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Gates establishes review of communications

By Lauren Smith & C.E. Walters
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M President Robert M. Gates established three task forces on Tuesday, overseen by a steering committee, to review, evaluate and help address problems with the University's communications systems.

Gates said flaws within A&M communications stem from a lack of central organization within the University.

"Contrary to what most people might believe, communication is decentralized at A&M," said Cynthia Lawson, director of University Relations. "The most centralized aspect of communication is media relations, but some colleges send out their own press releases."

Gates said the goal of the task forces and the steering committee is to help unify the University's communication to more effectively

connect with those unfamiliar with A&M or the Bryan-College Station area. Problems with the University's communication range from variable Web site designs to information packets missing the A&M logo.

"Right now we speak with many voices," Gates said.

Lawson said each college and department designs its own Web site and brochure.

Gates said streamlining communications also has the potential to save the University money. Multiple printing and copying facilities on campus could be merged or outsourced, he said.

Gates said he wasn't sure if any jobs would be lost in the ensuing shuffles, but that is something the committee will look into.

"I think it's premature to say that (any jobs may

be lost)," he said.

Lawson said the task forces and committees must also address how the University markets itself. Brochures lack identification, present conflicting messages and have little consistency from one department to another.

"In short, everybody won't be doing their own thing anymore," she said.

Lawson said colleges must target different audiences. The challenge will come from sending a united message while, at the same time, allowing each college to have its own identity.

Gates said communication must be improved to accurately portray the University.

"We've got a world class university that's half women, and most of the rest of the United States

thinks we've got 5,000 students and they're all men and they're all in the Corps (of Cadets)," Gates said.

Marty Loudder, a steering committee member and Faculty Senate speaker, said when visiting professors do workshops at A&M, that they refer to A&M as a "well-kept secret."

"Outside of Texas, A&M is not known for having great students and faculty," Loudder said. "(A&M) is thought of as a cow college. We are out to find out — is that really true?"

The three task forces will focus on marketing, web management and organizing for effective communication and marketing. The steering committee is co-chaired by Benton Cocanougher, interim chancellor, and R.C. Slocum, special assistant to the president.

Gates said Cocanougher and Slocum

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Democrat returns to Texas

By April Castro
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — As one of Texas' boycotting Democratic senators was returning home Tuesday night, colleagues remaining in New Mexico grappled with their next step in the legislative standoff over congressional redistricting.

Sen. John Whitmire's return to the state could give Republicans the quorum they need to consider the issue if another special session is called.

Whitmire, the dean of the Texas delegation, had spent the Labor Day weekend at home in Houston and returned to Albuquerque, N.M., briefly on Tuesday to meet with others among the 11 Texas Democrats who had boycotted the second special session.

"After being in my district for five days, I have concluded my constituents are opposed to redistricting, but they also believe the fight should be on the Senate floor," Whitmire had said earlier in the day.

The 11 boycotting senators stymied redistricting during the most recent special session by staying in New Mexico and preventing a quorum on the Senate floor until the end of the 30-day session.

Sen. Judith Zaffirini said Democrats in Albuquerque believed Whitmire spent the weekend in Louisiana and learned of his return

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First Yell



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Junior Yell Leader Ryan Bishop sorts through T-shirts at the entrance of the Memorial Student Center Tuesday afternoon. Bishop and the rest of the Yell Leaders will be

in the MSC from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. selling T-shirts to promote First Yell, which will be held at 8 p.m. Friday at Reed Arena followed by Midnight Yell Practice at Kyle Field.

Taliban teams with al-Qaida

By Kathy Gannon
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — The Taliban are no longer on the run and have teamed up with al-Qaida once again, according to officials and former Taliban who say the religious militia has reorganized and strengthened since their defeat at the hands of the U.S.-led coalition nearly two years ago.

The militia, which ruled Afghanistan espousing a strict brand of Islam, are now getting help from some Pakistani authorities as well as a disgruntled Afghan population fed up with lawlessness under the U.S.-backed interim administration, according to a former Taliban corps commander.

"Now the situation is very good for us. It is improving every day. We can move everywhere," said Gul Rahman Faruqi, a corps commander of the Gardez No. 3 garrison during the Taliban's rule.

"Now if the Taliban go to any village, people give them shelter and food. Now the people are tired of the looters and killers," Faruqi told The Associated Press, referring to regional warlords aligned with Afghan President Hamid Karzai's government.

In most parts of Afghanistan regional powers operate with relative impunity, terrorizing residents, extorting money, dealing in drugs and running lucrative smuggling routes.

