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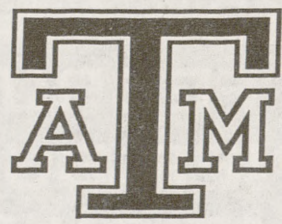
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## Bomer vows action on insurance fraud

Commissioner also wants to make insurance more affordable

AUSTIN (AP) — Gov. George W. Bush's pick for Texas insurance commissioner said Monday he wants to beef up fraud-fighting efforts and plans to meet with a grand jury that has accused the state of lax enforcement.

"Fraud is very definitely a major problem," Elton Bomer, a former state lawmaker from Montalba, told a Senate Finance subcommittee.

Bomer said he'll meet Feb. 8 with a Travis County grand jury that last month sent Bush a letter accusing the Texas Department of Insurance of failing to investigate fraud and citing "undue influence from the industry."

Bomer, who is awaiting Senate confirmation, said he requested the grand jury meeting "to try to get at the root of the problem."

Texas Department of Insurance funding to fight fraud has dropped 33 percent since 1993,

from \$3.5 million to \$2.3 million, Bomer said. He said he would like to move money from other, unspecified areas to strengthen anti-fraud efforts.

"I think it needs to be increased," he said.

Outgoing Insurance Commissioner Rebecca Lightsey, who appeared before the subcommittee with Bomer, noted that the state auditor already is reviewing the matter at her request to see "what changes need to be made, if any."

Bomer also said he planned to continue efforts at the agency that are aimed at ensuring insurance is available and affordable for Texans.

Sen. Gonzalo Barrientos, D-Austin, told him about an Austin man who was informed that his insurance was canceled because "his business was on the wrong side of town." Bomer said he has asked Barrientos for details on that case.

Bomer told reporters that, if asked, he would consider taking another look at anti-discrimination rules recently approved by Ms. Lightsey for Texas insurers. Bush had asked her to hold off on such major action because her term ends Feb. 1.

## Former cop questioned about death of two sons

HOUSTON (AP) — A former Houston police officer suffering from a shotgun wound to his chest was questioned Monday about the deaths of his two young sons who were found murdered at his home.

Frank Anthony Picone, 31, drove himself to the Spring Branch Memorial Hospital emergency room Sunday evening with a gaping wound to his chest, Houston police spokesman Robert Hurst said.

Picone, who was in stable condition Monday, told officers he had been shot at his home. On arrival at the second-story condominium, police found the bodies of 15-month-old Julian Picone and 5-year-old Franco Picone. The boys, who live with their mother, were visiting their father for the weekend. The couple is divorced.

The infant, apparently drowned, was found "laying on the floor in the bathroom outside the bathtub. The bathtub had about 6 inches of water in it," Hurst said.

Franco, apparently asleep when he died, was shot in the back with the same gun that wounded his father, authorities said. The gun was found next to the boy's body.

Police called Picone, fired from the force last August after less than a year, a suspect but did not immediately charge him with the murders. He was questioned by officers in his hospital bed Monday.

Hurst stopped short of saying Picone's shotgun wound was self-inflicted, but doctors said it was a close-range wound surrounded by gunpowder burns.

Dr. Dimitris Kyriazis, a surgeon who worked on Picone, said the man didn't say how he had been shot when he walked into the emergency room Sunday with the 3-inch-by-3-inch wound.

"He didn't say anything. He was in severe pain, mostly asking for pain medication," Kyriazis said.

Hurst said Picone was fired by the police department after violating department rules, but refused to further characterize reasons for the dismissal.

## British investigator criticizes Waco raid

Families of victims take legal action against federal authorities

MANCHESTER, England (AP) — A senior British policeman on Monday criticized U.S. handling of the 1993 siege in Waco, Texas, where 79 members of the Branch Davidian cult died.

The raid by the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms was "doomed from the start" said Detective Chief Superintendent Albert Yates at an inquest into the deaths of 23 Britons in Waco.

Ten of the victims came from Manchester, and the inquest was held at the request of the Manchester coroner.

Yates said an important aspect of the inquest "is allowing the families of those who died to stand up and ask questions."

Families of the British victims are joining in a multimillion-dollar legal action in the United States against federal authorities, whom they accuse of bungling the siege.

A report by the U.S. Justice Department criticized FBI handling of the incident but blamed the deaths of sect leader David Koresh.

The raid, in which four U.S. agents and six sect members died, led to a 51-day stand-off at the Mount Carmel Center and was followed by an inferno in which the others died.

Yates said the raid Feb. 28, 1993 had very little, if any, chance of success.

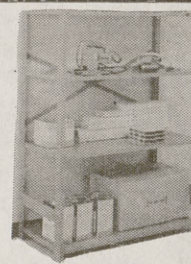
"It put, quite clearly, police officers and those within the Mount Carmel center at unnecessary risk of tragic consequences," he said. "All was lost from the moment the agents arrived outside the center."

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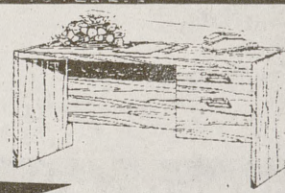
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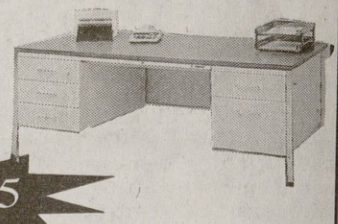
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