

World & Nation

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The Battalion

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Atlantis astronauts ignite fire to enhance future flight safety

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Atlantis' astronauts set a small fire aboard their spaceship Wednesday, but don't worry. It was an experiment to enhance future flight safety.

The fire was ignited inside a sealed aluminum chamber in the shuttle crew cabin, sending teardrop-shaped flames creeping along a strip of paper before extinguishing itself about a minute later.

"Everything looked like it ran

100 percent," said John Koudeika, the experiment's project manager.

Crewman John Adamson ignited the paper on the five astronauts' sixth day in orbit by flicking switches that sent electric current to a wire.

"Three, two, one, start," Adamson said as he hit the final switch.

Cameras recording the event showed a big flash. The flame moved slowly up each side of

the 4.3-inch-long piece of ashless paper. The paper continued to smolder, with flames shooting from the center. Then all was black.

It is only the third time shuttle astronauts have kindled flames in space. NASA's only other orbiting fire experiments were in 1974, when Skylab astronauts set fire to Mylar and polyurethane foam.

Data from the first two tests, conducted in October and in

June, are still being analyzed.

Flames travel twice as slow in space as on Earth and glow a cooler blue because less soot is formed.

"All of our knowledge about flames in zero-gravity is based on theories. No one has ever verified these," said Howard Ross, chief of the microgravity combustion branch at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Lewis Research Center in Cleveland.

Fire experiments are planned for five more shuttle missions. The next one is scheduled for next summer; in addition to another chamber test, the astronauts will light a tiny candle and set fire to wire insulation and polyurethane foam.

Ross said the research is designed to improve safety on shuttles and future spaceships by increasing the understanding of how flames spread in weightlessness. It ultimately might help

firefighters on Earth, too, he said.

NASA takes strict precautions to avoid fire in space. Only fire-retardant plastics are permitted aboard the orbiter, and wire insulation must be made of flame-resistant material.

Rubbing alcohol and flammable solvents or cleansers are prohibited, as are matches and cigarette lighters.

Federal judge rules against Louisiana abortion law

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A federal judge Wednesday declared Louisiana's strict anti-abortion law unconstitutional, setting the stage for appeals by abortion opponents hoping to overturn the 1973 Supreme Court decision that established abortion rights.

The law would send doctors who perform abortions to prison for up to 10 years with fines of up to \$100,000.

U.S. District Judge Adrian Duplantier's ruling that struck down the law was unexpectedly early. He had scheduled a hearing on the matter for next week.

A copy of Duplantier's ruling wasn't immediately available, but a clerk in the judge's office who asked not to be identified said the judge declared the law unconstitutional.

The Louisiana abortion law was passed by the Legislature earlier this summer, when the state House and Senate each voted to override Gov. Buddy Roemer's veto.

Roemer has long said he is opposed to abortion on demand. But he demanded exceptions in the law for victims of rape and incest.

The bill passed by the Legislature has such exceptions but Roemer said the rape exception was drawn too tightly.

It required rape victims to seek medical attention within five days of the crime, and that they report the crime to authorities within a week of its occurrence.

Money hoax 'a cruel joke'

Soviets panic over false TV report declaring recall of U.S. \$100 bills

MOSCOW (AP) — Soviets with American money under their mattresses are losing sleep

because of a false TV report that the United States is printing new \$100 bills and will not honor the old ones.

Panicked Soviets have deluged the American Embassy and the Moscow offices of U.S. companies with telephone calls since Sunday's television report, which

the government newspaper Izvestia called "a cruel joke."

U.S. Ambassador Jack F. Matlock Jr. took the unusual step of denying the report in an interview Monday on Russian television. Nevertheless, currency exchange windows at some Soviet hotels and banks refused to accept \$100 bills on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Although there was no order against taking the bills, individual cashiers used their authority to reject them, the newspaper Moskovsky Komsomolets reported.

"We've reassured everyone that existing currency will not be



Jack Matlock

Publisher halts operation of seven failing magazines

NEW YORK (AP) — The publisher of Discover, Health and five other magazines said Wednesday it is halting operations because of the weak advertising market and tight credit. Family Media Inc. said it will continue trying to sell the magazines.

Robert Riordan, principal owner of Family Media, told staffers in a memo that the "continual downturn in advertising and an economy which hinders the ability to borrow new money" forced the move.

Unless he can find a buyer, the magazines will not be published again.

But even if he does, he said in the memo that "would still not allow us to continue the operation of Family Media."

Riordan failed to return calls seeking comment on the problems that led him to disconti-

nue operations.

