

Spade Phillips, P.I.

by Matt Kowalski



Tubularman

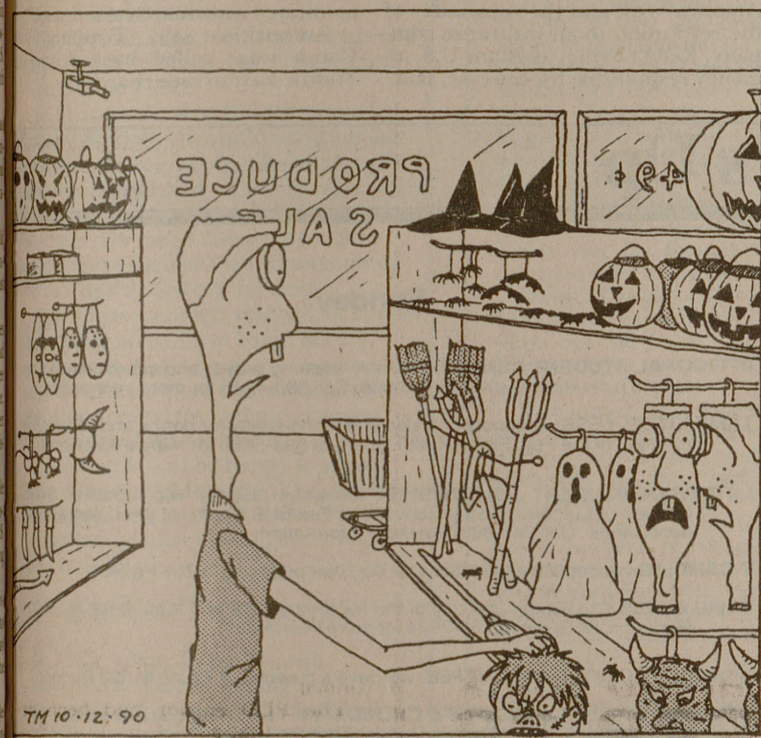
by Boomer Cardinale



Nerd House

by Tom A. Madison

Gunmen steal rings from mall



DALLAS (AP) — Two gunmen stole \$300,000 worth of diamond rings from a Valley View Mall jewelry store, according to police reports.

Witnesses said two males in their late 20s entered Linz Jewelers Tuesday afternoon and asked to see the diamond solitaire rings. When employee Mark Feinman showed one of the men a ring, he told Feinman to put everything in a bag.

The other suspect pointed a .22-caliber revolver at other people in the store. During the robbery, the gun-wielding suspect threatened to kill another store employee when he started to walk toward the suspect.

Both men fled the store after telling everyone to lie on the floor.

A maintenance employee for the mall, James Larson, tackled one of the men before he went through the mall entrance.

The other suspect held the gun to Larson's head, cocked it and told him to let him go.

U.S. grounds flights in Gulf

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Air Force grounded all training flights in the Persian Gulf area for a 24-hour period ending today in order to discuss with pilots the recent rash of U.S. aircraft accidents in Saudi Arabia, the Pentagon announced.

The "flying standdown" was declared Wednesday at noon Saudi time (4 a.m. CDT) and lifted at noon today, said Pete Williams, the chief Pentagon spokesman.

The halt applied to all training flights but not to reconnaissance missions and other "operational patrols," another spokesman, Col. Miguel Monteverde, said.

"So there was no degradation of our ability to defend ourselves," Monteverde said.

There are an estimated 700 Air Force combat and support aircraft in the gulf area as part of Operation Desert Shield.

"The Air Force declared a flying standdown for one day to conduct safety awareness meetings with Air Force pilots," Williams said. "To get together with everybody and just sort of review what they need to do to fly more safely."

The official death toll for Operation Desert Shield rose to 24 on Wednesday when an Air Force F-111 fighter-bomber crashed on a training mission in Saudi Arabia, killing both crew members.

Two pilots were killed Monday in the crash of an Air Force F-4 Phantom reconnaissance jet in Saudi Arabia, and just hours earlier two Marine Corps UH-1 Huey helicopters, each carrying four crew members, crashed over the Arabian Sea, killing all eight men.

Williams said the Air Force was the only service that has taken special measures to review safety in the gulf since this week's accidents.

"They're concerned about the accidents, they're concerned about the number of accidents that happened so quickly over a short period of time," he told reporters.

Williams said, however, that the military's safety record in Operation Desert Shield remained good.

"Given the amount of flying that has to be done, ... I think our service people are doing very well, but any accident is cause for concern," he said.

Exiled rulers hold conference

Forces seek reforms in gulf states

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — The Persian Gulf crisis has unleashed forces seeking political reforms in the feudal gulf states, including an extraordinary effort to discuss the future of Kuwait if it is freed from Iraqi occupation.

Kuwait's exiled rulers have invited 450 prominent citizens to a conference in Saudi Arabia this weekend to consider the future shape of a free Kuwait.

The government is eagerly — and uncharacteristically — soliciting the attendance of the Western press at the event.

Crown Prince Sheikh Saad al Abdullah made it clear that the agenda will range from future defense arrangements to the rights of Kuwaiti citizens and foreign workers.

"The basic topic is liberation," Kuwait Information Ministry spokesman Faisal Mutawaa said in a telephone interview from the conference site in Jiddah.

"But all issues that members want to discuss will be discussed," he said.

Sheikh Saad has called for a new social covenant between the rulers and Kuwaiti citizens. It follows widespread criticism by Kuwaiti exiles of the domination of the al-Sabahs, Kuwait's deposed ruling family, over their nation's important financial and political institutions.

The debate is raising questions about the mandate of other gulf rulers, benevolent despots who have so far rejected political parties and democratic institutions.

"No government, anywhere in the world, would fail to take heed of changing situations by beginning to adjust, whatever the prevailing situation."

— Sulaiman Mutawaa, minister for planning in the government-in-exile

After his Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein struck a responsive chord among the Middle East's masses by claiming that Kuwait was run by a selfish reactionary regime whose family had hoarded vast wealth for its own benefit.

To pre-empt such propaganda attacks, the issue of power-sharing is likely to take center stage in the other gulf states of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, Mideast experts say.

Few observers predict any immediate transformation to Western-style democracy in a region without such traditions. The gulf states are a political anachronism, where oil wealth and the accompanying support and banking industries have reinforced a tribal-based feudalism unique in modern times.

The hereditary Bedouin rulers' power is rooted not only in tradition, but also in their position as the symbolic source of the oil-fueled largesse that has created some of the world's highest per capita living standards.

"The native populations are all beneficiaries of the welfare system, except that isn't all they want," Shahrar Chubin, a Middle East specialist who teaches at the Graduate Institute of International Affairs in Geneva, said.

"The more educated ones want some say in the running of the country," he added. "It's not that they're excluded from the benefits. They're excluded from any power-sharing."

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