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March 4, 2000  
Registration Form



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E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
# of People Attending: \_\_\_\_\_  
\*\* If you are signing up as an individual, try to find 4 or more A&M to come out with you!  
Please indicate your time and site preference  
8:00 \_\_\_\_\_ 11:00 \_\_\_\_\_ 1:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
Bryan/ College Station \_\_\_\_\_ Lake Somerville \_\_\_\_\_

Due February 18th to the Fish Aides Desk in Koldus 127. There will be 2 informationals held. You must send a representative to one of the informational meetings. The informational meetings are February 23 and 24 at 7:00 pm in Rudder 501.

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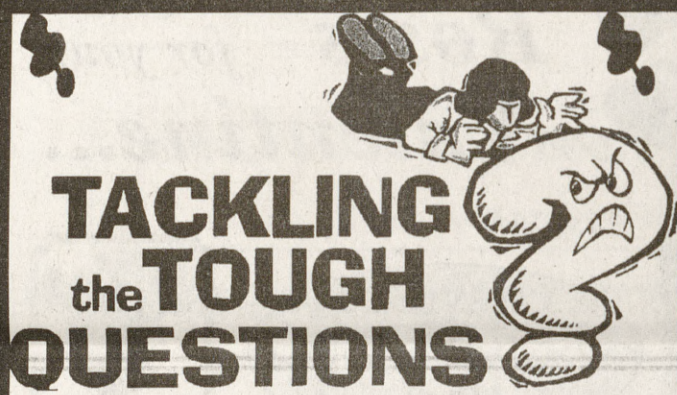
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# NEWS

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THE BATTALION

Friday, February 11, 2000

## Hijackers release 150 hostages, surrender

STANSTED, England (AP) — The hijackers of an Afghan plane released about 150 hostages safely and surrendered early today, ending a four-day standoff at an airport outside London. Police said they arrested 21 people who came off the aircraft.

Sixty people from the flight applied for asylum for themselves plus 14 dependents. There has been speculation, especially in British newspapers, that the Ariana Airlines jet was seized during its domestic flight in Afghanistan and brought on a meandering route to London as part of an elaborate bid for political asylum.

The hijackers did not make any demand for asylum, but "it became clear in the last hour of the negotiations that they were expressing concern about the political situation in Afghanistan," said David Stevens, chief constable of Essex County police.

Home Secretary Jack Straw suggested that anyone who had been on the flight with the intention of getting asylum would be considered part of the hijacking plot.

"I am determined that no one should consider that there is any benefit to be obtained by hijacking," Straw told the House of Commons, adding that he would personally handle the asylum requests.

Those arrested were not immediately identified. Police recovered four handguns, five knives, one set of brass knuckles, two detonators and two grenades, though they did not appear to have fuses, Stevens said.

He anticipated a long process of interviewing all the people aboard the aircraft, mainly through translators, to build a case.

"We are now into a very complex and involved

criminal investigation," John Broughton, an Essex County assistant chief constable, said shortly after the drama ended.

Before dawn, the passengers left the aircraft with little warning — first a group of around 85 at 3:50 a.m., then 65 more two hours later. Women and children came

*"This is good news, happy news for our staff and for all the people of Afghanistan."*

— Mohammed Daoud Sharafi  
head of the ticket office at the Ariana Airlines office

first down the runway, illuminated by bright lights from police vehicles on the tarmac. The men exiting the plane held their hands in the air.

The released hostages were taken to a safe location for medical tests, police said. Before the releases, police had said 151 people were on the plane, including 21 children. After it was confirmed no one remained on board, the Boeing 727 was swept to make sure it was safe for investigators, Broughton said.

The plane was seized early Sunday, 20 miles from a domestic flight from the Afghan capital, Kabul, made stops in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Russia before landing in London.

The end of the standoff capped days of tactical negotiations between British authorities and hostage-takers.

Just before the releases this morning, two of the hijackers had left the aircraft for a meeting with negotiators on the tarmac, deputy chief constable Joe Edwards said.

The atmosphere became tense Tuesday night as four crew members — the captain, second captain, officer and flight engineer — scrambled out of the cockpit window and down a rope. Hours later, the hijackers ejected a flight attendant, who was seen tumbling a set of stairs at the rear of the plane.

However, communications between police and hijackers resumed later in the day. Throughout the negotiations the armed men had made no demands, political or otherwise.

The men, believed to be Afghans, had requested only that food, water and other comforts be brought to the plane, police said.

At the airliner's three stops before landing at Stansted, 25 miles north of London, the hijackers released a total of 22 passengers. On Monday and Tuesday, hostages were let go at Stansted.

In Kabul, officials at the tiny state-run Ariana Airlines expressed relief today at the hostage drama. "This is good news, happy news for our staff and all the people of Afghanistan," said Mohammed Daoud Sharafi, head of the ticket office at the airline's office.

### News in Brief

#### Politicians fight for affirmative action

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — For weeks, leaders in Florida's black community have protested against Gov. Jeb Bush's plan to replace racial and gender preferences in certain state operations.

