



WEATHER

TOMORROW'S FORECAST:
Partly cloudy with slight chance
of rain in the afternoon.

HIGH: 90s LOW: 70s

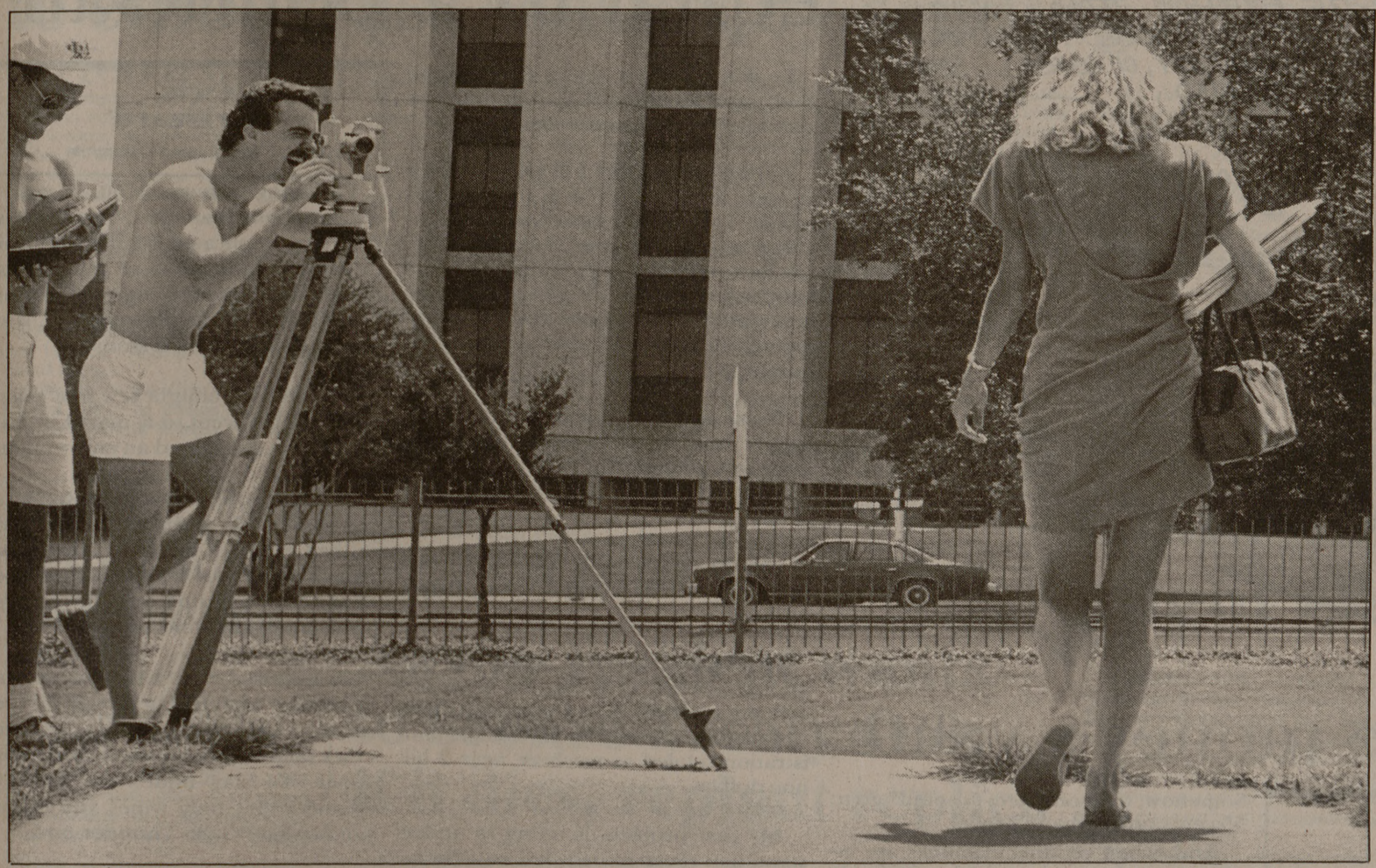


Photo by Phelan M. Ebenhack

On the level

George Meeks, a senior construction science major seems to be scoping out the scenery instead of the topography as graduate student Alesya Paschal walks to her class in the Zachry Engineering Center Thursday afternoon. Writing down the measurements for his Civil Engineering 202 surveying class is Kelly Harris.

