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FBI probe won't be released

By Brian Sharp
Senior Reporter

Any information gathered in a U.S. Justice Department investigation into the death of Francisco Renteria will not be released, federal officials said Thursday.

John Campbell, FBI assistant special agent investigating the case, said he couldn't say much more other than that the investigation, which began Thursday, was proceeding.

Renteria, 29, was involved in a struggle with city and University of Nebraska-Lincoln police on Sept. 30. He died on Oct. 1 while in police custody.

U.S. Attorney Tom Monaghan said Wednesday that the Justice Department would investigate the possibility of civil rights violations.

Mike Wellman, first assistant U.S. attorney, said the department became involved after receiving requests from State Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha; Cecilia Huerta, interim executive director of the Mexican American Committee; Donna Polk of Lincoln; and Gov. Ben Nelson.

Federal investigations don't happen often, Wellman said.

"It's not automatic," he said. "It happened in this case because there was such a wellspring of feeling from the Hispanic community and other communities in Lincoln.

"That seemed to indicate that there was absolutely no confidence in the local folks to run an investigation."

Wellman said he didn't know whether that feeling was merited. He always had faith in local law enforcement in the past, Wellman said.

Wellman said the FBI would run the investigation locally. The case will be pursued separately from local or state investigations, he said. The federal investigation will examine the actions of Renteria and Lincoln and UNL police.

Wellman said information from the federal investigation would be given to the U.S. Attorney's office and the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Justice Department in Washington, D.C.

Campbell said the information would be turned over as soon as the probe was completed, regardless of the progress of local investigations. He would not comment on how many investigators were involved in the case or what was being done.

Wellman said any decision in the case would come from Washington.

Image upgrade



Photos by Michelle Paulman/DN

Sheridan sixth-grader Shanna Hunsucker hears classmate Emily Hergert, right, amplified through a model of bat's ears at "Masters of the Night," a display at Folsom Children's Zoo on the secret lives of bats.

Zoo presentation brings bats to light

By Paula Lavigne
Senior Reporter

As Halloween approaches, hundreds of black-winged, furry bats can be seen casting shadows on the Capitol dome under the light of a full moon.

Popularized by "Dracula" movies and Halloween lore, bats have been stereotyped as dangerous, blood-sucking vampires.

But "Masters of the Night," a touring exhibit at Folsom Children's Zoo, is trying to change that negative image by bringing bats out of the dark.

The exhibit features informational, multi-sensory, interactive

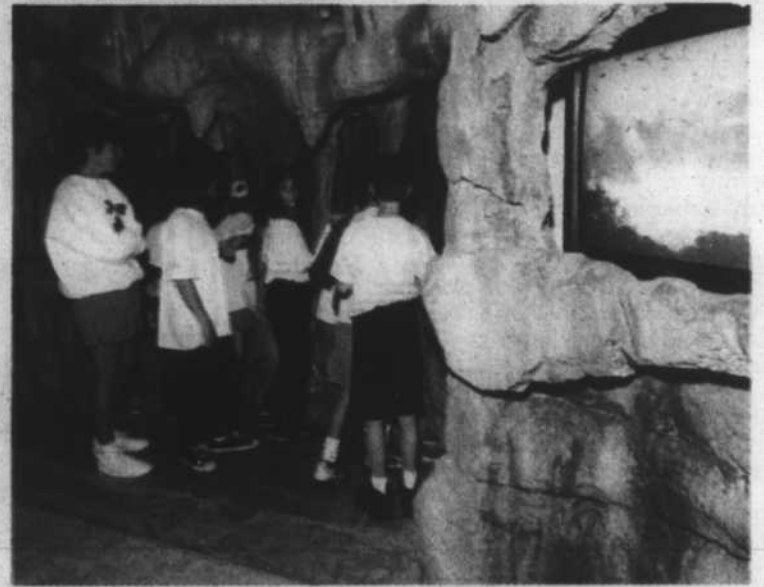
and ecological displays and videos. Adam West, from the "Batman" TV series, will appear at the Lincoln exhibit in November.

An upside-down Gothic castle greets visitors as they enter. A series of informational stations lead to a video presentation. A special exhibit describes a bat's sonar. The self-guided tour ends with a bat cave and ecological rain forest.

Todd Kirshenbaum, zoo marketing director, said the exhibit was designed to educate people on the importance and wonder of the bat world.

"They're very valuable," he

See BATS on 6



Students peer into a mock-up of a bat cave. The display also includes an educational video on bats and hands-on bat activities.

Storm soldiers not surprised by Hussein's actions

By Paula Lavigne
Senior Reporter

Soldiers involved in Operation Desert Storm expressed amusement rather than shock at the recent military developments in the Middle East.

Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein stationed 80,000 soldiers at the Kuwaiti border Oct. 8. The soldiers retreated Thursday after thousands of allied and U.S. forces moved into the vicinity.

Officers and cadets in the Reserve Officer Training Corps Army division at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln said they didn't foresee a Desert Storm repeat.

Maj. Greg Dibella was stationed in Saudi Arabia in 1992-93 during cease-fire operations. He was at the headquarters in charge of deploying forces.

"This is what we were always waiting for. We knew he would try something. It didn't

surprise me much," Dibella said. "I don't think he really understood or was aware of what our response would be."

Dibella said he thought Hussein's troops were merely a "tactic to get our attention."

"He brought his troops down there to see what would happen," he said, "and he found out we wouldn't take this sitting down."

He said the Iraqi retreat didn't surprise him either. But the area still has to be watched, he said.

"We'll just have to wait and see what develops," he said. "The soldiers over there are going in with a lot of confidence. They have a lot of support."

Dibella said the troops were ready for whatever confronted them.

"We'll take out anything he can muster."

Capt. Michael Dittamo was with the Field Artillery Battalion of the 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley from December 1990 through June 1991. Dittamo spent much of his time in

Safwan, Iraq.

Dittamo said he was amused with Hussein's recent actions.

"I find it sort of funny. I can't believe he actually intended to have us nuke him again," Dittamo said. "His army cannot face ours. It's not possible to do that unless his intention is to die in place."

"I don't believe for a minute he intends to invade and start another war."

Iraq is hurting, Dittamo said. He said he thought Hussein's actions were designed to get the United Nations to lift its economic sanctions.

"All he did was reaffirm our resolve," Dittamo said. He said if Hussein were to abide by the U.N. decisions, he would definitely lose power.

Dittamo said the chance of escalating the situation was slim.

"I don't see us fighting anybody over there. If we did, it'd be a very quick air war," he said.

"I'd just hate to be on the receiving end of the U.S. Air Force. I pity those guys, the Iraqis."

Staff Sgt. Gary Barnes, a junior exercise science major, said Hussein was "crazy."

"This is a guy that shouldn't be in a leadership position," he said.

Barnes said he thought Hussein should have been eliminated in previous operations.

"Now we're going to have to go back and do something about it."

Barnes offered advice for troops stationed in the Middle East.

"Pack your undergarments in Ziploc bags, and I would say don't be afraid to pack alcohol," he said, laughing. "Don't get caught with the alcohol, though."

"Be prepared for anything."