

Stun guns a prodding topic

By Joe Dejka
Staff Reporter

Stun guns cause no harmful side-effects to the heart, an Omaha researcher said Tuesday, but controversy still surrounds use of the immobilizing gun.

Dr. Robert Stratbucker of the University of Nebraska Medical Center, who tested the Nova 5,000 stun gun on laboratory animals, said that under specific circumstances the gun proved noneffective in causing negative effects to the heart or blood pressure.

The tests, performed on mini-pigs which have a cardio-vascular system similar to that of humans, were done at the request of the Douglas County Sheriff's Office.

Lincoln Police Chief B. Dean Leitner said the stun gun was initially designed for law enforcement as an alternative to lethal force, the same reason that the chemical Mace was developed.

The May indictment of five New York City police officers on charges they used a stun gun to torture accused drug dealers, and similar reports of abuse nationwide, have fueled concern about the high-tech weapon.

Dr. Stratbucker said the Nova 5,000 stun gun can effectively incapacitate a person for a short time. A charge of five to ten seconds on the support muscles of the lower back or hips can cause someone to fall down, he said. The gun could be effective in breaking up a fight or subduing a violent drunk, he said.

The biggest potential for abuse is in intimidation, he said. Though only about the size of a television remote control, the Nova can generate 45,000 volts of electricity with a minute amperage that is passed to the body through two probes. The gun produces a menacing blue arc of electricity between the poles, and when discharged on the skin creates a stinging sensation "like a bunch of bees," he said.

Police Chief Leitner said he still favors the use of nonlethal force other than the stun gun.

"I don't see any advantages and I wouldn't even consider its use," Leitner said. "It's like using a cattle prod," he added.

Denise Frost, associate director of the Nebraska Civil Liberties Union, said "the area is wide open for the eighth amendment." The eighth amendment prohibits cruel and unusual punishment.

Though the NCLU has no official policy on stun guns, Ms. Frost said that without specifically tailored guidelines governing its use, the stun gun could be used as a form of punishment.

"Could the stun gun be used on a juvenile, a pregnant woman, a drunk?" she said.

Though stun guns were specifically designed for law enforcement, Nebraska has no laws regulating their sale and distribution.

Jim Deitz, a salesman for Omaha Midwest Wholesale Distributors Co., which sells the Nova 5,000, said that women are buying the stun gun for self defense. The Nova 5,000 retails for \$68.95 and is powered by a nine volt battery, Deitz said.

"They're great because they don't physically harm anybody," he said. "It drops you to the floor," he said.

Torture is possible by using the device but is much safer than shooting someone with a gun, Deitz said.

Though effective in limited defensive situations, the stun gun as an offensive weapon is useless, Dr. Stratbucker said.

"The idea that you could rob a bank with it...I think that's pure nonsense," he said.

The natural reaction to the shock is to pull away, he said. To immobilize someone for a robbery, an assailant would have to press the gun against the victim for about ten seconds, he said.

Who's News

Scott Norberg, a first-year graduate student at the University of Nebraska College of Architecture, and Whitney Powers, a recent graduate of the Mississippi State University School of Architecture, have taken office as president and vice president, respectively, of the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS) for 1985-86.

AIAS, formerly the Association of Student Chapters/AIA (ASC/AIA), represents 15,000 architecture students in 135 chapters at U.S. colleges and universities with accredited architecture programs.

As AIAS president, Norberg represents student needs and concerns to The American Institute of Architects and the architectural profession. He serves on the AIA Board of Directors (as an ex officio member) and on the Intern-Architect Development Program (IDP) Coordinating Committee. In addition, he is publisher of the student journal CRIT and organizes student events at AIA national conventions.

The Nebraska Stockgrowers Association and Cow-Belles Organization have awarded their annual John Jirton Memorial Scholarships to four UNL Lincoln students.

The students are Lesa Diane Micheel of Ainsworth, Richard Eugene Jones of Benkelman, Cynthia Marie Rush of Scottsbluff and Patrick W. Doyle of Stapleton.

The recipients will receive the \$375 scholarships during the 1985-86 academic year.

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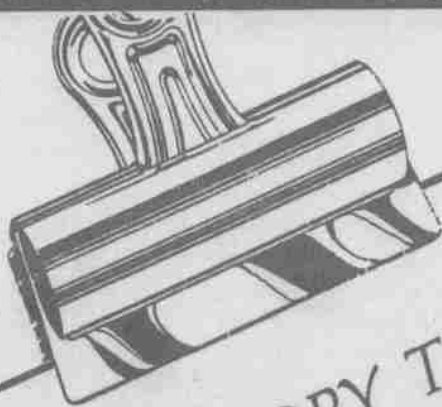
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News Briefs

Bump on Reagan's nose will be tested for cancer

WASHINGTON (AP, Reuter) — President Reagan had an irritated patch of skin removed from his nose by a dermatologist Tuesday and the specimen is being routinely checked for cancer, his spokesman said.

