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Border Patrol agents test anti-smuggling vehicle

PORT ISABEL (AP) — U.S. Border Patrol agents are testing a rugged military vehicle for possible use in the battle against smugglers who use the rough terrain in remote areas, officials said Wednesday.

"We're going to have something we can use to combat the drug smugglers and the alien smugglers," Larry Jackson, assistant chief for the Border Patrol's McAllen Sector, said.

"If they go into rough terrain, we'll be able to follow them there."

He said the "High-Mobility-Multi-Purpose Wheeled Vehicle," nicknamed "The Hummer," could be what agents need as they expand their surveillance of the Gulf Coast from the Rio Grande to Corpus Christi.

Border Patrol agents know of frequent alien and drug smuggling along the coast, particularly in the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, but have not had the equipment or personnel to fight the illegal activity along the coastal barrier islands, he said.

"If it proves effective, it could be considered another weapon in the war on drugs here in the Valley," Jackson said.

The Border Patrol has purchased four of the vehicles from the U.S. Army, and has been testing it on different types of terrain, Jackson said.

Produced by AM General, the 5,600-pound Hummer costing \$33,000 features a low center of gravity, making it less likely to overturn than some other all-terrain vehicles; four-wheel suspension; and is 7-feet, 1-inch wide.

It also enables the driver to raise or lower tire inflation pressure at the flip of a switch.

Of particular value to the Border Patrol, Jackson said, is the Hummer's ability to travel over extremely rugged terrain at a high speed, providing a smooth ride.

The Border Patrol also will open a new station at Port Isabel within the next three months, said Ernest Castillo, patrol agent in charge of the new station he said eventually will have 20 agents.

It will complement the Border Patrol station that recently opened in Corpus Christi, Castillo said.

"We're also going to get border work closely with the Coast Guard make our presence felt," he added.

Up to three Border Patrol agents will be stationed at Port Isabel, Castillo said.

Corpus Christi will have one agent.

"With these two stations, we'll be more effective here on the island," Jackson said.

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Airline to make Puerto Rico hub for travel connections

FORT WORTH (AP) — American Airlines is planning to turn San Juan, Puerto Rico, into a major connecting hub as the airline expands into Latin America.

American Chairman Robert Crandall unveiled plans Tuesday to more than double the size of the airline's hub at San Juan, the smallest of its five hubs.

Crandall and Puerto Rican Gov. Rafael Hernandez-Colon made the announcement at a news conference in San Juan.

The expansion announcement pushed the price of AMR Corp., the parent company of American, up 1 and five-eighths to 44 and seven-eighths on the New York Stock Exchange Tuesday.

American plans to spend up to \$100 million to turn San Juan into a major connecting hub for travel between Latin America and Europe, Crandall said.

Nearly all travel between Europe and Latin America currently flows through other airlines' hubs in Miami or New York.

The San Juan hub will also serve as a major connecting point for travel between the United States and Latin America.

Most such travel now flows through Miami, except for trips between the United States and Mexico.

There had been speculation earlier that American is interested in buying the Latin American divisions of Pan American World Airways or Eastern Airlines.

There is also widespread conjecture that American's San Juan hub is designed to take advantage of Eastern's weakened condition.

Crandall said American plans to add 10 gates — 10 of them large enough to handle widebody airplanes — to the 10 gates it built in 1986 at San Juan's Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport.

American's plan would triple the size of its facilities in San Juan and make it possible to more than double daily departures.

The airline also expects the expansion to create between 500 and 1,000 jobs at the hub. American currently employs about 900 people there.

"We left the time frame intentionally vague," said McGregor, a spokesman for the airline in Fort Worth.

"All we said was that it would be done within the next few years," he said.

From San Juan, American already serves one South American city, Caracas, Venezuela, on a route that began last spring. But the Venezuelan government turned down a plan American had to increase its frequency on that route from one round trip a day to two.

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For Fall Rush Information:
 Sam Noto 764-9155
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12 Texans chosen as Democratic co-chairs

AUSTIN (AP) — Twelve Texans — from conservative Democrats to more liberal party stalwarts — announced Wednesday they will serve as state co-chairs for the Dukakis presidential campaign.

"I'm one of those Reagan Democrats who is coming home to my party," John Mobley of Austin, a member of the Texas A&M Board of Regents, said. "Somebody has got to put this nation's house in order, and I happen to think that Mike Dukakis and Lloyd Bentsen can do that job, and do it well."

Mobley ran the first U.S. Senate campaign for Bentsen, a senator from Texas and Democratic vice presidential candidate.

Former U.S. Rep. Barbara Jordan, told a news conference the campaign should turn on issues and predicted Dukakis-Bentsen would beat the GOP ticket of George Bush and Dan Quayle in Texas.

Democrats have criticized Republicans for making an issue of patriotism, after Dukakis as Massachusetts governor vetoed a bill on constitutional grounds that would have required the Pledge of Allegiance in schools.

"This campaign must not turn on photo opportunities and non-issues about who can wave more red, white and blue flags and drop more balloons than anybody else," Jordan, a co-chairman, said. "This campaign cannot turn on who is the biggest or highest or strongest patriot."

"This campaign, Michael Dukakis says, is about the future, and I believe him," she said.

Also announced as co-chairmen were Sen. Carlos Truan of Corpus Christi; Sen. John Montford of Lubbock; Lyndon Olson Jr., former chairman of the State Board of Insurance; Dallas attorney Kathryn Cain; U.S. Rep. Mickey Leland of Houston; Maria Berriozabal, a member of the San Antonio City Council; Ben Love of Houston, chairman of Texas Commerce Bank Shares; Rep. Ernestine Glossbrenner of Alice; Austin attorney Joe Kilgore; and Hidalgo County Clerk Billy Leo.

The 12 will serve as steering committee for the campaign, with Railroad Commissioner John Sharp as its chairman.

Cain said the Democratic ticket would attract women because of support for issues like day care and pay equity.

"While Bush and his running mate, Dan Quayle, have been condescending at best to women, Mike Dukakis and Lloyd Bentsen have been providing some real leadership on issues of importance to women," she said. "Mike Dukakis and Lloyd Bentsen can give women, too, an equal shot at the American dream."

Montford, who noted that he represents a conservative area of the state, said he agonized over the decision to support Dukakis. In discussing it, he said, "I'm tired of going-out-of-business sales. I'm tired of stacked rigs... I'm tired of farm auctions. I'm tired of the biggest event in town being an FDIC auction."

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County heads replace board for MHMRA

HOUSTON (AP) — Harris County commissioners, reacting to a wide-ranging investigation of the district attorney, are replacing the chairman and two other members of the troubled county Mental Health and Mental Retardation Authority.

County Judge Jon Lindsay said he expects the new board, which he pointed Tuesday, to fire or negotiate the resignation of Eugene Williams, the authority's executive director. Williams was under fire amid claims his three-year contract was renewed last month at a \$104,000 annual salary.

Newly appointed members now make up a majority of the MHMRA, with four of the seven member board having been appointed since July, when the district attorney began investigating three land deals in which the agency paid a total of at least \$1 million more than appraised values.

"The existing members haven't done a bad job, but it's time for some changes," Lindsay, whose office serves as communications liaison to the authority, said.

Assistant District Attorney Taylor said his office's probe of the authority's activities likely would last at least another month or two.