

Mine-detecting dolphins participate in exercises

CORPUS CHRISTI (AP) — The U.S. Navy is getting some help from mine-detecting dolphins as part of a large fleet exercise in the Gulf of Mexico this week.

The five dolphins are trained to use their natural sonar to find mines that could otherwise go undetected. It is their first time working in the Coastal Bend.

"In specific situations, nothing competes with a dolphin," said Tom LaPuzza, public affairs officer for the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center in San Diego, Calif.

Signal interference might keep the Navy's sonar from detecting some shallow-water mines, but the dolphins have an uncanny ability to

find them, LaPuzza said.

"The purpose of the animal systems is to protect lives of sailors and marines," LaPuzza said.

The dolphins are worth about \$1 million, considering the cost of training each dolphin receives, said Lt. Jon Young, the marine mammal officer for the dolphins.

Each dolphin serves for up to 25 years, after completing about five years of training.

The dolphins are "actual operational systems," but haven't yet been needed in a real-life mission such as when soldiers are coming ashore, LaPuzza said.

Mine-detecting dolphins will be used in an actual operation in July

when they're taken to the Baltic Sea north of Lithuania to find old ord-

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Public affairs officer for the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center

nance in the water, he said. To go mine hunting, the dol-

phins jump from their pens to a mat on a smaller boat, then ride to the area where mines might be located.

When the dolphin slips into the water, its handler moves into an inflatable boat, which is less likely to trip a mine.

Once a dolphin detects a mine, it swims back to the boat and hits one of two paddles to let the handler know it found something.

The dolphins are also trained to drop a marker on a bottom mine and attach a buoy to a moored mine.

The Navy's Marine Mammal Program uses 15 dolphins in the mine countermeasure program.

LaPuzza said his center has about 75 dolphins, some of which

are trained as underwater guards to detect divers.

The Navy's Marine Mammal Program has come under fire from animal rights groups.

Lisa Lange, spokesperson for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, described the Navy dolphins as "prisoners of war" confined to pens and separated from family groups.

"These close social ties are cut when an animal is either captured for the Navy program, or when they are bred and separated from their mothers," she said. "We are currently enjoying a time of peace. That should be extended to the animal kingdom as well."

Grand jury recommends study of unethical practices

WACO (AP) — A McLennan County grand jury has recommended an independent review of what it called "unethical practices and procedures" at the sheriff's department.

But county officials say they have little power to investigate the sheriff's operating procedures and the sheriff says nothing is in need of changing or investigation.

The grand jury's investigation focused on alleged improprieties within the McLennan County Sheriff's Department and resulted in a misdemeanor indictment against Sgt. Martha Warren Norman, a 17-year department veteran and former supervisor of the county jail kitchen.

Many of the allegations investigated by the grand jury surfaced after Sgt. Rita Norred was arrested in September and charged with stealing money from the jail. Her case remains pending.

Norman was indicted for improperly accepting gifts from a vendor who sells food to the county for use at the county jail.

Along with the indictment, the grand jury issued a recommendation to 54th State District Judge George Allen that an independent study be conducted into unspecified county policies

and procedures.

"The grand jury throughout the testimony found numerous evidence of unethical practices and procedures due primarily to a lack of written policies," the letter said.

Allen, the judge who impaneled the grand jury, told the Waco Tribune-Herald that he sent copies of the letter to Sheriff Jack Harwell, County Judge Jim Lewis, members of the commissioners' court and County Auditor Steve Moore.

But Lewis and commissioners Ray Meadows, Lester Gibson and Wendall Crunk said it is hard to know what areas the grand jury thinks need to be investigated because its letter was vague and the jury's 20 hours of testimony and deliberations were conducted in secret.

Grand jury members take an oath of confidentiality and cannot discuss their sessions.

Lewis and the commissioners also said their responsibilities over the sheriff's department are strictly budgetary.

"The proper procedures are in place. All this comes down to is we had a couple of people who violated our trust," Harwell said.

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Jack Harwell
Sheriff

Former chief of prison system pleads innocent

HOUSTON (AP) — The former chief of the Texas prison system has pleaded innocent to charges he took thousands of dollars in kickbacks to approve a contract for meat substitute fed to prisoners.

James A. "Andy" Collins — who rose from prison guard to head of one of the world's largest penal systems — entered his plea Monday to federal bribery, money laundering, fraud and conspiracy charges.

Collins was indicted in late March. He resigned in 1995 from his \$120,000-a-year job in the wake of criticism.

If convicted of all six counts, he could be sentenced to 70 years in prison and fined \$2 million.

Also named in the March 30 indictment was Yank Barry, president and chief executive officer of Canada-based VitaPro Foods Inc. Barry has not yet been extradited to face his charges.

