

Texas fugitives feigned religion

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WOODLAND PARK, Colo. — The seven escaped convicts from Texas played loud Christian music in their cramped RV — perhaps to make themselves look innocent and God-fearing — and kept mostly to themselves as they hid out in a peaceful Colorado town for three weeks.

At least one of the men attended Bible study sessions and befriended several residents, who were impressed with his knowledge of Scripture.

Several frequented a coffee shop. Some even felt safe enough to go drinking and dancing in area nightclubs.

But they kept their heads

down while walking past others through the itinerant workers' mobile home park where their RV was parked. And at least two had disguised themselves by dyeing their hair.

Woodland Park Police Sgt. Bill Sumner speculated the men played Christian music for well-calculated reasons.

"That's what I'd do in a heartbeat," Sumner said. "The No. 1 way to look innocuous and innocent is to look real religious."

He said he wasn't surprised the men melted into the town without arousing suspicion.

"They were pillars of the community for the time they were here," Sumner said.

One of the biggest manhunts in the Southwest's history ended Monday for five of the convicts. Four were arrested peacefully, and a fifth killed himself in the motor home at the Coachlight Motel and RV Park rather than surrender to law officers who had the place surrounded.

The two other convicts remained at large Tuesday as state and federal officers pursued thousands of leads.

A van used by the missing two was found abandoned in a Colorado Springs motel parking lot Tuesday, and authorities checked hotels for the men. The van was said to contain duffel bags, maps and hair color.

Federal firearms charges

"The No. 1 way to look innocuous and innocent is to look real religious."

Bill Sumner

Woodland Park police sergeant

were dismissed Tuesday against the four in custody to expedite their transfer to Texas, where they could face the death penalty on state murder charges in the slaying of a policeman during a holdup at a sporting goods store 11 days after they broke out of prison.

The two convicts on the run — Patrick Murphy Jr., a 39-year-old rapist, and armed robber Donald Newbury, 38 — are

believed to have 12 weapons, including assault rifles and shotguns, and may also have bulletproof vests.

Teller County Undersheriff Kevin Dougherty said investigators do not believe there was any rift among the seven.

Inside the RV, officers found a "personal note" from Larry Harper, the convict who killed himself, to his family; the contents were not disclosed.

Bush unveils school standard, voucher plan

President George W. Bush gestures as he presents his education plan to Congress during a ceremony in the East Room of the White House on Monday in Washington, D.C.



Mark Wilson/Newsweek

■ The newly elected president asks Democrats to support his decision to focus on education.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Bush, seeking Democratic support for an education package submitted to Congress on Tuesday, promised more help to troubled schools before shifting more federal funds to private institutions.

"Our goal is to improve public education," Bush said in an East Room send-off for an education agenda that centers around vouchers for private school education, the most divisive part of his program to hold public schools accountable for student learning.

Bush said he wants to require annual state reading and math tests for students in every grade in order to gather reliable data on "who's falling behind and who needs help."

"Once failing schools are identified, we'll help them improve. We'll help them help themselves," said Bush with Education Secretary-designate Rod Paige at his side.

In Bush's plan, his signature campaign issue, failing schools have three years to get up to standards so that pupils are able to achieve before federal funds are stripped for other uses such as vouchers.

"When schools do not teach and will not change, parents and students must have other meaningful options," Bush said. "If somebody's got a better idea, I hope they bring it forward."

Bush, who said he wanted legislation enacted by summer so that school districts have time to implement reforms for the 2001-02 academic year, met privately Tuesday morning with top congressional Republicans and Democrats who oversee education policy-making.

Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., said afterward that despite differences over vouchers, Democrats are eager to work with him on education.

"The areas which he pointed out where we are in agreement, I thought were very substantial. I, for one, am interested in getting some action on education overhaul," Kennedy said outside the West Wing.

"What is important today is that we have a president that wants to make this a strong priority on education, and I think we have those that have leadership positions in the House and Senate that want to work with him and get something meaningful done," the Democrat said.

A Bush official, speaking on condition of anonymity Monday, said Bush had decided on some changes to his voucher plan to win over hostile Democrats.

Bush is proposing additional funding — beyond even what he proposed during his campaign. Corrective measures for such schools would include allowing students to use federal money for transportation to a public school with a better record.

Removing the school principal would be another second-year option.

Banned Chinese sect uses fire to protest

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIJING — Five Falun Gong followers set themselves on fire Tuesday in China's Tiananmen Square, the most radical act yet by sect members in defiance of the communist government's 18-month ban on their movement.

One follower died in the attempted group suicide, which prompted police to tighten security and then close the square in the opening hours of China's lunar new year.

After weeks of words, both the spiritual movement and communist government have turned to brasher tactics.

Falun Gong has stepped up demonstrations in recent weeks and issued warnings by founder Li Hongzhi of more vigorous action to protest the crackdown. The government has fought back by intensifying vilification of the sect in state-controlled media and supporting a nationwide campaign to collect a million signatures.

