

Texas A&M

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Travel to Iraq blocked

WASHINGTON (AP) — The State Department has begun blocking travel by most Americans to Iraq and Kuwait as a "precautionary measure," a spokeswoman said Thursday. At the Pentagon, anti-war demonstrators were arrested trying to block entrances and dig graves on the lawn.

U.S. passports are no longer valid for travel to, in or through Iraq and Kuwait "unless a special validation has been obtained," the State Department travel advisories issued Wednesday night said.

The advisories said violators would face prosecution and imprisonment.

Other than journalists and some peace groups, few Americans are known to have traveled to Iraq since the war began last month. State Department advisories indicated reporters would qualify for exemptions from the new restrictions but did not make clear whether peace activists would qualify.

Asked if the government intended to block visits to Iraq by peace groups, spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said, "I have never heard that mentioned. I am not aware that that is what drove this policy."

"This is a precautionary measure and part of the State Department's general travel restrictions for Kuwait and Iraq," she said. Travelers seeking exemptions from the restrictions must apply in writing to the department's passport services office.

Americans who were living in Iraq and Kuwait are eligible for exemption, as are professional journalists, Red Cross representatives, humanitarian cases, such as someone with a critical illness in the family, and people making trips judged "to be in the national interest."

At the Pentagon, a group of about 50 protesters from the Atlantic Life

Community, including some children, sat in a driveway to try to block arriving Defense Department workers.

Others splashed a side entrance with a liquid they said was blood and oil, symbols of their opposition to the war in the oil-rich Persian Gulf. The demonstrators also spray-painted the words "Bush-Terrorist" in red and black on a wall.

Police cleared the driveway, arresting several people, and then detained two others trying to dig graves in a lawn outside the building. They reported a total of 13 arrests.

Wiatt emphasizes solicitation control

By Julie Hedderman
The Battalion

Unsuspecting Texas A&M students often are victimized by illegitimate magazine solicitors, but students can protect themselves by helping enforce campus regulations.

Bob Wiatt, director of the University Police Department, says soliciting on campus without a University concessions permit is illegal.

Dennis Busch, University Center assistant manager, says only student groups and campus offices can have concessions permits.

If people not affiliated with the University want to solicit on campus, they must work through a student group, which will receive a percentage of the sales.

Busch also says sales must occur in a specific location, not door to door, and members of the student group must assist.

Wiatt says people who sell magazine subscriptions are the most frequent offenders of the permit regulation. He says though many salespeople are from legitimate companies, some of them are not.

The biggest complaint about solicitors is they use high-pressure sales techniques that often intim-

idate students into purchasing magazine subscriptions.

Most of the salespeople are college-aged men and women who say they earn points for a trip or money for college by selling subscriptions.

Solicitors, however, often do not turn in money to the magazine company if a sale is made.

If a student buys a magazine subscription and the magazines are never delivered, it becomes a civil matter called a breach of contract.

Wiatt says calls to magazine companies indicate publishers never received the orders and money, or the company went out of business.

He says on-campus students can protect themselves best by calling University police if solicitors come to their dorm rooms. The police officer will request a name and other information from the person and ask to see a concessions permit.

"We tell them to leave," he says. "If they don't, or if they come back, we arrest them on charges of criminal trespass."

Off-campus students also are plagued by magazine salespeople.

College Station Police Lt. Mike

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KEVIN IVY/The Battalion

Heart-y meal

(Left to right) Freshman Marsha Floeter, sophomore Byron Seyerance, sophomore Meridith Graham and sophomore Eric Pickett spend Valentine's Day in research park at a picnic lunch. Several other couples also spent their day doing the same thing.

Special dogs search river for professor

By Jayme Blaschke
The Battalion

The Brazos County Sheriff's Department will use specially trained dogs Saturday in an attempt to find a missing Texas A&M professor believed to be in the Brazos River.

Dr. Peter John H. Sharpe, 50, a bioengineering professor, has been missing since Jan. 24. His van was found on Hwy. 21 near the Brazos River.

The dogs are from the Children's Educational Search and Rescue, a non-profit organization of Dallas, Brazos County Sheriff Ron Miller says.

"These dogs are specially trained to search around for bodies in water," Miller says. "They're a lot like bloodhounds, only they are supposed to be able to smell scents on the surface and under the water."

Miller says the dogs have been involved in searches before and have had numerous successes.

"We will have divers on hand, in case the dogs react to something," he says. "They'll be able to go into the river and search immediately."

He says the dogs will continue their search through Sunday if necessary.

The extra day could be necessary

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Texans support quality higher education, poll says

By John Lose
The Battalion

Texans are strongly in favor of quality higher education and don't support further cuts in university budgets, according to a recent Texas Faculty Association poll.

Parents of present college students, however, gave their children's professors relatively low grades regarding the quality of teaching.

"We made some guesses about the amount of support for higher education," Dr. Charles Zucker, director of the TFA, said. "But we were surprised about how high the numbers actually turned out to be. People understand that it's important for good higher education in Texas."