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Clements signs bill outlawing burning of U.S., Texas flags

AUSTIN (AP) — Gov. Bill Clements on Thursday signed into law a bill making it a crime to desecrate the United States or Texas flags, a response to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in a Dallas case that held flag burning as a constitutionally protected expression.

The new law makes it a misdemeanor, punishable by up to a year in jail, to burn, mutilate, destroy or deface the state or U.S. flag.

The dispute over protecting flags resulted in a filibuster attempt during the special legislative session that ended last month.

Sen. Craig Washington, D-Houston, talked for 12 hours and 20 minutes, against a resolution calling on Congress to exempt desecration of the U.S. and Texas flags from the constitutional protection of freedom of speech.

Washington finally relented, saying he had made his point with the public against tampering with the constitution, and the Senate passed both the resolution and the legislation.

Lawmakers rallied to protect the flag after the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Gregory Johnson, who burned a flag in protest at the 1984 Republican National Convention in Dallas.

After the decision, President Bush urged passage of a constitutional

amendment to ban flag burning.

State Sen. Hugh Parmer, D-Fort Worth, introduced the bill outlawing flag burning in Texas, saying there was no need to wait for Congress to enact a constitutional amendment.

"If we wait on a constitutional amendment, the United States flag will remain unprotected in Texas for at least the next two years," Parmer said. Speaker Gib Lewis, D-Fort Worth, sponsored the legislation in the House.

In addition to the flag bill, Clements signed 28 other measures Thursday, including so-called "hate crimes" legislation and a tax break for producers generating oil through enhanced recovery projects.

The hate-crimes bill will increase from a misdemeanor to a felony the penalty for damaging or destroying a place of worship, or a community center that offers medical, social or educational programs.

The bill was a response to the damaging of synagogues by white supremacists called "skinheads," backers said.

The oil tax bill will reduce the oil production tax reduced from 4.6 percent to 2.3 percent for 10 years on oil produced from certain enhanced recovery techniques. The oil industry sees the measure as an incentive to increase drilling activity.

Group gives Israel new terms to save American hostage

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AP) — The pro-Iranian group holding Joseph Cicippio hostage said Thursday it would spare his life temporarily but indicated the American still could be killed "within days" unless Israel met new, tougher terms.

When the original threat to kill Cicippio was made Monday, his captors demanded the release of a Shiite Moslem cleric Israeli commandos kidnapped July 28. The new terms include release of unspecified "Palestinian and Lebanese" guerrillas.

Israel has offered to swap Sheik Abdul Karim Obeid and other Lebanese Shiites it holds for Western hostages and three Israeli soldiers held prisoner in Lebanon.

The latest announcement came in a handwritten statement from the Revolutionary Justice Organization delivered to a Western news agency 45 minutes before the 10 p.m. (3 p.m. EDT) deadline it had set for Cicippio's death.

It was the third time since Tuesday the group held off on its threat to kill Cicippio.

The statement in Arabic was accompanied by a photograph of Cicippio from the waist up with the trace of a smile on his face.

"Out of respect for the intervention by the parties and states with whom America pleaded to mediate and stop the execution, we declare the freezing of the death sentence and its substitution with an initiative," the captors' statement said.

The group demanded freedom for Obeid, a Hezbollah spiritual leader. It also demanded Israel release Palestinian and Lebanese guerrillas held in Israel, and it said it would provide their names to the Red Cross at a later date.