Now, women are also entering the fray against Bush's "One Florida" proposal, which would eliminate race and gender as factors in university admissions and the awarding of state contracts.

"From day one, the group hurt most by One Florida is women," said Democratic state Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, one of several female legislators who joined with groups like the National Organization for Women on Wednesday to defend affirmative action.

"Whatever crumbs he's using will not help women in this state."

Wasserman Schultz ascribed political motives to the plan, saying it was an attempt to stop an anti-affirmative action ballot measure by Californian Ward Connerly and a way to boost the

presidential prospects of Bush's rival, Texas Gov. George W. Bush.

Under the plan, students who do not have a difficult enough course load and are in the top 20 percent of their school graduating class would be guaranteed admission to some state universities.

The plan would also encourage businesses owned by women and minorities to bid for state government contracts and streamline the application process.

The issue came to a head in January when two black lawmakers staged a 10-hour sit-in inside Lt. Gov. Frank Bryant's office, demanding that Bush rescind his executive order to put Florida in place.

Bush refused, but he agreed to hold public hearings on the plan. The two so far, in Tampa and Miami, have been dominated by critics. A third was planned for today in Tallahassee.

NASA prepares for Endeavour liftoff

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — With only one day left until liftoff, NASA said today it's tracking no problems with space shuttle Endeavour and the weather looks excellent.

Forecasters said there is a 90 percent chance the weather will cooperate for Endeavour's second launch attempt, at 12:30 p.m. Friday. The only concern, and a slight one at that, is crosswind.

"Things are looking awfully good," shuttle weather officer Ed Priselac said at a morning news briefing.

Last week, rain and thick clouds, along with a computer problem, prevented NASA from sending Endeavour on a long-delayed mission to create the finest map ever of the Earth. The 11-day mission had been planned for last September, but was put on hold because of damaged shuttle wiring.

The computerized unit that malfunctioned in the final minutes of the

countdown Jan. 31 has since been replaced with a spare.

NASA has replaced a few other components aboard Endeavour, namely a ble and a navigation-satellite receiver.

During the past week, shuttle managers also made progress in their investigation into engine pump seals.

A seal that should have been left away as a factory reject somehow ended up flying aboard Discovery in December. NASA was able to verify the quality of all but two of the 18 seals in Endeavour's engine pumps, but decided to proceed with week's launch attempt anyway because of the unlikelyhood of another defective seal turning up.

Engineers have since found the perwork exonerating one of those remaining seals, and no more defective parts have popped up although search continues, said shuttle program manager Ron Dittmore.

## St. John's wort dulls effect of prescription medicines

LONDON (AP) — St. John's wort, a popular herbal remedy used to relieve mild depression, can interfere with drugs used to treat HIV-infected people and heart transplant patients, new research shows.

Scientists said the findings add to growing concerns that the herb may interact dangerously with prescription medicines.

Two studies published this week in The Lancet medical journal found that St. John's wort dulls the effectiveness of both the HIV medicine indinavir and the transplant drug cyclosporin, used to suppress transplant patients' immune systems so their bodies don't reject the new organs.

Although both studies involved few participants, independent experts say the way they were conducted and the strength of the results render the findings significant.

In one study, the level of medicine in the bloodstream when St. John's wort was taken dropped dramatically enough for patients to begin to reject their transplanted hearts.

The other showed that St. John's wort depressed the effectiveness of a drug used to treat HIV patients.

"This is a cautionary note," said Dr. Fred Valentine, professor of medicine at New York University Medical Center, who was not connected with either study.

"These [herbal remedies] really aren't necessarily benign compounds,"

St. John's wort is widely used in Germany as a treatment for depression and

anxiety. Some U.S. physicians have started recommending it to patients and report that the herb has shown effectiveness in stemming depression.

"There is definitely a potential problem with St. John's wort that is only recently becoming apparent," said Mark Blumenthal, executive director of the American Botanical Council in Austin, Texas.

This information "is coming out as the herb increases in popularity and is being used by millions of people in combination with over-the-counter or prescription medications," Blumenthal said.

Last month, CVS Corp., the second-largest drugstore chain in the United States, said it had started asking customers to list the herbal supplements they use — in addition to their prescription drugs — in an effort to avoid potentially dangerous drug interactions.

In one of the new studies in The Lancet, Stephen Piscitelli and other researchers at the Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md., gave eight HIV-negative volunteers indinavir, a class of HIV drug called a protease inhibitor, three times a day.

On the experiment's third day, St. John's wort tablets were added and the volunteers continued taking both pills for two weeks.

Blood tests were taken the day before the volunteers started taking the herb and at the experiment's end, to see if the concentration of the HIV medicine in their blood changed by adding St. John's wort.

*"These [herbal remedies] really aren't necessarily benign compounds."*

— Dr. Fred Valentine  
professor of medicine at  
New York University Medical Center

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MSC Film Society regrets to inform you that Sandra Bullock will not be attending Texas Film Festival this year due to scheduling difficulties, but hopes next year things will work out.

My heart is breaking because I can't be with you.