The poll indicated that 63 percent responded that they had college degrees, and 89 percent

gave their professors grades of A or B.

However, 83 percent of parents of college students in Central Texas gave professors an A or B grade, while statewide percentages of A or B ratings dropped to 70 percent.

Zucker says those numbers are extremely interesting.

"Unfortunately, there's no way for us to follow up on that," he says. "The problem could lie with problems that children may be facing their first years in college, with poor grades, frustration and so on."

Dr. E. Dean Gage, Texas A&M's provost and vice president for academic affairs, says one reason for lower evaluations might be that institutions have grown in size and scope in recent years, causing the student-teacher ratio to escalate.

The growing disparity between teachers and students also is limiting the individual attention that each student receives, Gage says.

"There is no question that the recent decreases in state funding for higher education is related to the increasing student-teacher ratio," Gage says.

The Legislature's budget board recently has proposed an additional 6 percent cut in funding for higher education.

Gage says, however, he does not believe the proposal is reflective of the public's commitment to quality higher education.

"I think it's more of a statutory recommendation," Gage says. "But it would hurt deeply to reduce funding further."

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Speedway gears up for renovation, reopening

By Mack Harrison
The Battalion

Renovation of Texas World Speedway will give the race track potential to become another Daytona Speedway, says the sponsor of Texas A&M's Sports Car Club.

Bill LaBarge, owner of the Bug Clinic in Bryan, says the track south of College Station could have a great economic impact on the local area, possibly drawing crowds of up to 100,000 on weekends.

"It will definitely be the biggest facility within 1,000 or 1,500 miles," says LaBarge, who races professionally.

Ishin Corp., which bought the track three weeks ago, plans to re-surface the track, rebuild the retaining walls and generally "rejuvenate the track," says Harry Wharton of Texas World Speedway.

"It will be a full racing facility when entirely complete," says Wharton, who has worked for the speedway for the past 15 years.

The complex will be host to concerts and motorcycle races in addition to all types of auto races, he says.

The National Association for Stock Car Racing (NASCAR), International Motor Sports Association and Championship Auto Racing Teams (CART) are some of the circuits that could use the racing facilities, Wharton says.

However, he says nothing has been finalized. He says most auto



RICHARD S. JAMES/The Battalion

Charles Harris, a senior engineering technology major, and driver and crewman for Bill LaBarge's

Oh Wow Racing team, looks forward to racing at the Texas World Speedway when it is rebuilt

racing organizations will not commit until the facility is completely ready.

Wharton says the complex — which can hold 27,500 people in the

grandstands and another 50,000 to 75,000 in the infield — could generate up to \$500 million a year for Bryan-College Station.

The reopened speedway also will benefit him directly, Wharton says.

"From a racer's point of view, this is the greatest thing that could hap-

pen," he says. "It will be my home track."

The speedway, once reopened, will be as good or better than any in the country, LaBarge says.

The speedway was once the world's fastest, and when it reopens it will set more records, he says.

In 1973, Mario Andretti set a world speed record of more than 214 miles per hour, when the fastest speed at Indianapolis was about 165 mph, Wharton says.

The new owners are rebanking the turns to slow the track down. In its present condition, the course is too fast for Indy cars, Wharton says.

Charlie Harris, a member of the Sports Car club, says the track is more fun than other courses.

"It's bigger, more open, and you can turn in both directions," Harris says. "It's not just turn left and go straight."

Harris, a senior engineering technology major from Midland, says he hopes the track will reopen.

"The track holds a lot of good memories for me," he says.

Harris began his racing career driving autocross for the Sports Car Club his freshman year. He says anyone interested in racing should start out this way.

In autocross, drivers race their own cars alone on a marked course. Participants compete against the clock for the best time.

From there, prospective racers should look for smaller racing teams who need volunteers, Harris says. These groups are looking for peo-

ple willing to put in some time, he says.

Harris drove his first race at Texas World Speedway for LaBarge in 1987. He started out as a member of LaBarge's racing crew, and began driving for him when LaBarge acquired a second car.

Harris raced until last year, when LaBarge moved to a more expensive class of race car and could only afford one vehicle. Harris still is a crew member for LaBarge.

Dr. Thomas Pollock, an A&M aerospace engineering professor, says he feels "positive" about the improvements on the track.

Pollock raced from 1974 until he sold his car in 1987, including twice on the Texas World Speedway. He says racing on the track then was an unpleasant experience.

"The track has been extremely bumpy for several years," Pollock says.

Racing on the speedway was a matter of avoiding the bumps as well as avoiding the other cars avoiding the bumps, he says.

He never drove on the track again after his second race because the course was so hard on his vehicle, Pollock says. Improvements made by the track's new owners, however, will correct this and other problems.

"It would be nice to race on it again," Pollock says.

Wharton says no decision has been reached on whether the Sports Car Club will be able to use the renovated track for its autocross.