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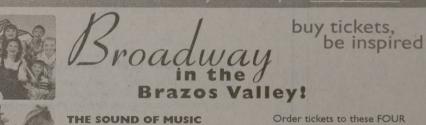
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Friday, September 4, 2003

Modern train-robbers Fra caught and await trial By Gei THE ASSO DRESDEN

By Jeffrey Gold THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEWARK, N.J. - Instead of six-shooters and horses, these modern-day train robbers used two-way radios, night-vision goggles and bolt cutters. Instead of bandannas, they had ski caps monogrammed "CRB," for Conrail Boyz.

And while alleged ringleader Edward Mongon is unlikely to become legend, authorities say his gang lasted longer and stole far more than Jesse James or Butch Cassidy ever did.

Train robbery, a quintessentially 19th-century crime, is rolling on into the 21st century.

Along with the technology the targets have changed: The old gangs preyed mostly on passenger trains, snatching gold and cash from riders and the baggagecar safe. Today, freight trains loaded with such merchandise as electronics, cigarettes and tires are the lure.

"If you can sell it on the street easy, they'll get it," said James Beach, a captain for the Union Pacific railroad police in Fort Worth, Texas.

Law enforcement authorities have responded with advanced technology of their own. Just as Pinkerton men used the newfangled telegraph to track Cassidy, today's railroad police use computers to pinpoint where cargo disappeared, and infrared scopes that reveal people hiding in rail yards.

Most freight bandits are hitand-run artists whose strikes have little planning, such as those conducted by street gangs in Chicago and Los Angeles, or by Mexican gangs that dash across the border in Texas and New Mexico.

Many such gangs do not measure up in sophistication to the Conrail Boyz, a ring centered in northern New Jersey.s.

Steven Hanes, director of Norfolk Southern's police force, pronounced the Conrail Boyz the 'largest single gang ever to attack North American railConrail police had made dozens of arrests of Conrail Boyz since 1992, but mostly on relatively light charges, and they were back on the streets quickly. Over the summer, though, 24 alleged members were charged in a racketeering indictment and all but one of them were rounded up.

The Conrail Boyz helped make Newark --- which has the East Coast's busiest container port and is served by hundreds of trains - a hotbed of train robbery

Other lucrative areas for theft include Chicago, Dallas, East St. Louis, Ill., and Memphis, Tenn., because the freight lines run through poor and usually rough parts of town.

66 These young gang bangers will jump on moving trains, grab stuff, throw it off, and run away.

- James Beach

Union Pacific railroad police

"Our trains have to move slowly through some areas, and these young gang bangers will jump on moving trains, grab stuff, throw it off, and run away," Beach said. Engineers often cannot see the thieves, because freight trains can be 150

In the case of the Conrail Boyz, train jumpers would find out which container cars had valuable cargo, then radio the information to cohorts. The workers and ask dispatchers which siding the train was headed for. Once the train had stopped, the thieves would toss the merchandise into trucks.

The gang went for designer clothes and other merchandise. In one brazen heist, members drove

France and a container with 17,496 St Thursday to PlayStation units worth \$5 a draft resolut lion out of the Jersey City: yard in 2001, according Norfolk Southern police. gang then fenced the sto believed a d goods.

Train robberies are rare, sidering the billions of dollar cargo rolling on 173,000 m of rail in North America. Fr losses to theft and pilferage \$9.5 million to \$14.6 million year over the past six year, ting \$11.4 million in 20 according to the Association American Railroads. That is a fraction of a percent of industry's 2002 revenue \$42.9 billion.

Beach said he believes theft is more common now in the post-Civil War era da James Gang, if only becaue country has grown in popula and there is so much more to Violence is sporadic, a far

from the Wild West days. Str speaking, much of the rain thievery these days is buy and not robbery. The Co-Boyz did not carry guns in a to avoid long prison senta investigators said.

One alleged member of Conrail Boyz is charged crashing a getaway car in vehicle driven by a Conrait geant, and Mongon, 28 accused of putting out a contract to have someone a a Conrail lieutenant.

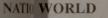
Mongon is awaiting trial lawyer, Arthur J. Aba declined to comment.

A day before authorities d the Conrail Boyz, Mexican men were sentend New Mexico to two year prison for their roles in a ci with two FBI agents during foiled train robbery along them der. The agents were pumm with rocks and beaten last year

Law enforcement age launched the sting operation along the border after Un Pacific suffered 122 robbenes burglaries and 19 rock-throwing

Judge dismisses citizen's plea The war h significant th France (70 pe cent), Portuga undesirable, t

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By Bob Johnson

MONTGOMERY, Ala. - A federal judge on Thursday dismissed a lawsuit by three residents seeking to return a 5,300-pound Ten Commandments monument to the lobby of the Alabama Judicial building.

U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson said removal of the monument did not unconstitutionally establish a religion of nontheistic beliefs, as the residents claimed.

"The empty space or 'nothingness' in the rotunda of the Judicial Building is neither an endorsement of 'nontheistic belief' nor a sign of disrespect for Christianity or any other religion," Thompson said. He said the empty space demonstrates government neutrality toward religion.

The ruling comes after a lengthy legal battle in a separate lawsuit that led to the granite monument's removal last week. In that case, Thompson ruled the monument an unconstitutional promotion of religion by government.

Suspended Chief Justice Roy Moore had the monument moved into the judicial building in the middle of the night on July 31, 2001, saying it represents the moral foundation of American law. The monument soon became a symbol of

casual attire

who decried its removal.

Patrick Mahoney of the Christian Defa Coalition, said the ruling "shows the cours" now defining neutrality as the removal of acknowledgment of God from the pub square.

Ayesha Khan, an attorney for one of the groups that filed the original suit see removal of the monument, applauded the rul 'Judge Thompson recognized that Just Moore's monument shoves religion down po ple's throats," Khan said.

Jim Zeigler, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, s he has not decided whether to app Thompson's ruling.

Thompson's dismissal came a day after spokeswoman for Mississippi Gav. Ron Musgrove said Moore had turned do Musgrove's offer to publicly display the m ment for a week at the Mississippi Capitol.

Also Thursday, about 150 supporters of Mo marched to the Alabama Capitol and presente wooden plaque of the Ten Commandments to G Bob Riley's chief of staff. The chief of staff said governor would consult with lawyers before playing the plaque.

The Ten commandments block was remo



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