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A&M is strong contender for security center

By Rolando Garcia
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M is a strong competitor to become the center of homeland security research efforts after the Senate moved toward final passage of a bill Tuesday that would grant President Bush's demand for a new Cabinet agency to protect Americans from terrorists.

The Senate voted 52-47 to reject an amendment which would have removed seven provisions from the bill that Democrats said were favors to friends of Republicans. Among the disputed provisions was a proposal to create a university research center to study security issues that was drafted, critics said, to give A&M an unfair advantage over other institutions.

In order to gain the votes necessary to pass the bill, Senate Republican Leader

Trent Lott promised to rescind three provisions next year when Congress reconvenes in January, including the A&M provision.

Rep. Kevin Brady, R-Texas, inserted the language in the bill and said while A&M was a front-runner, other schools would have the opportunity to compete for federal research dollars.

"We have the best and brightest minds already in place," said Brady, whose district includes College Station. "If Texas universities work together to present a state-of-the-art proposal, we can land a national research center in College Station."

At stake is an estimated \$3 billion in new federal research funds for homeland security, Brady said.

To be selected as the center for homeland security, the provision Brady drafted established a set of criteria few schools but A&M could meet, such as affiliations with emer-

gency response and rescue teams and with veterinary diagnostic labs, as well as strong programs in engineering and food safety.

A&M recently formed a consortium with the University of Texas, the University of Houston and Texas Tech University to lobby for homeland security research funds. This cooperation will give a crucial advantage to Texas schools in the competition for research dollars, Brady said. If the consortium is designated as the national research center, each school would get a small slice of the research pie, but A&M will likely be the headquarters of the research center, Brady said.

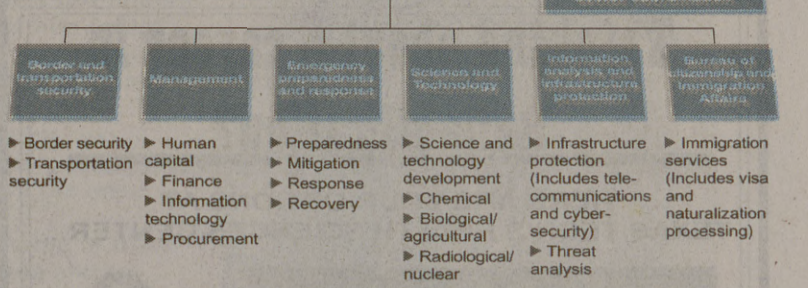
"Science can make Americans safer, and this new research center would be a major step forward," Brady said.

With Democratic challenges to the bill

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Department of Homeland Security

The Senate worked on the final touches Tuesday for legislation that will create a new federal agency dedicated to protecting the United States. A look at how the organization may take shape:



SOURCE: Associated Press

AP

Bush urges allies to join U.S. fight to disarm Iraq

PRAGUE, Czech Republic (AP) — President Bush urged NATO allies to "come with us" and help disarm Saddam Hussein, even as summit diplomats said Tuesday the alliance will not take up arms collectively against Iraq.

Bush, arriving first among 19 NATO leaders for a two-day gathering shadowed by intense security, said alliance nations can find ways individually to support his campaign against Saddam.

"Everybody can contribute something," he told Czech TV as White House aides sought to lower expectations for concrete action by NATO against Iraq.

"It all has got to be done within the strategy of the true threats we face in the 21st century, which is global terrorism. That's the biggest threat to freedom right now," Bush said.

NATO intends on Thursday to create a 21,000-strong rapid response force that could mobilize in seven to 30 days to confront threats from terrorists, renegade governments or regional crises.

In a historic reach toward Russia, the alliance also plans to invite seven former communist states into NATO — Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Bulgaria.

The threat of terrorism loomed over the summit as the Czech government mobilized 12,000 police officers, 2,200 heavily armed soldiers and special anti-terrorist units to protect the presidents and prime ministers.

Engines growling from above, U.S. warplanes helped Czech airmen in small, aging Soviet-era planes protect the Prague airspace. Intelligence officials fear the leaders are an inviting target for al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations.

Threats surrounding a Bush speech to students on Wednesday about the planned NATO force were so serious that it was moved from Radio Free Europe's headquarters to a sequestered hotel along the riverfront, law enforcement officials said.

"Terrorist attacks can happen wherever and whenever," Czech President Vaclav Havel said. "Our police and security forces have prepared a wide network of measures and have done the maximum so that nothing like that would happen. But 100 percent certainty cannot be found in the world today."

Railway workers found an explosive device on railroad tracks within the city limits while checking a section of track that appeared to have been sabotaged, police spokeswoman Eva Brozova said.

Police are worried, too, about how to handle the thousands of protesters who have said they will demonstrate.

NATO's new rapid response force, proposed in September by U.S. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, will not be ready for action in Iraq should Saddam defy a United Nations Security Council resolution to disarm.

Still, Bush seemed eager for NATO nations' help to confront Saddam.

"If he refuses to disarm, then we will lead a coalition of the willing and disarm him," Bush said. "And of course, I hope our NATO friends will come with us."

"I think they will realize it's in the interest of peace and stability that that happen," the president said. "But we're not close to that decision point yet because we're just beginning the process of allowing Saddam the

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Here it is



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Chemical engineering PhD student **Rubayat Mahmud** gives a geographic explanation of his hometown, Mirpur Dhaka, Bangladesh as **Jibrán Khan**, a freshman computer science major, looks on. Mahmud and Khan, members of the

Bangladesh Student Association, joined various other international student associations in the MSC Flagroom as part of the "International Living Room" promoting international education week.

