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102 ZACHRY

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Austin takes homeowners to court City fights crack houses

AUSTIN (AP) — In an effort to shut down alleged crack houses, the city is taking the homeowners to court.

"These are going to be test cases. If we are successful here we are going to continue to use this law to close down crack houses," Assistant City Attorney Orlinda Naranjo said.

In the lawsuits, the city alleges the properties are a "common nuisance" and can be seized if the owner participated in or knew of alleged drug trafficking occurring there, the Austin American-Statesman reported Tuesday.

"It's our position that we want the drug sellers and users to know that the city of Austin is going to

use every method it can to make neighborhoods safe," Ms. Naranjo said.

"If we have to go after the owners and make them accountable, then that's what we have to do. We want to return the neighborhoods back to the neighbors," she said.

The owners of one house said they had no idea there was any problem.

Susana Wilson of Los Angeles said, "We moved to L.A. in '63." She said the house has been rented to the same person since the 1970s. "We were just out here in the dark. We didn't know," she said. Assistant City Attorney Bob

Rose said the homes in question are "rather notorious."

"The neighbors are also upset because the dealing is quite blatant," he said.

Other cities, including Houston, Dallas and Los Angeles have turned to civil lawsuits in the fight against drugs.

In Dallas, a task force was established last month to help investigate 300 cases in which the civil remedy of declaring crack houses nuisances might be used.

So far, Dallas judges have ordered two alleged crack houses closed for one year, according to Dallas Assistant City Attorney Bob Davis.

Palestine receives respect during talks, official says

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mands included all of present-day Israel.

"The Palestinian speaker, Haidar Abdel-Shafir said Palestinians are willing to live side-by-side with Israel and share a promising future," Hatchett said. "He said their homeland would never cease to exist in their hearts and minds, but must exist in lands take in 1967."

Yarak said the ultimate outcome of the talks depends on Israel releasing the lands taken in 1967. Syria's insistence on the return of the Golan Heights is a major issue, he said, but the Palestinians are the major negotiating group Israel must deal with.

Hatchett said the treatment of the Palestinian delegation at the conference was the most graphic indicator that all parties took the talks seriously.

"The Palestinians, although officially a part of the Jordanian delegation, were treated with respect

and professionalism, and were in fact, a defacto nation," Hatchett said. "They spoke for as much time as the other delegates, not having to share time with Jordan."

"The Palestinian spokespersons handled themselves very well," he said. "The Israelis were very impressed with their lack of polemics."

Yarak said U.S. pressure on Israel enabled the conference to happen. He said the President Bush sent a message that shocked Israel and the Palestinians alike when he froze Israel's \$10 billion loan guarantee.

Hatchett said the door to peace is open, but a lot of work needs to be done before a lasting peace is established.

"We need to keep our eye on the ball and make sure nothing disrupts this process," he said. "Syria is the biggest obstacle now, but they're not the biggest players."

"Palestine can't bear the brunt of others' 'No.'"

Parents chain boy to cabinet

WHITE SETTLEMENT (AP) — A 13-year-old boy, who starved for months while chained to a cabinet, remained in a coma Tuesday as his parents were transferred to the Tarrant County Jail on child abuse charges.

Stephen Jay Hill was listed in "very critical" condition with "very minimal brain activity" at Cook-Fort Worth Children's Medical Center Tuesday, a hospital official said.

The boy's mother, Linda Hill, 37, and his father, Jay Hill, 42, an engineer at General Dynamics, were arrested and arraigned Monday night on charges of injury to a child.

The mother told authorities they had discipline problems with the 13-year-old, and kept him on a plastic chain and padlock out of reach of food.

When Stephen was found by police Sunday morning, he weighed 55 pounds, about half the normal weight for a boy his age.

The couple was transferred Tuesday from the White Settlement Jail to the Tarrant County Jail, where they both remain on \$100,000 bond for one count each of child abuse, said Mike Nichols, an investigator with the White Settlement Police Department.

Hill declined comment as he left the jail in this Fort Worth suburb, but his wife broke down when asked by reporters what she would tell the teen-ager if she could speak to him.

"The same thing I tell him every day, that I love him," Mrs. Hill said as she was led in handcuffs to an awaiting police car.

Lottery wins over voters, promises added funds

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"The lottery will provide us with \$500 million in the first year, and we badly need that additional revenue to educate our young, to fight crime and to bring jobs to Texas," Richards said.

Sue Cox, of the anti-gambling group Texans Who Care, said the results were bad news for Texas. "We regret that our state will never be the same," she said.

In the past decade, Texas has legalized charitable bingo games and pari-mutuel horse and dog racing. Cox predicted that lottery would bring added gambling problems Texas was the nation's largest state without a lottery.

"We regret that there will be victims of gambling ... an increase in problems families will face when a parent, grandparent or teenager becomes addicted to the lottery," Cox said.

"We regret that the taxpayers will think that the serious funding problems of our state will have been met, then realize ... that they will have the worst of both words — higher taxes and a lottery," she said.

Andy Welch, a spokesman for the comptroller, said preparations already have begun.

"The lottery task force has been at work for the last three months," Welch said. "They've traveled to other states. They have looked to see how lotteries are run in other states."

Backers said a Texas lottery would be a bonanza for a state government forced to raise taxes repeatedly since the devastating oil and real estate busts of 1986.

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