

Attorney General battles critics

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN ANTONIO — Attorney General William P. Barr Wednesday denounced critics of America's drug war, saying the drug problem — glamorized by Hollywood — has existed 25 years and requires more than a quick fix.

"We didn't reach this sad state of affairs overnight. It took us at least 25 years, since the mid-60s, to dig ourselves into this hole," Barr told the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force.

The 10-year-old task force consists of representatives of nine federal agencies. Its national conference is this week in San Antonio.

"You are the leaders and the warriors in our nation's greatest struggle — the war on drugs," Barr said in a sort of pep talk to the group.

Barr said there have been ac-

Barr denounces doubters of drug war, says there have been accomplishments

complishments in the drug war, including a 50 percent decline in overall drug use since 1985 and the breakdown of the Medellin cocaine cartel of Colombia.

But, he said, work remains to be done.

More than 375,000 babies are born each year with drug-related problems, and over the next 10 years the nation will spend about \$100 billion on medical care and education to treat children exposed to cocaine, Barr said.

As drug use increased over the years, Barr said, "many influential sectors of our society took an extremely permissive attitude toward drug use."

"And well into the '80s the movie industry and the popular culture glamorized drug use,"

Barr said. "Its permissiveness had a devastating impact, and by the early 1980s there were over 25 million users of illegal drugs in this country."

Today, Barr said, some people who once were permissive toward drugs now "stand on the sidelines holding a stopwatch, asking why the war on drugs isn't over yet."

"The critics of the drug war want instant gratification now just as they wanted instant gratification in the 1960s and '70s," he said.

Barr said the Bush administration is continuing to battle drugs by attacking supply and demand and through improving foreign cooperation. He said the two greatest drug threats — cocaine and heroin — are produced by

foreign drug rings.

After his speech, Barr presented an award to U.S. Attorney Ronald Ederer of the western federal district of Texas for leading the nation in prosecutions under "Project Triggerlock." The program imposes federal firearms charges and standardized jail for state crimes in which guns and violent weapons were used.

From May 1991 to April 1992, Ederer's district brought 271 criminal prosecutions under the program.

Barr also had presented U.S. Attorney Ronald Woods of Houston with a plaque Tuesday commending the southern district for bringing 194 such cases against criminals since April 1991. The Houston-based district had the fifth-highest number of cases in the nation. The Dallas-based district was third in the program nationally with 210 prosecutions.

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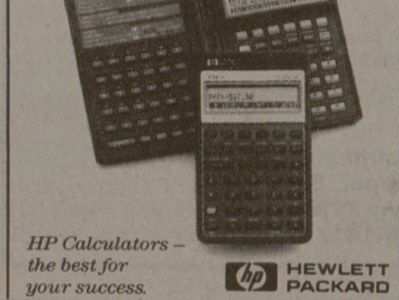
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Company fined for pollution

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — A smell likened to the stench of a thousand dirty socks has cost a Pasadena company \$100,000 in the first Harris County prosecution for air pollution under new, tougher state laws.

Eurecat U.S. Inc., a small oil refinery catalyst recycling company, pleaded no contest Tuesday to charges of polluting the air in its Pasadena neighborhood, prosecutor Roger Haseman said.

County Court-at-Law Judge Hannah Chow fined the company \$100,000 — the maximum allowed under the law.

The plea and fine were part of a settlement reached between Eurecat and Harris County in which the county dropped several other charges. The settlement also required Eurecat to agree to a temporary injunction in civil court in which the company promises to take steps to end the odor problem.

At least 15 people have complained over the past two years about a foul smell in the area, Haseman said.

"It was an odor that would be bad enough to keep people inside their homes and postpone barbecues," he said.

The smell has been compared to a stench from 1,000 dirty socks in a gymnasium, the prosecutor said.

Company president Jerome Wilson said Eurecat has invested \$500,000 in the past two years to try to eliminate the non-toxic odor sometimes emitted during the catalyst recycling process.

UTA delays action on admissions standards proposal to study effects

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ARLINGTON — The University of Texas-Arlington will delay action on a proposal to tighten admissions standards to study how it will affect women and minority students, UTA president Ryan Amacher said.

The proposal, which originated in the office of the vice president for academic affairs before Amacher became president in July, calls for higher Scholastic Aptitude Test scores from students not in the top 10 percent of their classes.

