

Texas A&M The Battalion



WEATHER

TOMORROW'S FORECAST:
Partly cloudy with a slight chance
of showers in the afternoon.
HIGH: 90s LOW: 70s

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College Station, Texas

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Democrats block GOP-proposed flag amendment

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats on Wednesday blocked a Republican-proposed constitutional amendment to ban flag burning as they pursued passage of a regular statute they say can do the same thing without altering the Bill of Rights.

The chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Jack Brooks, D-Texas, ruled out of order an attempt by Rep. James Sensenbrenner, R-Wis., to bring before the committee the amendment backed by President Bush.

Supporters of the amendment contend that changing the Constitution is the only way to overcome last month's ruling by the Supreme Court that flag-burning was a protected form of free expression.

Democratic leaders, including

Brooks and House Speaker Thomas S. Foley, D-Wash., are pursuing a regular statute designed to meet the court's objections.

Their strategy is aimed at avoiding damage to constitutional rights and demonstrating that Democrats abhor flag burning.

The symbolism of the flag was used by Bush in last year's presidential campaign against the Democratic nominee, Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis.

Brooks scheduled another meeting of the panel for Thursday to take action on his proposed bill to outlaw desecration of the flag, including burning, with penalties of up to a year in jail plus a fine.

The bill could come before the full House next week.