"Acceptance (of the demands) should be announced within days, otherwise the initiative will be considered canceled," it said, implying that the death sentence for Cicippio would be reimposed.

The group earlier had given Cicippio a four-hour reprieve from death, and it released a videotape in which he read a statement asking Israel to free Obeid.

President Bush said he was pursuing every diplomatic means of resolving the hostage crisis, while "prudent planning" for possible military action if Cicippio was murdered. White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said no decision had been made on whether to use force.

A leader of Hezbollah, the pro-Iranian Shiite movement thought to be behind kidnappings of Westerners in Lebanon, said military action would bring "ruthless reprisal."

Well-informed Shiites in Beirut said they believed Iran and Syria were playing a role in keeping Cicippio alive.

On Monday, the captors of Lt. Col. William R. Higgins said they had hanged him in retaliation for the abduction of Obeid.

Bush administration says reprieve doesn't fill U.S. hostage demands

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Bush administration called Thursday's reprieve in the threatened execution of hostage Joseph Cicippio "an encouraging and hopeful development" but said it did not fulfill U.S. demands for the release of all the hostages.

The announcement by Cicippio's captors lowered tensions at the White House and elsewhere. But it appeared unlikely to lead to an immediate recall of U.S. naval power converging on the eastern Mediterranean, a precaution taken in the event Cicippio were killed and President Bush ordered a military strike.

"I urge everyone to keep in mind, especially in regard to the ships, that we still have a serious problem in the Middle East," Bush's spokesman, Marlin Fitzwater, said. Hostages are still being held, he said, adding that he did not expect "any quick changes" in the military deployment.

Earlier, Fitzwater said Bush had made preliminary decisions "of every kind" about how the United States would respond if terrorists killed Cicippio, following the reported Monday execution of Marine Lt. Col. William R. Higgins.

Thursday was the threatened execution date of Cicippio by the Revolutionary Justice Organization. However, 45 minutes before the deadline, the radical group said it

Colonel pushes for U.S. hostage rescue attempt

AUSTIN (AP) — The ground force commander in the ill-fated 1980 Iran hostage rescue attempt said Thursday the United States should work to get information needed to rescue Americans being held in Lebanon.

"I'd like to see the United States be able to go in there and eliminate all of those terrorists and bring those beautiful hostages home," retired Army Col. Charlie Beckwith said.

"I'd like to see us do it in such a vigorous way that we tell the rest of the world, 'Never fool with the United States again,'" he said.

But based on comments by President Bush, Beckwith said he doubts that a rescue mission will be possible unless the United States gets more information. Bush should pressure the Central Intelligence Agency to come up with the necessary facts, he said.

"In order to put a scheme together, you need the

linchpins. The linchpins are intelligence information... to tell you where the hostages are and where the terrorists are," Beckwith said.

"I don't think we have that kind of information right now. I'm very frustrated over that," he said.

Beckwith was critical of the CIA, saying the agency has not been active enough since the death of William Casey, a former director.

"They're not doing anything — we don't want to make any ripples," he said.

The CIA relies too heavily on electronic wizardry and has forgotten about the need for "a pair of good solid eyeballs, and a good human being on the ground," Beckwith charged. "It's just a shame."

It is important for the United States to take a stand in the current hostage crisis, he said. Terrorists claimed they killed one American hostage in Lebanon and threatened to kill another.

There was an obvious sense of relief in Washington that Cicippio had been spared.

At the White House, Fitzwater said, "We regard this as an encouraging and hopeful development."

"But it still does not answer our continuing concern for release of all hostages," Fitzwater said in a written statement.

Japanese firm sets up scholarships for A&M

Texas A&M joins Harvard as two U.S. universities selected by Mitsui and Company for major scholarship support for students preparing for careers in international business.

The Japanese firm, now the world leader in revenue, is providing support for 10 international business scholarships at A&M.

