

# Five girls claim gang required HIV sex

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN ANTONIO— The frightening disclosure by five teen-age girls who say they were dared to have sex with an HIV-infected gang member had police trying to verify their stories Monday.

But police said there is little they can do unless someone comes forward to file a criminal complaint alleging sexual assault or claiming somebody knowingly exposed them to the AIDS virus without their consent.

Planned Parenthood of San Antonio revealed that five 14 and 15-year-old girls who were tested for the AIDS virus told counselors they had sex with the HIV-infected male as part of a gang initiation.

"They weren't really bragging. What they told us came out in the counseling session," said Planned Parenthood spokeswoman Jo Ann King-Sinnett. "The girls came off as being tough and unemotional, but I think deep down they were very concerned."

So far none of the girls have tested positive

for HIV, King-Sinnett said. The teen-agers told counselors the sexual activity occurred late last year and in January. The virus that causes AIDS, may not show up in the bloodstream for several more months, however.

"We tend to think that maybe it is just one

**"The girls came off as being tough and unemotional, but I think deep down they were very concerned."**

—Jo Ann King-Sinnett,

Planned Parenthood spokeswoman

(infected male)," she said.

Police spokesman Sgt. David Ramos said police were gathering information about the gang activities from Planned Parenthood, but that the family planning organization cannot release the names of the girls for

confidentiality reasons.

"At this time we're going to try to monitor ... because we're not aware of this activity, this alleged activity," Ramos said. "There's no way to determine if it's actually accurate."

Police and Planned Parenthood declined to reveal the name of the gang so as not to give the group publicity. King-Sinnett said it is one of the city's largest, based on the predominantly Hispanic west side.

Tales of promiscuity among gang members and of girls having sex as part of gang initiation is nothing new, and Ramos said the stories the girls told the Planned Parenthood counselors are not farfetched.

"We're dealing with young, uneducated juveniles here. Yeah, I guess it's possible," he said. "They do engage in some type of sexual contact, in promiscuity among gang members. That is part of it sometimes. Luring other unsuspecting females into the gang, that's another type of activity that they get involved in."

## State News Briefs

### Brakes at fault, witness claims

EDINBURG (AP) — Properly functioning brakes on a Coca-Cola truck would have prevented a collision that knocked a school bus into a flooded pit and killed 21 schoolchildren, an expert testified Monday.

"These brakes failed and the truck could not stop, causing it to sail through the intersection," said auto-safety consultant John Stilson, the first defense witness for truck driver Ruben Perez.

Stilson, who was attacked by the prosecution as a paid witness, also called the school bus a "coffin," arguing that design flaws prevented an easy escape for the victims.

Perez, who turned 29 on Monday, drove the tractor-trailer that passed through a stop sign and knocked the Mission Independent School District bus into a water-filled roadside pit on Sept. 21, 1989.

If convicted of 21 counts of criminally negligent homicide, Perez would face up to one year in the Hidalgo County jail.

### Lawsuit leaves bar on defensive

AUSTIN (AP) — A lawsuit by a man thrown out of an Austin bar is among the first filed since the Texas Supreme Court ruled last week that nightclub owners can be held liable for drunken customers' injuries after they leave the bar.

Carl LeBlanc, 21, is suing the

### Back Room, claiming he was thrown headfirst out of the nightclub and then chucked into a ditch, causing serious injury.

LeBlanc, who was three days shy of his 20th birthday when the incident occurred on April 24, 1991, suffered "fractures of the skull, cheekbone and jaw and has permanent injuries including a hearing loss," according to the lawsuit.

The owners of the nightclub, Ronnie and Lisha Roark, said their employees did nothing wrong and will fight the claim.

### Feds investigate nuclear factory

HOUSTON (AP) — A federal examination of the South Texas Nuclear Plant is focusing on possible

management flaws at Houston Lighting & Power Co. ranging from worker intimidation to poor training to the bypassing of important technical specifications, the Houston Chronicle reported Monday.

In a copyright story, the newspaper reported that documents it has obtained show a Nuclear Regulatory Commission team investigating the plant has identified more than 100 potential weaknesses.

The investigating team spent two weeks at the plant last month and planned a final week of inspections and interviews beginning Monday. The detailed inspection comes in the wake of numerous personnel and equipment problems at the plant near Bay City, about 100 miles southwest of Houston.

# Columbia voyages into space on third attempt

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Space shuttle Columbia roared into orbit Monday with seven astronauts on a German science mission that had been plagued for months by delays.

It was the mission's third launch attempt in five weeks. "It finally worked!" said an exulted Reinhard Fiege, a German government research official who watched from Kennedy Space Center.

The astronauts quickly powered up the laboratory in Columbia's cargo bay, where the medical, biological and other experiments will be conducted during the nine-day flight, ordered by Germany years ago.

Payload commander Jerry

Ross, one of five Americans aboard, was the first inside Spacelab, followed by German astronaut Ulrich Walter. They floated into the bus-sized laboratory module from a tunnel connected to the cabin.

"I am enormously relieved that we had such a good start. Now we will wait for tremendous results," said German program director Heinz Stoewer, who also was at Kennedy for the launch.

NASA's oldest shuttle rose from its seaside pad on time at 10:50 a.m., piercing through thick clouds as it arced out over the Atlantic.

By launching nine days after Discovery returned from orbit, NASA broke the 1985 record for the shortest interval between U.S. human space flights.

"We all thoroughly enjoyed the

ascent," shuttle commander Steven Nagel said after Columbia reached a 184-mile-high orbit.

Minutes before liftoff, launch director Bob Sieck wished the two German astronauts a good flight in their language: "Einen guten Flug."

And there was this congratulatory message from German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, read to the crew in German and English 31 1/2 hours into the flight by German mission manager Hauke Dodeck: "After the long years of intense preparations and the recent delays to the launch, you must be very pleased to commence your work in orbit."

The first countdown for the mission ended with an engine shutdown three seconds before liftoff last month because of a debris-clogged valve. A faulty

navigation unit ruined the second launch attempt, on Saturday.

The mission was delayed earlier in the year by other shuttle trouble, principally a ruptured hydraulic hose and an equipment mix-up that required the replacement of three engine pumps.

"Columbia always seems to be a tough one to get off the pad," Sieck said. "But age doesn't seem to be a factor. It just kind of works out that way."

This is Columbia's 14th voyage since it embarked on the first shuttle flight in 1981, and NASA's 55th shuttle mission.

Many of the 88 experiments follow up on research conducted during Germany's first Spacelab mission, aboard the shuttle Challenger in 1985.



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