Academics important to all ethnicities

WASHINGTON (AP) — Black and Hispanic students surveyed in diverse, upper-income communities have as much desire to succeed in school as their white and Asian peers, says a study that challenges the idea that some minority groups are less focused on school.

Researchers for the Minority Student Achievement Network study said the findings released Tuesday, based on a survey of 40,000 middle, junior and high school students in 15 school districts across the country, show that black and Hispanic students are actually more likely than white students to report that their friends think it is very important to study hard and get good grades.

But nearly half of the black and Hispanic students surveyed said they understood their

teachers' lessons about half the time or less, compared with 27 percent of white students and 32 percent of Asian students.

"As we present these data to teachers, we find that it sort of gets their attention," said Ronald Ferguson, senior research associate at Harvard's Wiener Center for Social Policy. "And I think we're better able to engage teachers and communities to say we need to do something about it."

Ferguson, who helped analyze the responses for the network, said some teachers were surprised and even questioned the accuracy of the data when told that for students within the same course level, there was virtually no difference in the amount of time that blacks, Hispanics and whites devoted to their homework. Only Asians

spent significantly more time on homework.

"How well students understand what they're being taught or what they're asked to read for school depends a great deal on how they are being taught and what kinds of supports are in place to encourage learning," said Allan Alson, superintendent of Evanston Township High School District 202 in Illinois and founder of MSAN.

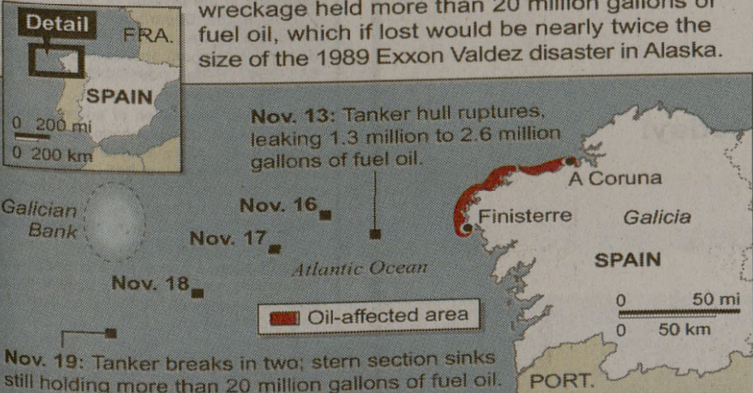
The survey — the first major study by the suburban school network — was conducted in the fall and winter of the 2000-01 school year. It also covered issues such as teacher-student relationships, students' understanding of classroom material, homework and peer-pressure.

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Oil tanker sinks off Spain's northwest coast; environmental disaster looms

Sunken tanker poses major threat

The oil tanker *Prestige*, damaged in a storm last week, broke in two and sank off the northwest coast of Spain on Tuesday. The wreckage held more than 20 million gallons of fuel oil, which if lost would be nearly twice the size of the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster in Alaska.



MADRID, Spain (AP) — An oil tanker carrying 20 million gallons of fuel oil broke in two and sank Tuesday in the Atlantic Ocean, threatening a spill nearly twice as big as the Exxon Valdez's and an environmental catastrophe along a scenic Spanish coastline.

The hope was that the oil would sink and harden in waters more than two miles deep before it could inflict disaster and engulf the area's rich fishing grounds. But it has already soiled 125 miles of Spanish coastline, and its highly viscous and toxic load is far bigger than the 10.92 million gallons dumped off Alaska by the Exxon Valdez in 1989.

As the Bahamas-flagged tanker *Prestige* sank, it leaked between 800,000 to 1.02 million gallons of oil, according to government estimates. SMIT, the Dutch salvage company hired to keep the ship afloat, estimated the spillage at 13 percent of its load. Nor was it clear much oil might reach land, or where. Portugal said it was monitoring a

slick 22 miles by one-third of a mile.

Shut out of Spanish and Portuguese ports after its hull split in a storm six days ago, the tanker was towed some 150 miles out to sea off the coast of Spain's Galicia region. When it finally capsized and sank crews were already cleaning up Galicia's coast, where an estimated 800,000 gallons of oil has contaminated fisheries, blackened beaches and killed wildlife.

The calamity has highlighted concerns about older, single-hull ships like the 26-year-old *Prestige* that are due to be phased out by 2015 — and about what Europe should do to keep them safe and inspected in the meantime.

The European Union charged Tuesday that single-hull ships skirt European ports to avoid tough new EU-mandated inspection rules. It urged national governments to work harder to enforce them.

Spain said the ship had not been inspect-

ed since 1999, but the ship's Greece-based management company, Universe Maritime Ltd., claimed the vessel underwent an inspection last May.

At stake in Spain's misty, green, north-west corner is a fishing and seafood industry that feeds much of the country and does more than \$330 million in annual business. It employs tens of thousands of people who catch, process or sell everything from monkfish to mussels.

Fuel oil, used to power ship engines and electricity plants, is harder to clean up than the crude spilled by the Exxon Valdez. Crude disperses in sea water but fuel oil turns to sticky lumps.

"It's a big, sticky, gooey mess — a bit like molten asphalt," said Unni Einemo, senior editor at Bunkerworld, a London-based news service for the marine fuels industry.

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