President William Mobley will host a luncheon Tuesday in Houston to commemorate the establishment of the scholarships. He has invited Houston business and civic leaders to join in thanking Mitsui and Company's top Texas representatives, headed by Yoshi Kawashima, senior vice president in charge of the Houston regional office. Kawashima serves on the advisory board for

A&M's new Institute for Pacific Asia.

The institute's activities include coordination of the planning for an A&M branch in Koriyama, Japan. Plans call for the campus to be built with funds furnished by the city of Koriyama and its business community. A&M began offering English language courses in Koriyama this summer.

The international business scholarship program established by Mitsui and Company will be administered by the Center for International Business Studies in the College of Business Administration. Mobley established the center when he was dean of business administration.

Judge gives Mosbacher deadline to begin protection of sea turtles

WASHINGTON (AP) — Shrimpers could be forced to use turtle excluder devices if Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher fails to take immediate steps to protect endangered sea turtles from drowning in fishermen's nets, a federal judge ruled Thursday.

Under U.S. District Court Judge Thomas Hogan's ruling, Mosbacher has until Monday to draft alternative guidelines to the TEDs regulations to protect the endangered turtles, especially the Kemp's Ridley.

If Mosbacher misses the deadline, Hogan said he would go along with the National Wildlife Federation's request that the Commerce Department be compelled to enforce the TEDs regulations.

"We intend to submit regulations for publication (in the federal register) by next Monday which would permit shrimpers to either limit their trawl times or use TEDs," Commerce Department officials said in a statement.

Commerce spokesman Brian Gorman said the agency, however, had not yet determined how often shrimpers would be required to pull their nets to check for entangled turtles.

"Mosbacher's decision Monday is a true litmus test for the Bush administration's commitment to this nation's environmental agenda and the Endangered Species Act," Tom Miller, a spokesman for the Center for Marine Conservation, said after Thursday's hearing.

Mosbacher suspended enforcement of the TEDs regulations July 24, after shrimpers, who contend the devices reduce their catch by up to one-third, blockaded

shipping channels along the Texas Gulf Coast in protest and threatened violence against lawmen who attempted to board their trawlers.

At the time, Mosbacher also said that after 45 days, shrimpers would be required to pull their nets every 90 minutes, the length of time some officials say a turtle can survive submerged.

Mosbacher has since proposed regulations requiring shrimpers to pull their nets every 105 minutes, but Hogan said that in the interim, endangered sea turtles have been left "totally unprotected."

"They have been totally abandoned by the secretary," said Hogan, who ruled from the bench that Mosbacher's decision appears to "fly in the face" of a congressional mandate that the TEDs be used effective May 1.

Protecting sea turtles from shrimpers has been an issue for nearly two decades and Congress passed the TEDs law, Hogan said, "after years and years of study and thousands upon thousands upon thousands of hours to determine the best method to preserve these species."

And while Atlantic Coast shrimper fishermen have successfully used the TEDs, Hogan said it is regrettable Texas and Louisiana shrimpers "cannot find it possible" to use the devices even for a season.

Wildlife federation attorney Jan Goldman-Carter told the court the shrimping season is at its peak in Texas and Louisiana, putting the endangered sea turtles at their greatest risk of death.

A&M receives \$10,000 grant for symposium

Texas A&M University's Mosher Institute for Defense Studies has received a \$10,000 grant from the Fort Worth division of General Dynamics.

The grant money will be used to underwrite expenses incurred during a Mosher Institute disarmament symposium in Houston earlier this year titled "Toward a More Stable Military Balance in Europe."

Some 175 participants representing 12 foreign nations and the United States along with media representatives from Great Britain, France, Switzerland, Sweden and American-based publications and news services attended the two-day conference, which planners and participants called an unqualified success.

"General Dynamics was privileged to be a major underwriter of this prestigious event," said Charles A. Anderson, vice president and general manager of General Dynamics' Fort Worth Division.