

WEATHER

TOMORROW'S FORECAST:
 Mostly cloudy and cooler
 HIGH: 68 LOW: 61

Refrigerator explodes in Chemistry Building

By CHRIS VAUGHN
 Of The Battalion Staff

A refrigerator containing highly flammable chemicals exploded in the old Texas A&M Chemistry Building early Tuesday morning, blowing out the windows in the second-floor room and tossing the refrigerator door 12 feet.

The explosion in rooms 212 and 213 occurred at 4:42 a.m., Bob Wiatt, University Police Department director of security, said. Wiatt said no one was injured, even though a student was busy working on the computer in an adjacent room.

Harry Stiteler, director of safety and health at A&M, said

the refrigerator contained a highly flammable chemical called diethylether. Diethylether contains carbon, oxygen and hydrogen molecules. The chemical is used primarily as a means of extracting other chemicals.

Stiteler said the chemical may have released vapors into the refrigerator. If the refrigerator's compressor kicked on with the vapors present, it may have caused the explosion, he said.

A chemist, who requested anonymity, said any type of electrical contact, such as the start of a compressor, with diethylether will cause an explosion. The source said the chemical is fairly common, but it must be handled carefully.

Wiatt said both laboratories suffered heavy smoke and water damage following the explosion.

Stiteler said the explosion ruptured a water pipe near the labs, which helped contain the fire until the College Station Fire Department arrived.

Ron Carter, the business advisor for the chemistry department, refused to answer any questions from The Battalion concerning the contents of the refrigerator.

Also, an unidentified chemistry department official refused to allow a Battalion reporter or photographer access to the area.

No damage estimate was available from any chemistry spokesman.

Six nations forge two-stage plan to unify East, West Germany

OTTAWA (AP) — The United States and its European allies forged an agreement with the Soviet Union and East Germany Tuesday on a two-stage formula to reunite Germany 45 years after the World War II victors divided it.

The nations' foreign ministers released a terse statement on the agreement, and U.S. officials added detail.

In the first stage, East Germany and West Germany would meet on legal, economic and political issues, according to the statement. The talks would begin soon after East Germany holds its March 18 national elections.

In the second stage the foreign ministers of the two Germanys would meet with the foreign ministers of the United States, France, Britain and the Soviet Union "to discuss external aspects of the establishment of German unity, including the issues of security of the neighbor-

ing states." The statement, hammered out at an East-West "open skies" conference, added that "preliminary discussions at the official level will begin shortly."

Although the statement was not specific, among the "external aspects" to be considered by the Big Four allies of World War II — who defeated Nazi Germany and its allies in the most devastating war in history — will be whether the new Germany is a member of the main Western military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The agreement on German unification was one of two at the NATO-Warsaw pact conference capping an extraordinary eight days of diplomacy that saw U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker III confer with allies and others in Ireland, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Romania, Bulgaria and finally in Ottawa.

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Technological commitment Speaker: Soviets look to space

By PAM MOOMAN
 Of The Battalion Staff

Despite terrible technological limitations, the Soviet Union always points to its space program with pride, a Texas A&M professor of space engineering said Tuesday at a meeting of Students for the Exploration and Development of Space.

"They firmly believe it is that area where they are equal to or better than the West," Dr. Richard Thomas said.

Space development is a high-tech industry, Thomas said, and this concerns the Soviets.

"That is the single driving force behind perestroika," Thomas said. The Soviets are strong in theory but weak in application, he said.

The Soviets are focusing on pro-

grams to enhance the national economy, he said. The three main areas are space information systems, such as mapping and monitoring the environment; space construction and production; and production of high energy from space in the form of solar powered satellites and a space transportation system.

"As far as I can assess it, the Soviet space program is still a focal point for national prestige," Thomas said. "The space program is one of their main claims to superpower status."

The United States, however, does not put such great importance on its space program, he said.

The Soviet and U.S. space programs differ in two other ways. First, the countries just think differently, he said.

"The Soviet Union is not the

United States," Thomas said.

Also, space development is largely a military program, although the Soviets generally say their space program is for science and the enhancement of their national economy, Thomas said.

The Soviets review their space program annually, he said.

"Obviously, perestroika and the restructuring effort is influencing many things in the Soviet Union," Thomas said.

It is logical to ask what effect the restructuring is having on the space program, he said. It's difficult to tell, he said, but pointed questions are being asked.

The Soviet people have begun asking their government why elab-

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Photo by Jay Janner

Tuesday's explosion in the Chemistry Building gave maintenance worker Ron Leshner more debris to clean up, but it gave THAR 101 students the day off.

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Speakers question 'peace dividend'

By KEVIN HAMM
 Of The Battalion Staff

The political changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe will cause the United States to slash defense spending, former Texas A&M president Dr. Frank E. Vandiver and Rep. Joe Barton told Barton's Student Advisory Committee Tuesday. The question is where the "peace dividend" should be spent.

"With what's happening in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, there are a lot of very key questions about our defense policy," Barton, a Republican from Texas, said. "I think that the majority of the American people feel that it is time for us to cut back on our defense expenditure level and not spend as much on defense as we have in the past."

"If we cut defense (spending) back significantly, and there's a good

possibility that we'll do that, the question then becomes what do you do with that money?"

The majority of student leaders attending indicated the peace dividend should be used to reduce the federal budget deficit, which will exceed \$1.23 trillion in the next budget year, Barton said.

Interest on the debt, which is about \$275 billion annually, is the

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Playing dead



Photos by Jay Janner

Seniors Dan Umbach (top) and Don Parker participate in an Army ROTC demonstration for junior cadets in Spence Park Tuesday. The cadets fired blanks from real M-16A1s and M-60s. The demonstration was a way of preparing the juniors for their trip to Camp Warrior at Ft. Riley, Kan., this summer.

Consul: Europe '92 requires Japanese help

By STACY E. ALLEN
 Of The Battalion Staff

If Europe '92 is to be completely successful, Europe and the United States must put pressure on Japan to play by the rules and trade fairly, the consul general of France said Tuesday.

Bernard Guillet, speaking about the common market that will be formed by 12 countries in 1992 and the different effects it could have on the world economy, said he felt the Japanese didn't believe in social justice and that America needs to stop depending on Japan.

Guillet said that because Japan is buying U.S. treasury bonds every month, it gives the Japanese a bargaining chip.

"America has got to find a way out of this vicious circle because you can't go on like this forever," Guillet said in his presentation, which was sponsored by the American Society of Agricultural Engineers and Agricultural Systems Management.

"The Japanese say, 'We are giving you money and sustaining you so you must buy our products,'" he said. "And that is where America should gain full control—through trade. Otherwise America is going to be in a bad position."

In addition to the actions of the Japanese, Guillet

said, two important things must take place.

First, he said, a currency must be developed that can be circulated throughout the 12 countries that are involved in Europe '92. The second thing is to try to get the people to learn a common language, he said.

Guillet emphasized that activities that take place in Eastern Europe in the future will also have a big impact on Europe '92.

"1992 will mean nothing if we don't find a solution for Eastern Europe," he said. "The only solution would be to bring the two Germanys together, and we could then have cooperation between the other European states."

Guillet said the future of Eastern Europe is unknown and that this is the first time since 1945 that nobody knows what the future holds. In 1993 or 1994, he said, the world may say Europe '92 had no real significance.

The United States and Europe must work together to help the countries that may pose major immigration problems for Europe and America in 1992, Guillet said.

All countries must be strict in dealing with immigration, he said, but the best way to solve the problem is to ensure that people living in poor countries have a high quality of life so that they want to stay in their native countries.