"Before people didn't believe the Taliban were around. They thought we were finished so they were afraid. But now they see that we are active and they see there is no other alternative to the looters and killers," said Faruqi, who was interviewed Monday in neighboring Pakistan.

"We know they don't like the Taliban, but they hate the looters and killers even more."

In the Afghan capital, a Western diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the religious militia, working with al-Qaida, has regrouped, changed tactics and now operates in Afghanistan and in Pakistan.

Faruqi scoffed at suggestions that coalition forces have them on the run.

"We have new bases all over Afghanistan. We

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Iraqis mourn slain Shiite cleric

By Tarek Al-Issawi
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NAJAF, Iraq — About 400,000 mourners took to the streets Tuesday, flailing their backs and pounding their chests in anguish at the funeral of a leading Shiite cleric assassinated in a car bomb attack. In Baghdad, another car bomb exploded outside police headquarters, killing one and wounding 13.

In an angry funeral oration, the cleric's brother blamed the U.S. occupation forces for the lax security that led to the attack at Iraq's most sacred Shiite mosque. He raged against the American troops and demanded they leave Iraq.

Men clad in white robes and dark uniforms brandishing Kalashnikov rifles stood guard along the roof of the gold-domed Imam Ali mosque, where Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim was killed Friday in the bloodiest attack since the fall of Saddam Hussein. Accounts of the death toll ranged from more than 80 to more than 120.

"The occupation force is primarily responsible for the pure blood that was spilled in holy Najaf, the blood of al-Hakim and the faithful group that was present near the mosque," said Abdel-Aziz al-Hakim, the ayatollah's brother and a member of the U.S.-picked Governing Council.

L. Paul Bremer, the U.S. civilian administrator for Iraq, told a Baghdad news conference that U.S. occupation authorities will push the new Iraqi Cabinet to assume governing duties and

want to quickly train Iraqis to take over security.

He insisted there was no rift between the coalition and the Governing Council.

"I completely agree with the argument that we should find ways quickly to give Iraq and Iraqis more responsibility for security," he said. "They (the Governing Council) have encouraged us to do what we were already doing, which is putting Iraqis ... in Iraqi security."

Bremer, a former diplomat and counterterrorism expert, said there were already as many as 60,000 Iraqis involved in security or undergoing training.

"What we need at this point is better intelligence to find out where the terrorists are who are killing Iraqis," he said.

Al-Hakim has said he would not resign from the Governing Council but spoke with great anger about the American military's inability to pacify the country.

"This force is primarily responsible for all this blood and the blood that is shed all over Iraq every day," he said, voicing the frustrations of Iraqis throughout the country. The criticism could signal an open fissure in the historically cooperative relationship between the Shiites and the U.S.-led civilian and military occupation.

"Iraq must not remain occupied and the occupation must leave so that we can build Iraq as God wants us to do," he said.

Earlier, the slain ayatollah's son warned that the country had entered a dangerous new era.

"Our injured Iraq is facing great and danger-

U.S. and Iraqis work to control violence

U.S. authorities will push the new Iraqi Cabinet to assume governing duties as soon as possible and wants to quickly train Iraqis to take over security. L. Paul Bremer, the top U.S. civilian official in Iraq said. Recent attacks in Iraq have intensified including Tuesday's attack on Baghdad's police headquarters.



ous challenges in which one requires strength," Mohammed Hussein Mohammed Saeed al-Hakim said at one stop in the funeral march — the third day of a procession that began in Baghdad and pushed south to Najaf.

During the procession, crowds surrounded the coffin and many mourners beat their chests in a ritual show of mourning for Shiites.

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Perry faces possible GOP opponents in '06

By Kelley Shannon
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — Amid speculation that two fellow Republican office holders might decide to run against him, Gov. Rick Perry brushed aside questions Tuesday about whether he's bracing for a GOP challenge in 2006.

The two other Republicans who have been mentioned as possible Perry opponents are U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison and Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn.

Perry, after casting his early ballot in the upcoming constitutional amendments election, spoke with news reporters and said he's only focusing on his current job, not a Republican primary nearly three years away.

"There is so much work to be done, and those that would like to distract from that and talk about primaries, that's their business," Perry said.

The weekly newspaper Park Cities People in Dallas last week published an editorial stating that if Perry decides to call another special session on congressional redistricting that Texas should elect another governor next time. The editorial said Hutchison has served the state with "honor and distinction" and said some Republicans view her as

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