

The Battalion

Cavazos seeks advice of peers on loan default

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Education Secretary Lauro Cavazos is seeking the advice of thousands of lenders, colleges and universities, and public officials on how to hold down the escalating default rate on student loans.

The Education Department says taxpayers spent \$1.5 billion to cover defaults on the guaranteed student loan program in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, almost 43 percent of the program's entire cost.

The figure represents a 200 percent increase over the past five years in what is now known as the Stafford loan program, the department said.

The program has loaned about \$40 billion since it began.

Of the current \$12 billion in outstanding loans, about \$5 billion is overdue, the department said.

Charles Kolb, acting deputy undersecretary for planning, budget and evaluation, said Cavazos has sent letters appealing for advice to more than 7,000 participating colleges and universities, 13,000 lenders, 54 agencies that guarantee student loans, 50 governors, and members of Congress.

Cavazos, who was president of Texas Tech University until taking over as education secretary in September, is also accepting suggestions from students.

He is especially concerned about those who defaulted on their loans because

they were unable to earn a living after attending unscrupulous trade or other schools that award a certificate but do not provide necessary job skills.

Kolb said some schools have 100 percent default rates, suggesting they may not be providing the kind of education necessary for students to hold a job and earn enough money to repay their loans.

"There are a lot of scams going on here," Kolb said.

A school must be accredited to qualify students for guaranteed student loans, but Kolb said there are still fly by night operations that don't give students a technical background — just a paper certificate, no skills, and a debt.

Kolb said former Education Secretary William Bennett had proposed that schools that fail to get their default rate below 20 percent could be cut from the program.

Cavazos has extended the comment period on that proposal until the end of February.

Cavazos also wants to know to what extent lenders, guarantee agencies and schools should share in the risk and cost of defaults; how communication can be improved among those participating; whether credit reports and co-signers should be required for borrowers with poor credit histories; and how consumer and personal financial counseling can be used most effectively.



12th Man
Texas A&M students do a yell during the A&M-Louisiana Tech game Saturday at Kyle Field. The Aggies beat the Bulldogs 56 to 17.
Photo by Jay Janner

Computer expert finds A&M virus

By Juliette Rizzo
Staff Writer

Diagnosed as "virus-free" Friday morning, Texas A&M's computer system later came down with the symptoms of a recent computer virus that spread through a nationwide computer network last week.

John Dinkel, associate provost for computing and information systems, said an initial check of the system revealed that the A&M system was healthy.

"A system's analyst in the computer science department discovered the virus after a preliminary check of the system,"

Dinkel said. "The virus was isolated and taken care of very quickly. We discovered it before it had the opportunity to do any damage on campus."

Arpanet, the research data network infected, allows A&M to exchange research information with 300 universities, research institutions, military experts, corporations and the Pentagon. The system handles only unclassified information.

According to computer experts, the virus, which was entered into the Arpanet system by a Cornell University graduate, was discovered last Wednesday and found to be the largest and most widespread in the United States. Other universities "infected" include MIT, Harvard and Stanford.

Dinkel said the computer virus entered the A&M campus computer system through a user who logged on to the system in Michigan.

"Viruses are hidden within computer programs," Dinkel said. "When a person tries to copy a program, the virus becomes active and reproduces. Some are destructive and delete stored data and some are just innocuous."

The virus on campus was caught and stopped from spreading before it had a chance to become destructive. Dinkel said that if the virus had not been caught, the Arpanet system would have had to be completely shut down before it was thoroughly affected by the virus.

"What we need to do to prevent the spread of viruses on campus is to practice safe copying of software," Dinkel said.

Indian commandos save Maldives hostages

MALE, Maldives (AP) — Indian commandos rescued 20 hostages and recovered bodies of four others aboard a crippled getaway ship Sunday after gunmen who tried to overthrow the Maldives government surrendered, Indian officials said.

Officials reported three hostages were missing.

Armed Sri Lankan mercenaries ended a two-day high seas standoff early Sunday after the Indian frigate Godavari fired on the cargo vessel 60 miles from the Sri Lankan coast, Indian officials said.

They said the alleged mastermind of Thursday's bloody coup attempt, an aide to former Maldivian President Ibrahim Nasir, was among the 46 people who surrendered.

