.

The plan, he said, calls for limiting the size of the incoming freshman class to 6,600.

Of the 14,818 applicants for this fall, 8,588 were automatically admitted based on their high school ranks and Scholastic Aptitude Test scores, he said.

One thousand, eight hundred and seventy-six of the nearly 15,000 applications were under special review and the 3,320 remaining applications were either late or denied.

Total A&M enrollment is expected to peak at 43,185 in 1991 and then drop back to the goal of 41,000 by 1993, McDonald said.