The indictment alleges that Collins accepted at least \$20,000 from VitaPro to extend by five years the company's \$33.6 million contract with the prison system.

Additionally, the indictment al-

leges that Collins directed three aides to sign the contract extension and that he and Barry conspired to conceal the payments by establishing a dummy company.

After he resigned, Collins went to work for VitaPro as a \$1,000-a-day consultant, but the company fired him after state and federal investigators launched separate inquiries into the deal.

Collins, 47, had been with the prison system 23 years when he submitted his resignation in September 1995.

Within a month of leaving his state job, Collins transferred \$12,000 to his personal bank account and \$6,000 to pay an American Express credit card bill, the indictment alleges.

At his arraignment Monday, Collins told the judge he is unemployed, but actively seeking work.

Employment is a condition of his release pending trial.

Earlier this month, Collins filed for personal bankruptcy a second time.

An Austin bankruptcy attorney told the Austin American-Statesman that Collins owes \$27,949 in federal income taxes.

Allegations of abuse cause patient removal from rehab facility

AUSTIN (AP) — The Texas Rehabilitation Commission has removed four of six patients from a central Texas rehabilitation center and will not refer new patients to the facility after allegations of abuse.

The complaints against Raul Davila, 33, of San Marcos, and Rafael Patlan, 25, of Kingsbury, led to indictments earlier this month on a total of seven counts of injury to a disabled person, the Austin American-Statesman reported Tuesday.

A case against a third employee is pending, the newspaper reported.

David Seaton is executive director of Tangram Rehabilitation Net-

work, which owns the Hacienda facility near Seguin where the alleged abuses occurred between June 1996 and December 1997. He said the incidents were isolated and that the employees accused of wrongdoing were fired immediately.

"This was isolated, not a directive or a treatment technique," Seaton said.

Nevertheless, the Rehabilitation Commission removed four of its six clients in the Tangram network. Two others chose to remain.

The Tangram network houses 135 residents in eight facilities in Caldwell, Hays and Guadalupe counties. Residents pay an average of \$300 a

day for services, Seaton said. A complaint history of the Ha-

"This was isolated, not a directive or a treatment technique."

David Seaton
executive director
Tangram Rehabilitation Network

cienda facility showed a clean

record for at least the past two years.

The alleged abuses included hitting one resident's head against the floor and slapping another in the face. The arms of a third resident were shoved up behind his back.

Such assaults normally are misdemeanors, but state law steps up the charges to felonies if the victims are people with disabilities.

The Texas Department of Human Services, which licenses the facilities, has conducted its own investigation. But the agency cannot issue its report until a grand jury hears the case involving the third employee, said Guadalupe County

District Attorney W.C. Kirkendall.

"This is our twentieth year now, and we've never been investigated by the Department of Human Services like this before," Seaton said.

Davila and Patlan are free on \$10,000 bail. San Marcos attorney Paul Parash said Davila and Patlan plan to plead not guilty to all charges.

"If one of these disabled people gets out of bounds, what are you going to do?" Parash asked. "From what I know, there's only one six-hour course on how to control the patients. If you're going to blame someone who might have twisted an arm back too far, that's pretty rough."

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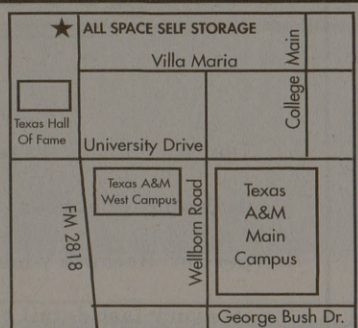
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Live Remote with KORA 98.3 9:30-11:30 p.m.

Saturday: Regular Kick-Butt Country Night
75¢ Drafts \$1 Bar Drinks \$1⁵⁰ Longnecks 7-10 p.m.

Sunday: David Allan Coe Concert
Advance Sale Tickets at A&M Western Wear & Rodeo 2000 \$5, Tickets at the Door \$6
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Thursday, April 16
7:00 p.m.
Directed by George Lucas
Starring Robert Duvall

Brazil
Sunday, April 19
2:00 p.m.
Directed by Terry Gilliam
Starring Robert De Niro and Jonathan Pryce

Video Screenings in Bio/Bio 107 (West Campus)
Free Admission !!!

Forcing Days 1998

Summer I
Wednesday & Thursday
May 6 & May 7
9:00 am - 11:00 am and
2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Friday, May 29
9:00 am - 11:00 am and
12:30 - 2:45 pm

Summer II
Wednesday & Thursday
May 6 and May 7
9:00 am - 11:00 am and
2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Monday, July 6
9:00 am - 11:00 am and
12:30 - 2:45 pm

Fall
Wednesday & Thursday
May 6 and May 7
9:00 am - 11:00 am and
2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Friday, August 28th
9:00 am - 11:00 am and
12:30 - 2:45 pm