

# Mexican authorities send stolen vehicles back to US

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Mexican authorities are returning some of the thousands of vehicles stolen in South Texas in an effort to improve international relations and crack down on border corruption, officials said.

Since Oct. 19, Mexican authorities at the Laredo International Bridge have turned over to the Texas Department of Public Safety 13 vehicles that ended up in Mexico, sometimes in the possession of Mexican state officials, the San Antonio Light reported Wednesday.

"We want to improve relations between our countries, and I won't stand for further problems," Tamaulipas State Judicial Police Commandant Franklin Ramon Barrera said.

Ramon ordered his 30-man department to return all stolen vehicles to U.S. officials immediately or face "severe penalties," he said Tuesday, adding that the move was in compliance with a federal mandate.

He also said the returns will continue until every vehicle has been given back to its rightful owner.

"It's as simple as that — there is no reason for police officials to ride around in stolen vehicles," he said.

Although Ramon said some of the returned vehicles were found abandoned, U.S. investigators said most were being used by state judicial police.

Five of the 13 returned vehicles were taken from the San Antonio area, DPS Investigator Jesse Flores of Laredo said. "But unfortunately, most of the owners are now insurance companies, since the original owners have already been paid," he said.

One of the returned cars — a 1990 red Plymouth Lazer — belonged to Air Force Sgt. Michael R. Franklin of San Antonio.

"I parked it at the Ingram Park Mall one evening last month, and when I came back it had vanished," Franklin said. "Even with the insurance, I lost about \$3,500 and now have to drive an old Honda — with no air conditioning. The theft really hurt me."

DPS investigators believe about 500 stolen vehicles are in the hands of Mexican state officials in Tamaulipas state alone. DPS also claims many of the vehicles were stolen by bands of car thieves, reportedly recruited by corrupt Mexican officials.

Texas law enforcement officials described Ramon as a man who can be relied upon to keep his word.

"He's always cooperated with us, and I think things will get better now that he is in his new post — espe-

cially in the Laredo area," Roy Neuman, commander of the DPS Vehicle Recovery Service in Austin, said.

The vehicle deliveries apparently caught some U.S. government officials by surprise.

In Nuevo Laredo, U.S. Consul Ronald Kramer said although he was happy with the returns, hundreds of vehicles still remain in Mexico.

And while well-intentioned, Ramon's actions do not meet procedural requirements of current bilateral treaties, Kramer said.

## State court just says no Poor school districts lose fight for legal fees

AUSTIN (AP) — Attorneys for the 68 property-poor school districts that successfully challenged Texas' school finance system failed Wednesday in an attempt to obtain quick approval of nearly \$1.22 million in legal fees.

Attorneys for Edgewood, Alvarado and other districts that won the landmark school finance case in the Texas Supreme Court had filed a motion "to expedite the payment of fees to plaintiffs who have labored (and are now laboring) on this case for six years."

The attorneys' motion quoted from the Oct. 2 Supreme Court opinion — holding the finance system unconstitutional — that the petitioners "are entitled to recover against the state their attorney fees as found by the trial court."

Attorneys representing the state contended that total legal fees for all parties are limited by law to \$300,000, the motion said.

The Supreme Court overruled the motion without comment.

Albert Kauffman, San Antonio attorney for the Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund, which represented Edgewood, a San Antonio district, said the battle over legal fees will go back to state district court in Austin.

## TEES will offer math, electronics night classes

The Electronics Training Division of the Texas Engineering Extension Service will offer introductory classes in electronics and mathematics.

Pat Wallace, head of the ETD, said the classes are offered periodically throughout the year and are designed to refresh basic math skills and provide an overview of electronics.

"The electronics course is for people who might be interested in electronics or in coming to our electronics school — and would like to know something about it before they come out here and pay the tuition for our main program," Wallace said.

The main program is an 18-

month certificate course for electronic technicians, Wallace said.

"We've had a good placement rate, and the students get good jobs," he said.

The Introductory Mathematics course begins Monday, and the Introductory Electronics course begins Nov. 7. Both courses are open to anyone and meet 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. once a week for six weeks at the Texas A&M Riverside Campus. The courses cost \$30 each and do not require any prerequisites or textbooks.

For information on the courses or the Institute of Electronic Science, call the Electronics Training Division at 845-6762.

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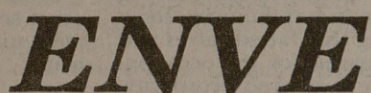
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