

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Spring Break

New laws mean increased beach arrests

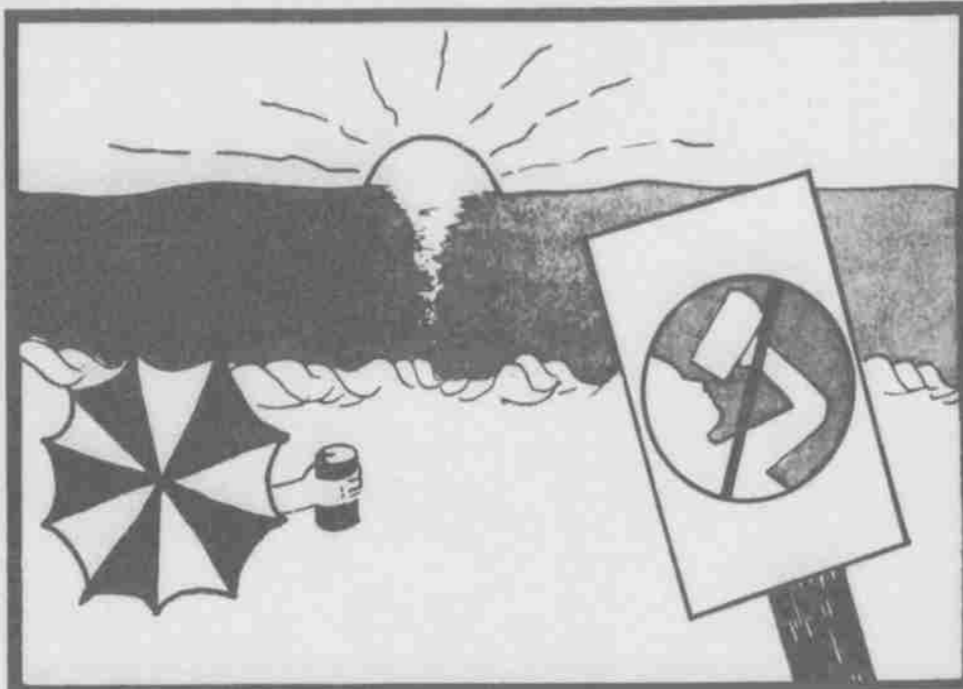
FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Armed with a new law that bans drinking on or near the beach, police say they are nearing last year's total for spring break arrests of college students even though the invasion is expected to last another four weeks.

Since Feb. 21, police have reported 830 spring break-related arrests, Capt. Ed White said Monday night. No new figures were available Tuesday.

Last year, there were 889 arrests for the unofficial spring break period, said White, commander of law enforcement at the beach.

This year's total included 200 arrests over the weekend, White said.

Arrests are up because of several new laws, including one that bans drinking in the beach area or in cars



along "The Strip," the street parallel to the beach. Violations of that law will account for about 20 percent of the arrests this year, White said.

Vietnamese recovery effort growing

WASHINGTON — The Vietnamese government, as part of what appears to be a greater effort to locate missing American servicemen, soon will turn over the remains of 21 additional people and begin investigating live-sighting reports, a Pentagon official said Tuesday.

The Vietnamese also are planning to conduct their own excavation of a possible U.S. airplane crash site, have accepted for study a list of five crash sites the Pentagon would like to excavate, and have agreed to send a team to Hawaii to study U.S. investigation and identification techniques, he said.

Richard L. Armitage, assistant defense secretary for international security affairs, also announced Tuesday that an Army laboratory has identified five of seven remains repatriated from Vietnam in December.

Armitage discussed the latest

developments in the long-running effort to locate missing servicemen during a briefing on the outcome of a recent meeting of technical experts in Hanoi.

That meeting, which ended Feb. 28, was the 11th technical meeting between the two sides since 1982, but the first since a new pledge by Vietnam to resolve the status of missing American servicemen within two years.

