

THE BATTALION

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PAGE BY LAUREN ROUSE

Student brandishes BB gun in Blocker

By Sonia Moghe
THE BATTALION

A student was arrested in the Blocker building Friday after he brandished a BB gun outside a classroom.

Armen Tsaturyan, a graduate student studying agricultural economics, was seen pulling a gun out of a white paper bag outside of Blocker 102 around noon Friday.

A woman saw him pull out the gun and made contact with him, said Elmer Schneider, interim director of the Security Department with the University Police Department.

"(The witness) then sees him try to open the door, and when it wouldn't open, he took the handgun and then (...) he appeared to rack the slide (the part of the weapon that chambers the round) and

then covered the weapon with the paper sack as he looked through the window of the classroom door," Schneider said.

The weapon was a Powerline BB Pistol, Model 15 XT, according to the case report. UPD officials arrived on the scene shortly after the witness called 911 from The Daily Grind, a snack cart located on the first floor of Blocker, and searched the building for the suspect.

"(The gun) frightened the girl because it appeared to be an automatic weapon," Schneider said.

UPD officials found Tsaturyan attempting to enter Blocker 102, where a class had been dismissed and had a few remaining students waiting to talk to the professor, and arrested him, Schneider said.

"The officer did un-holster his duty weapon on his subject, which would have been appropriate

based on the circumstances," Schneider said.

Tsaturyan's gun was tucked into the waistband of his sweatpants. Upon being arrested, he told the police officers that his possession of the gun was "just a game," Schneider said.

"Upon contact with the subject, he stated to the officer that it was just a game and that he likes to see the reactions of the people to the weapon," Schneider said. "He said that he'd apparently been watching too many cop shows."

Tsaturyan told police officers that he'd been carrying the gun for about a month, and that the store that he'd bought the gun from said it would be OK to carry it around, Schneider said.

"We believe him to be the same subject (that was) spotted on one of the buses carrying a handgun," Schneider said.

Schneider said it is against University regula-

tions to carry a BB gun on campus.

Donna Sieggreen, supervisor of The Daily Grind, said the witness used the phone on her snack cart to call the police.

"I was shook up," Sieggreen said. "I was wanting to get my students out of there. My department said to close up and said (to leave) if I didn't feel safe."

Tsaturyan was charged with terroristic threat, according to the UPD case report. He was placed in the Brazos County jail on Friday with a \$5,000 bond and was released the same day, according to the Brazos County Sheriff's Office.

"It's just not a good thing," Schneider said. "Not in this day and time. It's very poor judgment on his part."

Tsaturyan was also charged with criminal trespassing and is not allowed back on campus, Schneider said.

Back to school bash



SHARON AESCHBACH - THE BATTALION

Pat Green and guitarist Brett Danaher perform at the 12th annual Kickoff Concert held at Wolf Pen Creek Amphitheatre Saturday night. The concert started at 6:30 p.m. with Wade Bowen, followed by Roger Creager, and finished with Pat Green.

Public figures, journalists exchange ideas Saturday

By Luke Jackson
THE BATTALION

Members of the Texas A&M and Prairie View A&M student governments met with writers from The Battalion and The Panther, Prairie View's student publication, along with prominent political figures and journalists at the News Makers/News Breakers conference Saturday.

"I think we had a good dialogue. Sometimes (journalists and student leaders) get so wrapped up in what we do that we forget the other points of view. It was good for me to see a journalist's perspective on things," said senior accounting major and A&M Student Body President Jack Hildebrand.

The event was intended to increase understanding and dialogue between public leaders and journalists. Media and government relations, bias in the media, the evolution of journalism and tips for young leaders and journalists were discussed at the five-hour event. A mock journalistic scenario moderated by Professor and Associate Dean of the Bush School Charles Hermann capped off the conference.

"Many people in this nation are aware that the media isn't perfect, but when so many networks are rushing to get the news out first, mistakes are bound to happen,"

said former Texas Land Commissioner Garry Mauro in his speech about accuracy in an increasingly competitive news market.

State Rep. Dawnna Dukes, Class of 1986; U.S. Texas Rep. Chet Edwards, Class of 1974; John Lumpkin, vice president of The Associated Press/South; and John LeBas, city editor of The Bryan-College Station Eagle also spoke at the conference.

"Being faster in the world of journalism has always been important, and as technology improves, it's becoming more critical. The old Associated Press slogan 'get it first and get it right' is being put to the test," Lumpkin said.

Chet Edwards had a gridiron analogy for his view of the relationship between politicians and journalists: "In the football field that is government, the players are the elected officials and the referees are the journalists. We (officials) may not like the calls they sometimes make, but they're necessary to keep the game fair," he said.

Tips from professional politicians and journalists were respectively shared with their younger counterparts. Leanne South, director of College Relations for the College of Liberal Arts at A&M, explained her beginnings as a freelance journalist

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Budget proposals meet mixed reaction

By Matthew Wilkins
THE BATTALION

Budget increase proposals totaling more than \$135,000 met mixed reactions by the Student Senate Wednesday.