Spokesman Larry Speakes said Thursday that Regan had a "bump" on his nose for months, and that it became irritated by adhesive tape when he was hospitalized for cancer surgery last month.

Speakes disclosed the removal of the skin when reporters asked about a scar they noticed on Reagan's nose while he was addressing a group of radio editors in the White House.

He refused to identify the dermatologist and said he did not have a technical name for the irritated spot. He called it "a spot, a place, an irritation on his nose. It was irritated by the tape."

Budget plan ready for Congress

WASHINGTON (AP) — House and Senate budget negotiators reached agreement Thursday on a \$55 billion deficit reduction package, but it remained uncertain whether Congress could act on the plan before beginning its August recess Friday.

The plan, which would not raise taxes or touch Social Security benefits, would cut \$55.5 billion in spending in fiscal year 1986 and \$276 billion over three years. House and Senate leaders said they intended to bring it quickly before their chambers.

But GOP senators complained that the plan did not do enough to cut long-term overspending and House liberals opposed defense spending levels they said would be too high.

The senior members of the House and Senate budget panels met for 10 hours through Wednesday night, emerging after midnight from the second day of closed-door talks with the tentative spending plan they presented to the full budget conference committee Thursday. The full conference committee then met for three hours Thursday and nailed down the agreement.

Six held in plot to slip arms to Iran

WASHINGTON (Reuter) — A U.S. Army lieutenant colonel and an Iranian government official were among six people arrested in three states Thursday for plotting to smuggle missiles worth more than \$10 million to Iran.

The FBI said the conspirators intended to buy a wide range of U.S. missiles and other equipment for use in Iran's war against Iraq, but that the plot was thwarted by an undercover FBI agent.

The lieutenant colonel was said by the FBI to have gotten involved in the scheme because he was looking to become an international arms dealer after retiring from the military.

The United States has prohibited the export of weapons to Iran since November 29, 1979, when officials at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran were taken hostage in an ordeal that lasted 444 days.

House passes anti-apartheid bill

WASHINGTON (Reuter) — The House of Representatives Thursday overwhelmingly passed a bill imposing economic sanctions against South Africa to protest apartheid, but final action in the Senate may be delayed until September.

The House voted 380 to 48 in favor of the legislation, sending it to the Senate where Majority Leader Robert Dole said up to eight Senators were prepared to talk against the measure until Congress begins a one-month recess today.

President Reagan is opposed to sanctions and has not said if he will sign or veto the bill when it gets to him.

Lincoln's growing, may catch Omaha

LINCOLN (AP) — Lincoln would overtake Omaha as Nebraska's most populous city by about the year 2087 if their growth rates remain constant, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Lincoln has a population of 180,378 people, a 1.7 percent increase over the last census figure in 1982, the bureau said. The state's capital is the 83rd largest city in the country.

Omaha has a population of 332,237, making it the 47th most populous city in the nation, the bureau said. Omaha has grown 1.1 percent since 1982.

Group campaigns for seat-belt usage

LINCOLN (AP) — The Nebraska Traffic Safety Now Committee has announced creation of a statewide campaign to encourage people to use their seat belts.

"The purpose of our campaign is to convince Nebraskans that by simply using their safety belts, serious injury and death resulting from automobile accidents can be reduced significantly," said Dr. Dale Kemmerer of Grand Island, chairman of the committee.

Kemmerer said the "Please Buckle Up Nebraska" campaign will include an educational display at the Nebraska State Fair and about 30 county fairs across the state, a billboard campaign and a series of public service announcements.

Stars raise money to fight AIDS

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Elizabeth Taylor, Shirley MacLaine, Burt Lancaster and Burt Reynolds will join other stars at an extravaganza next month to try to raise \$1 million to combat the deadly disease AIDS, which has struck fellow actor Rock Hudson.

"It's more than a celebrity night. We want to raise the consciousness of America. People have to realize this disease is affecting everybody," Suzanne Neff of the Chen Sam agency in New York said Wednesday.

Delicate surgery, delicate subject

VANCOUVER, Canada (Reuter) — Surgeons have reattached the severed penis of a man in his early 20s in an operation believed to be the first of its kind in Canada, hospital officials said Thursday.

A plastic surgeon and a urologist reattached the penis Wednesday after seven hours of delicate microsurgery.

Urologist Dr. John Nasternson said the operation has been reported only about 30 times in the world and of those, "well over half have been successful."