

PLO leader survives crash landing

Arafat's plane plows into hillside on way to Central Council meeting

TRIPOLI, Libya (AP) — Yasser Arafat, who has survived gun battles, air raids and assassination attempts as leader of the Palestinian cause, walked away Wednesday after his plane made a belly-landing during a desert sandstorm.

PLO officials said three of the five crew members aboard were killed when the plane's nose plowed into a hill.



Arafat

Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi made a bedside visit with Arafat on Wednesday night at a hospital in Misratah, 120 miles east of Tripoli.

Libyan television showed Arafat, lying with a bandaged right eye, smiling and chatting with Gadhafi, who embraced him.

"We have treated him fully and comprehensively," doctor Muftah al-Shwayhi said. "His health is excellent."

Bassam Abu Sharif, a close adviser, said he should be healthy enough Thursday to preside over a session of the PLO's 80-member, policy-making Central Council.

In a televised interview with a

Libyan reporter, Arafat thanked Gadhafi for having "mobilized the whole state" to find him.

He said the two pilots and an engineer were killed and five others badly hurt.

Others on the plane suffered minor injuries or escaped unhurt, he said.

Palestinians around the Arab world celebrated joyously after hearing the news that Arafat was found at dawn, bruised but alive after missing for 15 hours.

Arafat has been the Palestine Liberation Organization's undisputed leader for 23 years.

Had he been lost, it would have been a grievous blow to the organization and could have seriously

undermined U.S.-sponsored Middle East peace talks.

"God has saved the Palestinians from a political disaster.... Arafat is irreplaceable," said Zeid Wahbeh, Arafat's representative in southern Lebanon.

Arafat's two most important aides have been assassinated over the past four years and no one else has the stature to step in as successor of the divided PLO.

Arafat was flying from Sudan to Tunis, where he was scheduled to preside at a meeting of the Central Council on Thursday.

PLO officials said he was on his way to Tripoli, Libya's capital, Wednesday night and would go to Tunis for Thursday's meeting.

Free trade talks with Mexico arouse anxiety

Lawmakers, agriculturalists urge Bush administration to guard American jobs

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lawmakers and agricultural producers alike weighed in Wednesday with their concerns over a proposed free trade agreement with Mexico, telling the Bush administration it must fight for provisions to protect American jobs and goods.

"While I am enthusiastic about the possibilities in these negotiations, I have not and will not blindly endorse any agreement struck by the negotiators," said Rep. Kika de la Garza, chairman of the House Agriculture Committee.

The only way this agreement will be approved by the Congress is if we ensure that public and industry concerns are not ignored by the negotiators and not ignored by their elected officials," the Mission Democrat said.

The free trade talks, which began last June,

are envisioned to create a North American market of 360 million consumers with an annual output of \$6 trillion.

Representatives of several agricultural groups testified during Wednesday's Agricultural Committee hearing that they have serious reservations about the talks with Mexico and Canada.

Without adequate protections, a free trade agreement could "be a giant foreign aid program for Mexico," said Jeffrey D. Garguilo of the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association.

"If we had to make a decision now, we would work to defeat the (North American Free Trade Agreement) because there are too many unknowns," he said. "However, the negotiations do not seem to be far enough along for us to make a meaningful decision."

Garguilo and others said it is imperative

that the United States push for a phaseout of tariffs over up to 20 years for sensitive crops, as well as safeguard mechanisms to prevent dumping of cheap goods, and laws to prevent other countries from using Mexico as a gateway into North America.

"Unless it's from a cow milked in one of the three countries, it shouldn't move back and forth," de la Garza said, citing a concern that heavily subsidized European Community dairy products could be dumped in U.S. markets.

American producers also want the creation of panels to settle disputes between the three countries, assistance for displaced American farm workers and the elimination of Mexican and Canadian protections for industries such as dairy, poultry and corn.

Byington

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make sure nothing was left to chance.

In the first game of Sunday's doubleheader, the Aggies scored seven runs in the first inning. But Texas scored two runs in the third and jumped on top of erratic Aggie pitching in the fourth for eight more runs.

The Longhorns continued their onslaught with a run in the fifth and two in the sixth to take a 13-7 lead.

The Aggies answered with two in the sixth behind a Terry Taylor home run, but Texas scored one more run in the eighth to extend the lead to 14-9.

The Aggies scored five runs in the ninth to tie the score when Texas coach Cliff Gustafson brought Dressendorfer off the bench with no warmup.

The first batter Dressendorfer faced was Byington — it also would be the last batter he faced.

"Big John," who hit 15 home runs in 1989 and was the leading hitter (an amazing .442) among the first-team Sporting News All-Americans, took Dressendorfer's first pitch, an inside fastball, over the left field fence that shook Olsen Field. The series finale would be no less riveting.