Armitage called the session "the most substantive talks held to date," but stressed that the United States will "not have full confidence" in Vietnamese efforts "until all discrepancy cases have been discussed and resolved."

In a related move, Armitage said the Pentagon is forming a panel to conduct an independent investigation of efforts by the Defense Intelligence

Agency to resolve the status of missing Americans. The panel is being formed "to deal with what we recognize as a vocal minority who have leveled conspiracy and cover-up charges," Armitage said.

The panel will be led by retired Lt. Gen. Eugene Tighe, a former director of the DIA, and will include as a member H. Ross Perot, the Texas businessman who has financed his own investigations of reported sightings of live Americans in Southeast Asia.

No date has been set for returning the 21, but the United States hopes it will be within three weeks. The largest repatriation of remains occurred last August and involved 24 Americans.

The Pentagon lists 1,792 Americans as missing in Vietnam as a result of the war. An additional 644 are listed as missing in Laos, Cambodia and China.

Rulo witness testifies Ryan laughed at torture

OMAHA (AP) — Survivalist cult leader Michael Ryan and his son laughed and joked about the death of a cult member allegedly tortured and killed on a farm near Rulo, a woman testified Tuesday at the Ryans' murder trial.

Cheryl Gibson, who left her husband to live on the cult's farm with her five children, said the Ryans appeared "happy and pleased" following the death of James Thimm last April.

Gibson, 30, told a Douglas County District Court jury that Michael Ryan said his son participated in Thimm's torture.

"(He) talked about how willing Dennis was to participate, how eager he was to learn how to torture and abuse a person," she said.

Gibson testified that Michael Ryan was upset that cult members John David Andreas and James Haverkamp were hesitant to torture Thimm and said he would kill the two cult members if they didn't "straighten out."

Michael Ryan, 37, and Dennis, 16, are charged with first-degree murder in Thimm's death. The bodies of Thimm, 26, and 5-year-old Luke Stice were found in unmarked graves last August on the farm near Rulo.

Michael Ryan also is charged with first-degree murder in the Stice death. He will be tried later on that charge.

Gibson, who has reunited with her husband, said she saw Michael Ryan fasten a belt around Stice's neck and lift the child off the ground by the belt. The child was wearing only undershorts at the time, she said.

Gibson said Ryan also told her and other women at the farm that he gave the child ice-cold baths and showers.

She had testified earlier that Ryan thought Stice, Thimm and the child's

father, Rick Stice, needed to be punished because Yahweh was angry at them. Yahweh is the Old Testament name for God used by cult members.

Gibson and other former cult members say Ryan thought he could communicate with Yahweh through arm contact.

Testifying during the second day of the trial, Gibson said Michael Ryan married her mother and two of her sisters in informal ceremonies. She also said Ryan tried to convince her that she was in love with him.

"I prayed 24 hours a day to tell myself that I loved him because I didn't want to go to hell," she said.

Under questioning from Richard Goos, one of Michael Ryan's attorneys, Gibson admitted that she lied last year to law enforcement officials about life at the Rulo farm and her relationship with her husband, Lester.

Gibson said she lied or exaggerated in statements to Richardson County authorities and the FBI because Michael Ryan had convinced her that law enforcement officials were "Satan's people."

In the statements, Gibson said her husband had abused her and her children and that no one at the farm was tortured or abused.

Gibson said Michael Ryan "went over each paragraph with me and told me what to write."

"A lot of these paragraphs are Michael Ryan's exact words," she said.

Michael Ryan could be executed if he is convicted. The maximum sentence his son could receive is life in prison.

The trial was moved to Omaha by Richardson County District Judge Robert Finn because of publicity about the case.

In Brief

Steel piece found in Girl Scout cookie

COLUMBUS — Police reported Monday that a child found a piece of steel in a Girl Scout cookie, and a Girl Scout official said the case was being treated as an isolated incident.

Police Chief Wes Baxa said he heard about the steel in the cookie Friday from a woman who called to say that a child in the apartment complex where she lived had found the foreign object.