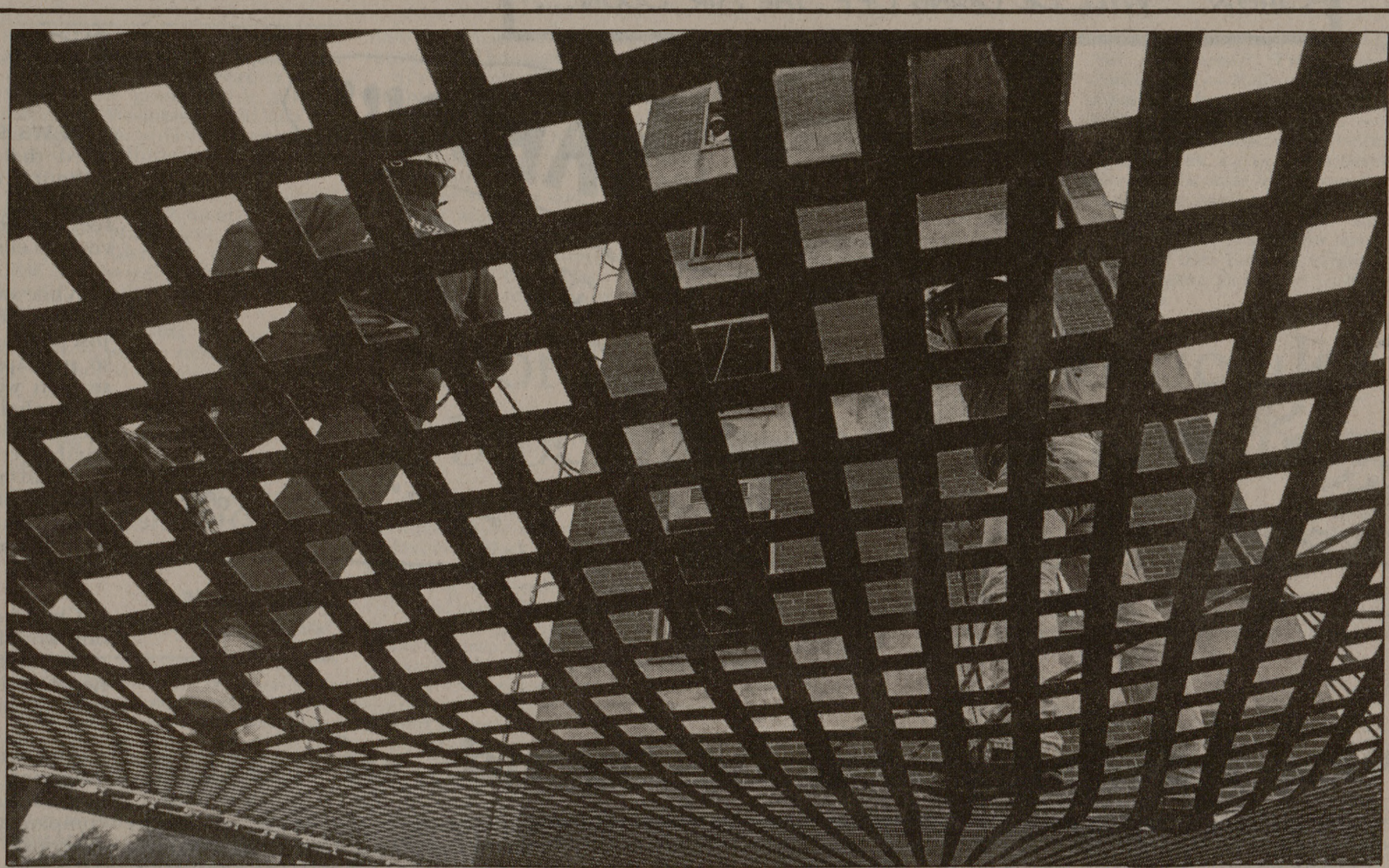


Photo by Phelan M. Ebenhack

Net Wait

Firefighters prepare to sharpen their rappelling skills by descending the Drill Tower while their colleagues wait below on

the safety net. The exercise was part of a training session Wednesday afternoon at the Brayton Firemen Training Field.

House votes to limit funds for production of costly B-2 bomber

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Democratic-controlled House voted Wednesday to sharply limit production money for President Bush's costly stealth bomber, pressing the Pentagon to come up with a program cheaper than the current \$70 billion.

"The B-2 bomber is in serious trouble," Rep. Mike Synar, D-Okla., said prior to House approval of the measure, which put off a decision on the final fate of the radar-evading bomber until next year.

The crucial vote Wednesday was 257-160, with 49 Republicans joining 208 Democrats to limit production of the bomber.

The House action, part of its work on the \$295 billion military budget, was a setback for Bush, who personally lobbied lawmakers for the aircraft.

The amendment, sponsored by Rep. Les Aspin, D-Wis., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, and Synar, allows the administration production funds for only two new bombers in 1990 and 1991. The Pentagon had sought eight bombers.

The action sets up a confrontation with the Senate, which voted 98-1 Tuesday to back the bomber if it meets flight test and radar-evasion standards.

The Senate trimmed Bush's \$4.7

billion B-2 request for the next fiscal year by a relatively modest \$300 million.

Once the House and Senate complete their versions of the defense bill, the two chambers will meet in conference to work out a final measure. The administration expressed the hope that a B-2 program resembling the White House request will still prevail.

"The Aspin amendment regrettably delays the program," White House spokesman Roman Popadiuk said. "It weakens our negotiating position (in arms-reduction talks) since it shows less than a full commitment to the manned bomber leg of our triad. We hope to restore the program in conference."

The House amendment on the bomber would meet the administration's full request for research and development work over the next two years but would limit procurement money and then cut it off unless Congress acts again.

Aspin argued Wednesday that the Air Force has "hardly tested this plane."

"What this amendment does is say 'slow down the program, do the research and development and fence the program,'" said the Wisconsin Democrat.

Bush signs bill to end last price controls on natural gas, calls for new energy plan

WASHINGTON — President Bush on Wednesday ended the nation's last price controls on natural gas and announced his administration will travel the country soliciting suggestions for an energy policy keyed to market forces.

"Our task... is to build the national consensus necessary to support this strategy," the president said in signing a bill ending the last wellhead price controls on natural gas, 35 years after they were begun.

The law Bush signed before a White House audience of members of Congress from oil producing states and industry representatives removes controls on the remaining one-third of natural gas supplies subject to price ceilings. The ceilings will be abolished by January 1993 for existing wells and by May 1991 for wells drilled from now on.