The Aggies took a 4-2 lead into the ninth before Bryant hit a three-run homer off Scott Centala to give Texas a 5-4 lead going into the bottom of the ninth.

After Jim Neumann and Terry Taylor walked, Byington stepped up to the plate with no outs. He took Chris Gaskill's first pitch over the left field wall for the win and brought the Olsen Field faithful to their knees.

After the game, Byington said he knew what pitches were coming.

"It was a curveball," Byington said of Gaskill's pitch in game two. "I was looking for it all the way. I'd touched them a couple of times on the fastball, so I was looking for the breaking pitch."

But Byington was not the only hero that day.

"I think what is just as important is the hits that got us to that situation," Johnson said. "There were some key hits when we made those ninth inning comebacks."

In 1989, there were plenty of heroics at Olsen Field as the Aggies went 58-7, making them the winningest team in A&M history.

Byington's legendary performance may have been the greatest of them all.

Congressmen say House official withheld super collider reports

WASHINGTON (AP) — Government reports on the super collider have been kept from supporters of the controversial \$8.25 billion project, three Texas congressmen charged Wednesday.

Rep. Howard Wolpe, who chairs a House oversight subcommittee with jurisdiction over the giant atom smasher, has withheld documents compiled by General Accounting Office investigators, the Texans said.

But a spokesman for the GAO, the investigative arm of Congress, said to his knowledge the agency has not issued any documents to Wolpe relating to the Texas project.

"We have had no correspondence or memos or anything else with Wolpe on our jobs that I can discover," said GAO spokesman Cleve Corlett in Washington.

"When we have reports, interim or otherwise, they are sent to the requester. They are made pub-

lic 30 days later," Corlett said. "But there are no interim reports or anything else (on the super collider) that I am aware of."

The Texas congressmen contended Wednesday that Wolpe was using GAO documents to prepare his case against the super collider. The super collider faces a difficult funding battle in Congress this year.

Wolpe's subcommittee was to hold a hearing on the super collider's status Thursday.

"This is a parting shot by a member who is leaving the Congress," said Rep. Martin Frost, D-Dallas.

His district next year will include part of the super collider.

Wolpe, one of the leading congressional opponents of the super collider, has announced he will not seek re-election to his Michigan seat.

Texas Supreme Court to make ruling on constitutionality of sodomy laws

AUSTIN (AP) — The legal battle over the state's 113-year-old sodomy law will move to the Texas Supreme Court after a lower appeals court Wednesday rejected the state's bid for a rehearing of the case.

The state will appeal to Texas' highest civil court, said Ron Dusek, a spokesman for Attorney General Dan Morales.

Last month, the Austin-based

3rd Court of Appeals upheld a state district judge's ruling that declared the sodomy law unconstitutional.

Without comment, the appeals court denied the state a chance for a rehearing of the case.

Dusek said an appeal to the Texas Supreme Court will settle the issue once and for all.

"If we don't use this opportunity to take it to the Supreme Court,

then somewhere along the line it will be challenged. So why not just do it now and get it over with?" Dusek said.

The law makes sodomy a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a \$200 fine.

State officials say the law has never been enforced, but gays and lesbians contend that having it on the books encourages discrimination and hate crimes.

Still, they said they were scarcely aware the woman and her children were missing until her sister began asking questions about them.

The family apparently disappeared in mid-February, according to sheriff's officials.

"We never suspected anything because he was still living in the house," said Melcio Lopez, who lived across the street from the Ramos home.

Ramos told his wife's sister, and later authorities, conflicting stories about his wife's whereabouts.

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Neighbors said the family was reclusive and seldom interacted in the community. But several did describe Ramos as a quick-tempered and jealous husband.

"He wasn't friendly," said neighbor Israel Terrazas.

"He had a strange attitude," added Bertha Morales. "He got mad at very tiny things that

Police charge man with murders

Suspect's wife, children found buried under bathroom floor

WESLACO (AP) — A Progresso man was formally charged Wednesday with the murders of a woman and two children found buried under the floor of his bathroom.

Roberto Ramos, 38, was ordered held on a \$1 million bond for each count by Peace Justice Jesus Morales of Weslaco.

Sheriff's deputies on Tuesday found the bodies buried under the bathroom of Ramos' home in Progresso.

Ramos already was being held in the Hidalgo County jail on unrelated charges at the time.

Ramos was arrested last week

on an outstanding traffic ticket and a misdemeanor theft charge. Authorities also questioned him about his wife and children, who were reported missing last month.

The three were identified as Leticia Ramos, 42, Abigail Ramos, 8, and Johnathan Ramos, 4.

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