No one was hurt, Baxa said. He did not reveal the name of the woman who called him.

Helen Kampfe, executive director of the Prairie Hills Area Chapter of the Girl Scouts, said the steel was found in a cookie called a Pecan Shortie.

Kampfe said the cookie was distributed by the Prairie Hills chapter, which covers 19 eastern Nebraska counties. The chapter receives its cookies from the Little Brown Bakers Co. in Louisville, Ky., and Marietta, Okla., she said.

"We firmly believe this is an isolated case," she said. "We are very confident of the high quality of our product."

Videotapes show Marcos family

MANILA, Philippines — Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos dominated television for 20 years, but now other films provide glimpses of such private moments as the party where a fat man in baby clothes burst from a giant cake.

The videotape, obtained by CBS television from the presidential palace library, shows a birthday party late last year for Irene Aranata, youngest daughter of the ousted president and his wife.

Ray Conso, who is in charge of the radio and television equipment at the palace, said the palace library contains at least 500 videotapes of the Marcoses. Officials of the Marcos government said he taped palace functions and his conversations with official and unofficial callers.

Use of 'Huckle Finn' in schools debated

LINCOLN — The book "Huckleberry Finn" uses the word "nigger" more than 100 times and is an embarrassment to many black students, said a member of the Lincoln schools' Multicultural Affairs Advisory Committee.

The book by Mark Twain perpetuates negative stereotypes of blacks common when the book was written in 1884 and still prevalent today, Leola Bullock said at a meeting Monday.

The parents of some students asked the school board either to remove "Huckleberry Finn" from required reading lists or give teachers guidance on how to teach it.

The use of the book in junior and senior high was defended by Lincoln Northeast and Lincoln High students.

The book, which deals with the relationship between a white boy and a black man in the mid-1800s, raises issues of racism that students need to confront, the students said.

Teachers also spoke in favor of keeping the book on the list of books recommended for use in senior high schools, but not in the lower grades.

Tornado weather has arrived

WASHINGTON — With spring come tornadoes. This year, weather watchers and emergency service workers are eyeing the onset of tornado season warily, recalling the last two years when twisters brought devastation far from the usual Midwestern "tornado alley."

Those storms helped remind Americans that tornadoes pose a threat in every state, not just that famous tornado alley stretching from Nebraska south through Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas, where they are traditionally most common.

On Monday, at least 20 tornadoes sliced through Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky, killing six people and injuring 70 more. Tornadoes are the offspring of changing weather. The warmth that replaces winter cold can spawn twisters, making the violent storms most common as spring arrives across the nation.

Kremlin counters U.N. staff cut order

MOSCOW — The Kremlin countered a U.S. order to cut Soviet staff at the United Nations with an official protest Tuesday warning Washington that its "illegitimate demand" could jeopardize U.S.-Soviet relations and the next summit.

The official news agency Tass distributed a text of Moscow's protest to the United States. Parts of it were read on Radio Moscow.

The protest accuses the United States of violating international agreements on the United Nations, headquartered in New York, and denies U.S. accusations that spies are among the Soviets' 275 U.N. employees.

The U.S. government on Friday ordered the Soviet Union to cut its U.N. staff to 170 over the next two years, a 38 percent reduction.

Congress notified of sales to Saudis

WASHINGTON — The Reagan administration is informing Congress it intends to sell Saudi Arabia \$354 million in anti-aircraft and anti-ship missiles, the White House announced Tuesday.

Notice of the sale will be sent later in the day by the Defense Department in a classified "pre-notification" followed 20 days later by a formal, public notification. Congress will have 30 days after that to approve or veto the sale.

The proposal is likely to touch off another political fight with Israel's supporters on Capitol Hill despite administration efforts to minimize congressional resistance by trimming an even larger request that would have included advanced electronic gear for the Saudis' U.S.-built F-15 fighters.

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