

THE BATTALION

Thursday, January 17, 2002

Background checks inadequate in Texas

AUSTIN (AP) — Background checks failed to prevent more than 1,100 guns from being sold in Texas to felons or other people prohibited from buying firearms over a 2 1/2-year period because of incomplete records, according to a study released Wednesday.

The "Broken Records" report by the Washington-based Americans for Gun Safety Foundation graded states on the quality of records used for federal background checks. Texas and 21 other states were graded an "F" because the states had not fully automated reporting of felonies, domestic violence and mental disability records.

According to the group, 1,142 ineligible gun buyers were able to purchase firearms in Texas. The state has automated only 55 percent of its felony records, the report said. The report studied gun sales from December 1998 to June 2001.

In Texas, all background checks required by federal law are conducted by the FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

Texas Department of Public Safety spokesman Tom Vinger said that local governments report felony convictions to the state agency, which then makes it available to federal officials instantly.

Texas officials conduct background checks for concealed weapons licenses but not gun sales, Vinger said.

Under federal law, if a background check cannot be completed within three business days, a gun dealer may turn over the firearm to the buyer.

Nationally, the report says 9,976 prohibited buyers obtained a gun because of faulty records over the past 30 months.

"The dirty little secret is that the records for almost every state are in terrible shape, and our front-line defense necessary to keep guns out of the hands of criminals is full of holes," said Jim Kessler, director of the foundation that wrote the report.

The National Rifle Association agreed Wednesday that the system is sloppy but said the blame should fall on an out-of-control bureaucracy, not lawful gun owners.

Olympics

Continued from page 1

medical and hazardous materials will undergo an additional eight hours of more specific training.

"Our doctors and medical team will be taking along narcotics that they have never covered or carried before. They are going to be instructed how to use them in the case of contamination or contact with hazardous materials, to keep our team members healthy," Donoho said.

Nick Pappas, rescue squad officer for the team and a lieutenant with the Bryan Fire Department, said TX-TF1 will be stationed at a military base near Salt Lake City.

"We will be on standby the whole time. If we are not called in, then we will spend our time training in our cold weather gear and becoming accustomed to the differences in that gear," Pappas said.

TX-TF1 is one of only six national task force teams that are being sent to cover the games. They will be paired with California Task Force-1 from Los Angeles and will serve 11 days in the area. Members of TX-TF1 were deployed to the World Trade Center in New York City to assist in the rescue effort after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Even though the FBI has not reported any terrorist threats against the Olympic Games, Donoho said such a high profile and international event could be a target.

"While this type of event has always had tight security, after the Sept. 11 tragedies, national awareness is even higher," Donoho said.

and a senior psychology major, said she found the stereotypical images in the cartoon deeply offensive and said *The Battalion* should apologize. She added that the cartoon is part of a pattern of insensitivity to blacks and other minorities by the newspaper.

"I might be outraged if this was the first time, but they (*The Battalion*) have made it a habit. I just don't know why the editors let such things run," Mack said.

This is not the first time that cartoons appearing in *The Battalion* have stirred controversy. Castillo said that he has been careful to exercise good judgment in deciding which

cartoons are published in the newspaper.

"I'm certainly aware that race is a sensitive issue on campus, and I thought this through carefully before making a decision," Castillo said. "We're not in the business of offending people, but we do want to make people think and make them question things, even if it may be a little uncomfortable."

Bisrat said the AASC is working with the University to help recruit more black students to A&M, but that incidents like the cartoon in *The Battalion* perpetuated A&M's reputation as unwelcoming to minorities.

Advertising Manager Angela Stanton-Anderson.

More free weight equipment will be added to the weight room by March. Hammer Strength machines are designed to match human movement, making the motions easier for joints, as well as conforming to accommodate any body size from 5 feet to 7 feet, Wilson said.

The Rec Center added treadmills, cross-trainers and abdominal machines this fall.

Wilson said that between \$60,000 and \$80,000 is spent on improvements each year to stay on the cutting edge of equipment and facilities.

Student suggestions are part of the formula that determines what equipment needs to be purchased, Wilson said. A Student Advisory Committee and a Participant Advisory Committee meet to review the ideas and make suggestions.

Funding for improvements and additions made to the Rec Center comes mostly from the Student Recreational Sports fee, which also covers the center's maintenance, wages and utility bills. These fees are currently \$78 per student for the semester, up from \$50 in Spring 2001, when the increase was approved by a student vote.

Cartoon

Continued from page 1

he would welcome a meeting with the group to discuss his concerns.

Texas A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen submitted a letter to *The Battalion* expressing his disapproval of the cartoon, saying it "clearly played on negative stereotypes of African-Americans."

Racist messages conveyed by the cartoon help cast doubt on whether A&M is a truly welcoming place for all people, Bowen said.

Megan Mack, vice chair of the Black Awareness Committee

Equipment

Continued from page 1

omore Thomas Tamez. "I like the fact that you can do other things on them."

One weight room attendant will be designated to the new racks during each shift in an effort to familiarize users with the new equipment, Wilson said. The Rec Center will also offer free weight room orientation every Saturday, excluding school holidays, at 11 a.m. Reservations can be made at the Member Services Desk in the Rec Center.

"We're trying to get as many people using [the new weights] as we can," Wilson said.

Women also are being encouraged to familiarize themselves with the new weight equipment. The Rec Center's Women on Weights program gives female students a chance to work with personal trainers and learn how to use the different equipment.

"Hopefully [the new racks] won't be as daunting to women because the machines are built for their bodies. They are very easy to move, and I think it's a lot safer to lift," said

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