



Joel Sartore/Daily Nebraskan

Two waste water service workers Floyd Rueter, left, and Ron Schrader, spend about 20 hours each week planting poison bait cubes in manholes and along creekbanks. Here, they hold the cube containers near "dead man's run," a small section of creek near 48th and Holdrege street.

By Lisa Nutting  
Daily Nebraskan Staff Reporter

Mickey Mouse and the Three Blind Mice should beware of Lincoln, because, "we have, probably the best rodent control program throughout the country," said Vern Agena, assistant superintendent in charge of the Lincoln Wastewater Collection Service Department.

The program, "Rat Patrol," maintains more than 750 miles of sewer line and 11,000 manholes — and keeps them "virtually rodent-free."

The Rat Patrol began operation in 1978, when a Lincoln biologist tested a new experimental rodenticide, Talon. Talon was used to control rat infestation of a Lincoln restaurant and it worked, Agena said. Within a week, the body count of dead rats in surrounding areas of the restaurant was nearly 3,000.

Since that initial experiment,

Talon has been used effectively to control the rat population of Lincoln.

Rats will go wherever an ongoing food source is, Agena said.

"The main thing is, that we as human beings are responsible for rats," Agena said. "Without us, there wouldn't be rats."

In the case of the restaurant, where the handling of garbage and grease was sloppy, rats migrated to garbage areas, Agena said.

But, since 1978, with the introduction of Talon and Rat Patrol, Lincoln's rat population is under control, Agena said.

Two hours a day is spent solely on checking and baiting numerous Talon traps throughout Lincoln.

"This is a continuous deal — it will never stop," he said.

Each day, two of three trained employees of the Wastewater Collection Service check and refill the bait trays. Talon is a rodenti-

cide that is poisonous only to rats and mice and would not kill other animals unless they consumed a great amount. Agena said it usually takes a few days before the rats die.

But, since sewers are not the only place where rats dwell, Agena receives 25 to 30 calls per month, he says, with complaints of rats near homes.

Agena said many homes that have trash near or around the area are likely to have rats.

When a complaint is received, the Rat Patrol will be out to check the area within 24 hours, Agena said.

In one case, a woman called with a complaint of rats in her garden. That afternoon, the Rat Patrol arrived to her home and got permission to bait her yard. Because the woman was afraid to go into her garden, the men picked her tomatoes for her.

"We care about the residents of Lincoln," Agena said.

## Wire Report

National and international news from the Reuter News Report

### Pentagon seeks to settle 'imminent invasion' fears

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon said Monday it was continuing naval exercises in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans including the Gulf of Fonseca off Nicaragua but there were no preparations for invading the Central American nation. Pentagon spokesmen responded to government radio broadcasts in Nicaragua alleging that 25 U.S. warships with 15,000 troops were approaching the Caribbean coast and others were operating in the Gulf of Fonseca on the Pacific side.

U.S. officials last week said the Soviet Union might be delivering advanced MiG jets to Nicaragua, which the United States would find unacceptable. The officials later said it did not appear any MiGs were delivered, but Managua warned of a U.S. invasion allegedly intended to overthrow its leftist government.

The Pentagon said Monday both naval exercises had been announced and were not related to the Nicaraguan situation. They said 25 ships were operating near Puerto Rico, hundreds of miles from Nicaragua, and were not headed toward Central America. The Gulf of Fonseca exercises, for which no figures were given, includes Honduran and Salvadoran ships.

In Managua, Nicaragua's Defense Ministry Monday ordered the armed forces on full alert and armored cars patrolled the capital as the government warned the country of imminent U.S. invasion. Soviet T-55 tanks rumbled through the streets of the capital as soldiers set up artillery pieces and civilians dug new trenches or repaired old ones. Civil defense workers broadcast appeals to the population to make sure air-raid shelters built last year after the U.S.-led invasion of Marxist Grenada were ready for use. About 20,000 student volunteers were diverted from picking the vital coffee crop and told to help defend the capital instead.

Nicaragua's armed forces, estimated at 60,000 troops and 300,000 militia members, are the strongest land force in Central America.

### Would-be defectors return home

PRAGUE — Up to 30 East Germans, a third of them children, Monday joined a gradual exodus from the West German Embassy, which has been occupied by scores of East Germans seeking to flee to the West. Two white embassy mini-buses filled with East Germans roared out of the huge embassy gate and sped to Central Station, where they boarded the Vindobona Express, a train that runs from Vienna via Prague to East Berlin.

Reporters who saw the minibuses leave estimated the number of East Germans at about 20. But travellers accompanying the group over the border into East Germany said they totalled around 30. Western diplomats said earlier that by Sunday night about 50 of more than 150 people camped inside the baroque palace had left for home after East Germany pledged they would not face prosecution. But the authorities in East Berlin have refused to guarantee they will eventually be allowed to emigrate to the West, as happened in similar cases earlier.

Government sources and media reports in West Germany have said at least 36 East Germans are in the West German embassies in Bucharest, Budapest and Warsaw.

### Duarte, rebels plan TV debate

SAN SALVADOR — President Jose Napoleon Duarte is expected to take part in a U.S. television debate via satellite with Salvadoran guerrilla leaders Wednesday, government spokesman Julio Adolfo Rey Prendes said Monday. He told reporters Duarte probably would put his case in the Public Broadcasting System program through a satellite link from San Salvador. Guillermo Ungo and Ruben Zamora, who have led the leftist rebels in the five-year-old war, also would take part by telephone or satellite, officials involved in the project said.

### Mexican police rout drug factory

MEXICO CITY — Eight men, including seven security police officers, have been arrested on charges of running a huge desert drug factory that employed some 5,000 peasants against their will, judicial officials said Monday. They said more than 8,000 tons of marijuana were seized as Mexican police smashed the operation over the last five days. The drug factory — plantations, drying and packaging plants and a fleet of 30 trucks — was located on ranches in a desert area in northern Chihuahua state.

The officials said that of 5,000 men found in the drug factory, 2,000 were allowed to leave after questioning. The peasants, who were underfed, said they were tricked into joining the operation and then prevented from leaving.