The trade journal Advertising Age reported earlier this week that Family Media was laboring under a debt load of \$60 million to \$70 million and was under pressure from lenders.

It said information circulated to potential buyers showed Discover was Family Media's only profitable magazine.

As a private company, it is not required to disclose financial figures.

The company's biggest achievement may have come in 1986 when it sold The Ladies Home Journal for a reported \$80 million more than it had paid for it four years earlier.

That reinforced Riordan's reputation in the magazine industry as someone who could resurrect failing magazines.

Airline declares bankruptcy after rebirth

NEW YORK (AP) — Living up to one of aviation's most troubled names, the latest airline flying as Braniff landed in bankruptcy court Wednesday, barely a month after its rebirth.

The fledgling carrier, Braniff International Airlines, filed for protection from creditors under Chapter 11 in U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Hauppauge, N.Y.

Braniff said it "remains committed to providing service on its various routes," including flights serving Newark, N.J.; Dallas; Orlando and Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.; and Islip,

N.Y. It blamed the trouble on business disputes that it plans to sue over.

The new Braniff, based in Dallas, had been in business only since July 1 before entering bankruptcy court, where two former incarnations of Braniff had stopped flying.

"We remain convinced that our routes form the basis for a viable airline and we look forward to building on this foundation by serving the growing needs of the traveling public in New York, Florida and Texas," Braniff said.

Industry observers were not so sure. The

new Braniff had taken off at a time when even the industry's healthy, established carriers were reeling from the effects of the Persian Gulf crisis and the recession.

Airline analyst Raymond E. Neidl at Dillon Read & Co. Inc. said the only thing surprising about Braniff's Chapter 11 filing was the speed.

"That was quicker than I thought," Neidl said. "How'd they do it so quick?"

Braniff did not elaborate on its troubles and would have no further comment, a spokesman said.

U.S., Soviet representatives sign accord on energy policies

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. and Soviet representatives signed accords Wednesday that could help the Soviet Union keep its place as the world's biggest oil producer.

W. Henson Moore, deputy secretary of energy, and Rantik Margulov, first deputy chairman of the Soviet State Fuels and Energy Commission, signed a record of a week's meetings at which they pledged regular exchanges on energy policies and technologies.

In the first five months of 1991, the Soviets produced 10 million barrels of oil a day, compared with 7.8 million barrels for Saudi Arabia.

Margulov said at a joint news conference that the Soviets expect to produce 3.85 billion barrels this year and next, including 420 million barrels for export.

That would call for a rise in Soviet production after a sharp drop since 1988.

Oil exports have been a major earner for the Soviets of the dollars they need to buy food and equipment in the West.

"We are not going to reduce our exports of energy," Margulov said.

At current prices, the 420 million barrels would provide more than \$8 billion.

But U.S. officials are not optimistic.

Security Council OKs Iraqi oil sales

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The five permanent Security Council members agreed Wednesday to authorize Iraq to

sell as much as \$1.6 billion in oil over six months to buy food, humanitarian supplies and pay war damages.

The resolution won general agreement from the United States, Britain, China, France and the Soviet Union, according to Western diplomats.

A text of the proposed resolution, obtained by The Associated Press, states that the Security Council authorizes all states to permit the import of Iraqi oil and petroleum products to be sold in three installments.

Accepted by the five countries with veto power, the draft will now be passed on to the rest of the Security Council for possible amendment. Some non-aligned nations are expected to protest its restrictive terms, intended to keep the money from oil sales out of Saddam Hussein's hands.

Iraq's U.N. envoy said his government will refuse to sell its oil unless the resolution is modified. Iraq had requested permis-

sion to sell \$1.5 billion in oil, but without conditions.

"If the draft resolution passes as it stands now, Iraq isn't going to sell oil," said Ambassador Abdul Amir al-Anbari. "Lifting sanctions for six months on oil sales doesn't benefit Iraq," he said.

If Iraq does refuse the sales, it eventually could have grave effects on the health and nutrition of poor Iraqis, which U.N. studies have indicated are deteriorating as a result of the war and the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq.

Western diplomats called the oil sale a one-time exception to the U.N. sanctions regime and said that sanctions were not being lifted or eased because Iraq has lied in its declarations about what weapons it has, and has not satisfied Security Council cease-fire demands.

Sweeping sanctions were imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait last Aug. 2.

The resolution states that each purchase of Iraqi oil must be approved by the Security Council's Sanctions Committee, which monitors the trade embargo against Iraq.

Payments will go directly into a U.N. escrow account to be administered by the secretary-general.



Saddam Hussein

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