

Violent crime statistics rise in Texas, nation

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — U.S. Attorney General William P. Barr said Tuesday the nation must strengthen its law enforcement efforts and re-align its social programs to address growing crime statistics.

"The issue of violent crime has reached a critical juncture in this country," Barr told members of The Houston Club and later Harris County officials who led him on a tour of the county's year-old jail.

"Of those countries that keep records of violent crimes, the United States ranks No. 1 and Texas is one of the highest in the country," Barr said.

Statistics released last week showed the number of violent crimes in the nation rose 3.6 percent during 1991, while in Texas the number increased by 10.3 percent, Barr said.

While politicians traditionally have addressed rising crime by either beefing up law enforcement or expanding social programs,

Barr said, "I think we need both approaches."

"For the last 25 years, we have been addressing the root causes of crime" by spending money on social programs, Barr said. Since then, "we've spent \$290 billion just for the anti-poverty programs. That's \$3,111 for every taxpayer." And, he said, that does not include any job training programs or other social improvement services.

"What good is it to build public housing and have it taken over as stash houses?" Barr said. "It was once said 'poverty causes crime' ... today, I think crime causes poverty."

Instead, he praised states' efforts to build more jails, strengthen sentencing laws and curb recidivism of "chronic offenders and career criminals."

who he said were responsible for 80 to 90 percent of the nation's violent crime.

"Our primary goal is to identify and incapacitate that long-term criminal," Barr said. "That is the only approach that has any effect

on crime."

Barr praised programs like the federal "triggerlock" project that imposes federal firearms charges and standardized jail terms against criminals who use guns and violent weapons to commit state crimes.

Barr presented U.S. Attorney Ronald Woods with a plaque commending the southern district, which includes Houston, for bringing 194 triggerlock cases against criminals since the program began in April 1991. The Houston-based district total represented the fifth-highest number of cases in the nation.

The district that includes San Antonio topped the nation with 271 cases. Dallas ranked third with 210. Nationwide, federal prosecutors have brought 6,400 such cases since the program began.

Barr was continuing on to San Antonio late Tuesday to present a similar plaque to law enforcement officers there.

Summertime losses force fares skyward

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Air fares are on the rise again as discounts expire and airlines raise ticket prices with hopes of ending the heavy losses sustained in summertime price wars.

But with fewer people traveling, the increases might not stick, airline analysts said.

And even if they do, it will take more than higher fares to make the industry profitable again, they said.

On Tuesday, a first round of fall price discounting expired, increasing fares within the continental United States by about 30 percent.

A second round of discounting, which started when Northwest Airlines issued coupons for \$35 to \$50 off, expires Saturday.

On the same day, most airlines will also raise prices by \$10 to \$40, depending on the market, in a round of increases initiated by Continental Airlines.

United Airlines and USAir however, will be raising fares by about \$10 to \$30.

The increases peg domestic fares to a mileage table so that in every case the fare paid bears a

Airlines plan to avoid affecting travel patterns with gradual price increases

direct relationship to the distance traveled," said David Messing, a spokesman with Continental. "We're intent on fare levels once again matching cost."

Transcontinental fare increases will generally be greater. For most of the industry, the regular 14-day advance purchase for a New York-Los Angeles round-trip, purchase, for example, will jump from \$390 to \$490. The United and USAir fares will increase to \$470.

"The intent is to return to a situation whereby the cheapest round trip equals the one-way no advance purchase full-coach fare," said Neil Monroe, spokesman for Delta Airlines.

The fare increase pushed up airline stocks Tuesday. AMR Corp., the parent of American, rose \$1.87 1/2 to \$57.37 1/2; Delta rose \$2.37 1/2 to \$52.37 1/2; and UAL Corp. rose \$3.37 1/2 to \$107.50.

The raises bring fares back up to the levels they were on April 13, when a fare overhaul initiated by American went into effect.

Under that system, fares for

leisure travel stayed the same or rose, but fares for last-minute travelers, usually business people, dropped.

Since then, summer price wars have eaten into airline revenues.

Although the discounting helped raise airplane loads from 68 percent in July 1991 to 73 percent in July, the industry still lost \$668 million in the first six months of 1992, according to the Air Transport Association. That follows losses of \$2.4 billion and \$1.6 billion in 1990 and 1991 respectively.

And the third-quarter, usually the airlines' most profitable, is expected to show more losses, said George James, chairman of Airline Economics Inc.

"We've had discounts on top of discounts," said American spokesman Tim Smith. "They've made no economic sense."

James said that the new fares represent "a recognition by all carriers that they have to move to a sensible fare structure related more to mileage and to cost."

Analysts speculated, however,

the fare increases might not be around long.

Several times this summer carriers tried to raise fares by up to 33 percent but each time plans failed because one airline or another chose not to match the increases, said Tom Parsons, editor of Best Fares Discount Magazine.

With the latest increase, all the major airlines have raised fares.

But since not as many people are flying as had been hoped, it's more likely that airlines would cut prices rather than raise them, said Daniel Kasper, an airline analyst with the Boston consulting firm, Harbridge House.

"I'm not sure we're through with discounting for the year," Kasper said.

Part of the problem is that people who might have traveled in the fall months pushed up travel to the summer to take advantage of the low fares, Kasper said. So, in the already slower fall months, traffic could be even less.

And its not just price increases that will make the airlines profitable, Kasper said.

U.S. economic conditions need to improve to get people traveling again, and the number of airlines operating will have to shrink, he said.

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