The end of price controls is expected to have little or no effect in consumer markets since gas is selling well below the current ceilings.

Years of price controls proved bad for producers and consumers, Bush contended, and were responsible for "the damaging natural gas shortages of the '70s and for gas market distortions that exist to this very day."

Natural gas supplies one quarter of the nation's energy. A 1978 law permitted the decontrol of most supplies starting in 1985, but the bill Bush signed was necessary to free the rest.

Gas prices have fallen from a peak average of

\$2.69 per thousand cubic feet at the wellhead in 1984, when homeowners paid an average of \$6.12, to \$1.71 last year, when homeowners averaged \$5.46.

Bush called the natural gas deregulation his administration's "first major energy initiative."

"Experience shows that deregulation works to serve consumers and to serve an expanding economy," Bush said in a bill-signing ceremony in the East Room. "It's a tribute to the American political system that after decades of disagreement over the merits of gas decontrol we can gather here today to state a clear message for all to hear."

"We have learned from the past. We are united in the conviction that the best way to deal with our energy problems and serve the American people is to let our market economy work."

Bush announced he was directing Energy Secretary James Watkins to come up with a national strategy that will seek to balance the nation's need for reasonably priced energy supplies, commitment to a safer and healthier environment, a strong economy and reduced dependence on foreign energy suppliers.

Bush said he would continue pushing for tax incentives to prop up declining domestic oil production, although he acknowledged he was unlikely to win action in Congress this year.

The administration's policy drafting comes when environmentalists are increasing their at-

tempts on the use of fossil fuels, which worsens the "greenhouse effect" warming of the globe, and when the Exxon Valdez tanker spill in Alaska has prompted Congress to expand the areas of federal offshore waters that are closed to oil and gas exploration.

"This is no time for complacency," Bush said.

"Our energy security problem continues. Conservation achievements are leveling off, domestic

"Experience shows that deregulation works to serve consumers and to serve an expanding economy."

— President Bush

oil production is continuing its downward trend. And petroleum imports are increasing. And our need for a cleaner environment is obvious to all."

Watkins cited several administration concerns: Domestic oil production is at its lowest point in 25 years while imports, still almost 20 percent below the 1977 peak, are 65 percent higher than in 1985.

Prosecutors call on A&M experts to help support use of genetic tests in rape cases

By Cindy McMillian

STAFF WRITER

Texas A&M researchers are taking the witness stand as the controversy surrounding genetic research has moved from the laboratory to the courtroom.

Prosecutors from around the state are calling on A&M experts to lend credibility to genetic tests which can match the DNA of rapists and suspects.

Dr. James Womack, a geneticist in Texas A&M's College of Veterinary Medicine, testified as an expert witness for the prosecution in a Fort Worth rape trial where genetic testing was a factor.

"The prosecution wanted me to verify that the probabilities of error were as small as the crime lab had calculated," Womack said. "In fact, I don't even work with human genetics, but both human and bovine genetics use the same basic analytical techniques and are based on the same principles."

The tests reveal specific gene codes in DNA samples. Because every individual's DNA has a different combination of chemicals, these gene codes are genetic "fingerprints."

Geneticists and forensic scientists can use these "fingerprints" to match DNA from rapists' semen with DNA from suspects' tissue samples.

Womack said the method has met with some controversy in legal and scientific circles because some think

the experiments "aren't adequately controlled."

The accuracy of genetic analysis depends on the quality and amount of DNA available. If the DNA sample is large and maintained properly, then the test is "very definitive," he said. If the sample is small or not stored properly, he said, then the test is not as reliable.

Womack said the test results in the Fort Worth trial were "very definitive" and an important piece of evidence leading to the conviction.

He said he interviewed the jurors after the trial and they said the genetic tests were not the only basis for their decision.