Nasir has denied involvement in the coup.

The Indian marine commandos recovered the bodies of four hostages from the Maldivian-registered ship, Indian government spokesman Ramamohan Rao said in New Delhi.

Rao said he did not know how the hostages died.

Interviews with survivors indicated three other hostages were missing, he said.

Seven of the surviving hostages, including Transport Minister Ahmed Mujithaba, had bullet wounds and were flown to the south Indian port city of Trivandrum for treatment, Rao said.

A Maldivian spokesman said he had not been informed of any hostage deaths. Rao said the Indian navy was returning

the alleged mastermind — Maldivian businessman Abdullah Luthufi — and the captured mercenaries to the 2,000-island nation.

President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom said they would be put on trial.

Luthufi was a former aide to Nasir, whose followers also tried to overthrow Gayoom in 1980 and 1983.

The Maldives' foreign minister, Fathulla Jameel, said that Luthufi hired the mercenaries and came ashore with them Thursday.

Gayoom, 50, was elected president in 1978 after Nasir abruptly resigned and fled to Singapore where he still lives. The 62-year-old ex-president has been accused by the Maldivian government of misappropriating \$4.2 million in state funds during his 10-year rule.

Two Indian frigates had trailed the mercenaries for two days as their listing ship limped across the Indian Ocean toward Sri Lanka, about 475 miles northeast of Maldives, also known as the Maldives Islands.

The mercenaries fled Male early Friday, shortly after Indian paratroopers landed in Maldives to help Gayoom and his lightly armed, 1,200-member security forces.

Maldivian and Indian officials said most of the estimated 150 mercenaries escaped by sea.

According to Jameel, the foreign minister, the official casualty toll from Thursday's fighting was 14 dead and 40 wounded.

Cavalry horses injure three before game

By Stephen Masters
Senior Staff Writer

Three San Antonio residents remained hospitalized Sunday after four Parson's Mounted Cavalry horses were spooked and ran wild before Saturday's football game.

George Rippy, 70, his wife, Margaret Rippy, 69, and their daughter, Carol Linton, 46, were struck with a street sign on Joe Routh Boulevard, said Bob Wiatt, University Director of Security. The Rippys were listed in serious but stable condition and Linton was listed in stable condition Sunday afternoon.

Just prior to Corps march-in, one of the horses was spooked, possibly by a Corps outfit while performing their outfit yell, Wiatt said.

All four horses bolted after the first was startled, he said.

The horses were attached to a small trailer, which accompanies a covered wagon and a larger trailer used to carry the cannon for A&M home football games. The cannon was not attached to the trailer involved in the accident.

Two members of the cavalry, Travis Reynolds, a junior range science major from Runge and Loyd C. Smith, a sophomore general studies major from Beaumont, were on the trailer when the horses bolted, Wiatt said.

The horses ran north through the Quadrangle and turned west toward Joe Routh Boulevard, Wiatt said. On Routh, the horses knocked over a light standard and a one-way sign in the median, he said. The team stumbled and fell when it hit the sign, Wiatt said. The trailer overturned, throwing the riders from the wreck.

The Rippys and Linton were part of a group gathered in the median to watch the march-in. Linton's son, Howard Lee Linton, is a freshman general studies major and a member of the Corps of Cadets.

Drew Gibson, commanding officer of the cavalry, referred all questions about the incident to cavalry adviser Lt. Col. Ronald Westervelt. Westervelt and Corps Commandant Tom Darling were available for comment Sunday.

Mudslinging campaigns not new to Americans

By Sharon Maberry
Staff Writer

Negative campaigning is nothing new to American politics. In fact, one of the most blatant negative campaigns occurred in 1828 when Andrew Jackson was running against the incumbent, John Quincy Adams.

Adams' elitist eastern supporters made it known that Jackson's wife had not divorced her first husband and was not legally married to Jackson. They also portrayed Jackson as a ruthless general who murdered helpless Indians and American soldiers falsely accused of desertion.

Jackson's supporters, in turn, accused Adams of "bargain and corruption" through such acts as misuse of public funds while he was in office.