"We'll put the proposal on hold," Amacher said. "It's putting the cart before the horse. We have to look at what our mission is as far as any recruiting goes, and this study is a bit premature in terms of looking carefully at planning for five years."

W.A. Baker, the university's vice president for academic affairs, said complaints from faculty that

students were not adequately prepared prompted him eight months ago to ask a three-member committee to investigate strengthening university standards.

"It's not our role to be an elitist institution," Baker said. "However we should not admit people who can't make it here. I'm concerned that we do a good job for the students we do admit."

If applied to UT-Arlington's current enrollment, the proposed admission standards would have prevented 21 percent of freshmen between 1987 and 1990 from entering the university, according to the university's college research and evaluation department.

Had they been in effect between 1987 and 1990, those denied entrance would have included 220 blacks (or 58 percent of all black students); 700 females (29 percent); and 103 Hispanics (29 percent), the department said.

Brenham gas explosion under study

Federal board investigators question pipeline workers

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — National Transportation Safety Board investigators Wednesday questioned gas pipeline workers about events leading up to an explosion at an underground storage facility near Brenham that claimed three lives and left 21 injured.

During the fact-finding hearing, investigators questioned three Seminole Pipeline Co. employees and a Coastline Gas Pipeline Co. official about the April 7 blasts.

A final report on the explosion, which apparently occurred after a cloud of liquefied petroleum gas vapors was ignited, is not expected for several months. The agency in July held a two-day fact-finding hearing in Texas and is planning another session next week in

Washington.

Investigators Wednesday questioned the employees about Seminole's safety, operational and maintenance procedures at the Brenham station.

It marks the first time the NTSB has investigated an accident involving an underground storage cavern, said agency spokesman Michael Benson.

The Brenham explosion has highlighted the fact there is little federal or state regulation of underground storage domes, which are created by flushing fresh water down a well to melt away salt on the cavern's walls.

NTSB member Susan Coughlin has said only minimal industry standards — and no federal standards — exist for the design, maintenance and operation of underground storage facilities.

The NTSB has no regulatory authority, but if it determines rules would be appropriate it could recommend them to agencies such as the U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of Pipeline Safety or the Texas Railroad Commission.

The explosions occurred after Seminole's underground storage facility overfilled with liquefied gas. The Tulsa, Okla., company contends it responded properly after learning an hour before the first explosion that the cavern was overfilling.

But during the NTSB hearings in Texas two months ago, local authorities claimed fatalities could have been avoided had they been contacted once it became apparent something was amiss. Evacuation procedures could have been implemented, they

Migrant children work illegally

Kids as young as 6 toil in farm fields despite child labor laws

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FREMONT, Ohio — It's backbreaking work even for an adult, bending over row after row of cucumber plants, plucking the mature vegetables from the vine. But in the fields of northern Ohio, children as young as 6 years old can be found helping their migrant-worker parents with the harvest, in violation of child-labor laws.

The Associated Press found dozens of young children at work during visits to 10 farms, most of which sell their crop to major pickle processors like Vlasic Foods Inc., Heinz USA and Dean Foods.

Federal law bars children younger than 12

from working in the fields. But the farm workers say they have no other choice, given the lack of day care. And in a job where the pay depends on how much you pick, putting the whole family to work boosts the meager wages of these migrants.

"I don't know what else to do," said Juan Hernandez as his 9-year-old son, Miguel, piled cucumbers in a basket nearby. "If he wasn't doing this, he'd be running around. We have to watch him."

Hernandez spoke on the condition that the farm not be identified.

"We don't even have enough money to get back home," said Hernandez, who lives in Pharr, Texas. "It's been a bad year."

An estimated 10,000 migrant workers arrive

in northern Ohio each June from places like Texas and Florida to help harvest the cucumbers, tomatoes and other crops grown in the fertile plains west of the industrial city of Cleveland.

The workers and their families live in camps of one-room plywood shacks without indoor plumbing for the summer, then move on in September.

They can make as much as \$300 a week, although a drought last summer reduced that to \$50 a week for some, said Baldemar Velasquez, president of the Toledo-based Farm Labor Organizing Committee, which represents about 5,000 migrant workers.

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