Chinese police arrest 3182 in three-day manhunt

BEIJING (AP) — Police in eastern Jiangsu province arrested 3,182 people in a three-day manhunt, including a Beijing student leader and other alleged counter-revolutionaries, an official newspaper report seen Wednesday said.

Jiangsu's *Xinhua Daily* did not say how many of those arrested have been charged with political crimes connected to the crushed student democracy movement.

It said they included the secretary and liaison worker of an independent workers' union in Hefei, and Cheng Mingxia, treasurer of Beijing's United Association of University Students, the independent student union that led the protests.

The brief report, in Saturday's edition, said Cheng had hidden thousands of dollars in Hong Kong, Japanese, Chinese and British currency.

Official reports of arrests connected with the seven-week student-led movement trickled almost to a halt in national newspapers after more than 2,000 were an-

Bill Juvrud, Assistant Brazos County District Attorney, said genetic tests have been used as evidence in two rape trials in Brazos County this year. The tests are used when little other evidence is available, he said.

One case this summer involved a victim who could supply only a general description of her attacker because she never saw his face, Juvrud said.

"When dealing with a rape victim who was prevented from seeing the attacker, genetic tests can be the only possible link to identification," he said.

Both Brazos County trials ended

in convictions, he said.

Tests for the two trials in Brazos County were performed by Life Codes, a private company in New York. The tests are expensive, but more companies are starting to offer them, he said, including one in Dallas called Gene Screen.

Juvrud said the procedure is becoming more common in courtrooms outside major cities, but it is meeting some challenges from critics.

"That's why we still need researchers from A&M to testify at the trials," he said.

nounced nationwide. However, thousands more arrests are believed to be taking place in secret.

The Beijing Evening News reported a Beijing court sentenced four people to death Wednesday — two for several thefts and two for theft and murder.

Officials say 12 people directly linked to the protests have been executed since June 4. They refuse to confirm unofficial reports of more executions of protesters.

The government, meanwhile, criticized as "very unfriendly" the announcements by foreign governments, including the United States, extending the visas of Chinese students abroad.

A State Education Commission statement promised authorities would not punish the thousands of Chinese students who took part in demonstrations in Japan and the West to protest the June 3-4 military crackdown in which hundreds of their classmates at home were killed. China has said 100 civilians were killed and about 100 police and soldiers died.

Student indicted for infecting A&M's, 5 other universities' computer systems with virus

FROM STAFF & WIRE REPORTS

A Cornell University graduate student was indicted Wednesday on a felony charge stemming from creation of a rogue computer "virus" that affected as many as 6,000 computers last fall, including the Texas A&M computer system.

Robert Tappan Morris, 24, who has been suspended from Cornell for one year, was indicted by a federal grand jury in Syracuse, N.Y., on a single count of accessing without authorization at least six university and military computers.

The virus found in A&M's computer system was isolated and "cured" before it had the opportunity to do any damage.

According to computer experts, the virus was entered into the Arpanet system by Morris. The computer virus then entered the A&M campus computer system through a user who logged onto the system in Michigan.

In a November issue of *The Battalion*, Associate Provost for Computing and Information Systems John Dinkel said viruses are hidden within a computer program, so 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.

Dinkel said 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. The computer-crime indictment charged that the virus, which spread across a nationwide network of computers, prevented the authorized use of those computers by universities and military bases.

The Justice Department said in a statement released here that Morris was the first person to be charged under the computer-crime provision of the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act of 1986.

The indictment comes after months of deliberations within the Justice Department over whether to charge Morris with a felony or a misdemeanor.

Morris, of Arnold, Md., could face a possible five-year sentence and a \$250,000 fine if convicted of the charge.

The law also provides for restitution of victims of a computer crime, but prosecutors did not specify how much damage was caused by the Nov. 2, 1988, incident that virtually shut down a military-university computer network used to transmit non-classified data.

An industry group estimated that as much as \$96 million worth of damage was caused by the virus to 6,200 computers.