Adams and Jackson can be compared with 1988 presidential candidates George Bush and Michael Dukakis, who also have engaged in extensive negative campaigning.

Because mudslinging has not been blatant in the last few campaigns, many Americans are not used to the negative emphasis, said Dr. Susan DeBonis, political analyst and Texas A&M assistant professor of journalism.

"What we are seeing here is nothing new," DeBonis said. "Both candidates

have engaged in negative campaigning. Bush has done more and Dukakis has joined in, perhaps too late.

"I think they've used ads to avoid the issues to some degree. Bush has done a remarkable job keeping the Iran-Contra issue out of the forum. He's put Dukakis on defense and that's the purpose of negative campaigning."

Bush's negative campaigning forced Dukakis to respond by defending rather than promoting himself, she said.

"I think Dukakis should have responded sooner," she said. "He came out of the Democratic convention with a substantial lead over Bush."

Some negative campaigning against Dukakis has been by groups other than the Bush-Quayle campaign, including the National Rifle Association and local Republican parties, DeBonis said.

"Some of that is blatantly wrong and should be stopped," she said in reference to an ad run in Maine, a conservative state. The ad asked voters if they would like to see Jesse Jackson as Secretary of State if Dukakis won the election. DeBonis said she objected to that ad because it was not based on fact and it was racist.

"Racism is not necessary. This is not the 1930s."

Another ad in poor taste focused on family members of the person killed by a

convict out on a weekend furlough pass in Massachusetts, she said.

Although the Bush-Quayle campaign did not produce those ads, it in effect endorsed them by not asking them to stop, she said.

Allison Westmoreland, a member of Victory '88, a Republican campaign organization on campus, said she thinks Bush was forced into negative campaigning by the media and the Democratic Party.

"In the beginning, Bush was classified as a wimp," Westmoreland said. "Before the Republican convention, they criticized Bush for not taking a stand on the issues. The Democratic convention rallied Bush for being a wimp. Their big theme was, 'Where's George?'"

"I felt like it positioned Bush between a rock and a hard place. He either had to take a very strong stand on everything or continue what he was doing. He's being criticized for the hard stand he's taken on all these issues, but if he hadn't, he still would've been criticized."

"I think negative campaigning is sad, but it happens. And it happens in every presidential campaign that's close. The sad part is that it doesn't give you an insight on issues. For instance, Texas had a furlough program for quite a while.

"The very educated people know what

A disadvantage of this schedule included the problems involved in certifying graduation for commissioning.

An additional problem is that some students would participate in graduation without being academically clear to graduate.

Under the revised schedule graduation and commissioning times remain the same. Diplomas will be in the tube at commencement only if a student is cleared by the degree audit on the first check after final grades are recorded, but there is not time for students to clear possible problems before commencement.

All degree candidates having problems, will have until the first week of the spring semester to clear for December graduation, can still participate in commencement.

Final exams will be held over four days, instead of four and half, but there will be no finals after dusk and there is a free weekend during finals.

Liz Harwell, a biomedical science major and graduating senior, said, "I am pleased with the revised schedule because I didn't want to take a final on the day of graduation. I don't care about the matter of diplomas."

Derek Cossey, who will graduate in December with a degree in aerospace engineering, said it's ridiculous that the policy was changed this late. "But it's also ridiculous to have a graduation if people aren't going to receive their diplomas as they walk across the stage — that's what makes A&M unique."

the issues are. But the majority of the voters don't and they are the ones who will be impacted by the negative campaigning."

Margie Boswell, an A&M senior history major, said she does not approve of the negative campaigning by Bush and Dukakis.

"It turns me off of the candidate who does it," Boswell said. "It seems like a childish way to campaign, by mudslinging."

"I think they do it to make themselves look better, and that's a natural reaction to the closeness of the race. I think when they do it, it makes them both look silly because neither one is dealing with the issues."

Denise Smart, A&M visiting assistant professor of marketing, said that the candidates do not focus on issues like national defense and the economy because they are so complex.

"Most people look for an emotional issue and try to latch on to something," Smart said. "Bush's furlough program (advertising) was effective because no one wants someone out raping and pillaging their family."

"You can't say a lot in 30 seconds. You want to pick something that has an emotional impact."

A&M political science Professor

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