The proposals were presented by chairman of the Student Service Fee Advisory Board (SS-FAB) and junior political science major Jim Carlson. The SSFAB is an appointed, nine-member board of students that makes budget recommendations on behalf of the student body.

"SSFAB is being irresponsible by not challenging the administration's expenditures," said Sen. Chad Wellington, a junior computer science major. "All they're doing is parroting the administration's party line back to us."

Logan Renfrow, a senior management major and speaker of the Senate, defended Carlson.

"He is doing an outstanding job in representing students. He wants student input. He's making himself very accessible to students so that they can voice their concerns," Renfrow said.

A \$15,060 budget increase proposal from the Office of University Art Collections and Exhibitions prompted questions about its propriety from Scott Smith, a senior chemical engineering major and chairman of the Student Services committee. Carlson defended the proposal.

"I think that (the curator) is developing this program

so that she can spread the arts among students more. It's a challenging task. She really works very hard," he said.

The Student Government Association budget for the 2005 fiscal year was also presented to the Senate. After an opportunity for appeals, the budget will be returned to the Senate for approval at its next meeting.

In what could be considered a victory for Student Body President Jack Hildebrand's administration, the budget met serious inquiry, but relatively little criticism. Last year, the budget met determined opposition by some members of the Senate and was passed only after several heated attempts to amend it.

Vice President for Student Affairs Dean Bresciani also spoke at the meeting and challenged the senators to represent their constituents and work for real change instead of getting caught up in petty politics.

"If you don't... you are wasting an opportunity you have to make a difference in this university," he said.

Rules and Regulations Chair Corey Nichols, a sophomore general studies major, said he is looking forward to developing a positive working relationship with the vice president.

"Bresciani is fantastic. I've

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A&M steps up suicide prevention efforts

By Rhiannon Meyers
THE BATTALION

Three Texas A&M students have committed suicide since February 2004, a drastic increase in A&M's historically low suicide rate of one suicide every two years, said Dr. Maggie Olona, director of Student Counseling Services.

Olona said that although A&M's rate is still low compared to other comparable universities, even one suicide is too many.

"This (increased suicide rate) is still low nationally, but not low enough," Olona said.

Dr. Kerry Hope, SCS psychologist, said universities the size of A&M usually have an average of six to eight suicides per year. New York University, which had an enrollment of 38,000 in 2003-04, has been increasingly visible in the media for its high suicide rate. According to nynewsday.com, six NYU students have committed suicide in the past 12 months.

Olona said that prior to the mid-1990s, A&M had a suicide rate of three or four suicides per year, but since the SCS HelpLine was installed in 1995, the rate dropped to 0.5 per year. Olona said she doesn't know why the rate has increased in the past six months, but that she hopes the increased rate is an anomaly.

"It's nothing on the fault of the University," Olona said. "I don't know why the rate has increased. There seems to be a variety of reasons, but here's one thing: The students (who) commit suicide

Suicide

There has been an increase in suicide rates at A&M, which historically has had low rates.

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for college-age (20- to 24-year-old) students, after accidental death
- One in 12 college students has made a suicide plan
- Risk factors for suicide in college students include depression, sadness, hopelessness and stress
- Depression is treatable

BRANDI DUNN - THE BATTALION

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rarely come into Counseling Services."

Hope said the HelpLine has been beneficial in lowering the suicide rate and that A&M has been recognized nationwide for having

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Brazos area veterans support Kerry campaign

By Stacy Thompson
THE BATTALION

Ray White, Class of 1985 and a member of the Veteran Caravan for Kerry (VCK) Brazos County Team, worked to garner Democratic support with the Caravan Friday in the B-CS area, which he said isn't as conservative as many believe.

"I don't believe Brazos County or A&M is as conservative as it looks," White said. "Too many people throw in the towel. I see this community as being more apathetic than conservative."

The campaign is set to travel through many states including Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California. The campaign

starts in Laredo, Texas, and is set to end in San Diego, Calif.

"Basically, what we wanted to do was to inform the (public)," White said. "This was not an event just for veterans, but for the community to get involved. It's a grassroots effort funded by private donations."

Norman Beal, a Korean War veteran, agrees with VCK and said soldiers should come home.

"I deal with some of them who are severely physically and mentally scarred. When one (soldier) is killed, seven or more are wounded," Beal said.

Chuck Wiggins said the goal behind VCK is to persuade more Democrats to come out to the polls.

"Seventy-four percent of the Republicans go to polls, while 34 percent of Democrats go to polls," said Wiggins, County Chair of the Brazos County Democratic Party. "A little bit of my frustration with the fish is that they register to vote, yet they pull down the straight Republican vote."

The Republican voice was virtually absent from the conference Friday, but that wasn't because they weren't welcome, White said.

"This is our coming out," he said. "We haven't had any Republicans out here. If they want to come out, we welcome them. That's their right."

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