The campaign is the government's first effort to make people publicly support the ban and is reminiscent of communist political movements — from the 1950-53 Korean War to the radical Cultural Revolution in the 1960s.

The government's efforts have accelerated with the approach of Wednesday's lunar new year, China's biggest holiday. Expecting the same mass protests that marred celebra-

tions last year, police checked people entering the square, patting many down and inspecting their bags.

Still, five sect followers managed to douse themselves with gasoline in the middle of the square and set themselves on fire in two "suicidal blazes," the government's Xinhua News Agency said.

Police rushed to the site, Xinhua said. The brief report added that one woman burned to death and the surviving injured were taken to a hospital.

A producer and cameraman with CNN witnessed the protest. CNN reported that one man sat down, poured gasoline on himself and then set himself on fire. Moments later, the journalists saw four more people on fire, staggering forward, their hands raised in a meditation pose.

Police confiscated CNN's videotape and detained the journalists for 90 minutes. Officers at the Tiananmen Square police station refused comment, referring all questions to Xinhua.

The group suicide attempt brought even tighter security, which blocked all but a few dozen revelers from gathering on the square to welcome the Year of the Snake. As firecrackers crackled around Beijing after midnight, police cleared even them from the square.

State media have said followers are killing themselves at the prodding of the sect leader.

Israeli murder stalls Mideast peace talks

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM — Israel abruptly suspended peace talks with the Palestinians on Tuesday after two Israeli restaurant owners were killed in the West Bank, apparently by Palestinian gunmen.

It was not immediately clear how long the talks were on hold, although Israel's deputy defense minister predicted the talks would resume soon. Israel has briefly suspended negotiations in the past over Palestinian attacks on Israelis.

The two sides, meeting in the Egyptian resort of Taba, had been conducting intensive talks on a peace agreement against a tight deadline — Israel's Feb. 6 election.

Cabinet ministers from the Israeli negotiating team were recalled to Jerusalem for consultations, according to a statement from Prime Minister Ehud Barak's office.

"During the consultations, there will be no talks at any level," the statement said. However, lower-level officials remained behind in Taba, officials said.

Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh said the sides had no choice but to continue talking.

"We can't stop the talks at this point," Sneh told The Associated Press. "We can't stop them because there is a glimmer of hope and we can't lose it."

Sneh said he expected the negotiations would resume in "a couple of days."

Palestinian negotiator Ahmed Qureia condemned the killings, but said he was surprised Barak recalled his negotiators.

"Of course it will adversely affect negotiations," he said.

Palestinian officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, pledged that security forces would investigate the deaths.

Israeli police and military officials said the two Israelis were eating in a restaurant in the West Bank town of Tulkarem when masked gunmen entered, forced them out and shot them. Refugee

World/Nation

The Associated Press

■ New Jersey

Secret police sect may exist on New Jersey state patrol

NEWARK — An internal investigation by the New Jersey State Police has found evidence supporting allegations that a secret group exists within its ranks, a spokesman said Tuesday.

Two troopers on stress leave say they were harassed by the "Lords of Discipline" through threatening notes and vandalism.

If confirmed, the group would be another blemish for the state police, whose 2,700 troopers have been scrutinized since two troopers wounded three minority men traveling on the New Jersey Turnpike in April 1998.

The shooting ignited a controversy over racial profiling, in which law officers stop a vehicle based on the occupants' race.

■ Pennsylvania

Morgue employee confesses to stealing from bodies

PHILADELPHIA — One of 10 former employees of the city's medical examiner's office pleaded guilty Tuesday to stealing from bodies at the morgue.

Leon Henry Jr., 29, stole credit cards from two bodies and gave the cards to someone who purchased computers and other merchandise worth more than \$28,000, Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Schwartz said.

Under a plea agreement, prosecutors will recommend that Henry serve 18 months to two years in jail. He could have faced 15 years in prison and a fine of \$500,000.

Besides the former morgue workers, six non-employees are charged with using credit cards stolen from the bodies.

The investigation began last spring after several family members told police they had received credit card bills for purchases made after their relatives had died.

■ England

Trash collector guilty of stealing from Posh Spice

LONDON — A trash collector was convicted Tuesday of handling property stolen from "Posh Spice" Victoria Beckham.

Mark Oliver, 20, was found guilty by a jury of two counts of handling the goods, which included a lock of her baby Brooklyn's hair and love messages from her soccer-star husband, David Beckham.

No date was set for sentencing, and Oliver was freed on bail.

Oliver was accused of stealing clothes from the Spice Girl singer's luggage, which disappeared during a flight change at Heathrow Airport.

■ Yemen

Hussein follower hijacks, redirects passenger plane

ADEN — An armed man who wanted to show support for Saddam Hussein hijacked a Yemeni plane carrying a U.S. ambassador and 90 other people Tuesday and diverted it to neighboring Djibouti, where he was overpowered by the crew.

Passengers, including U.S. Ambassador Barbara Bodine, exited down the plane's emergency chute as the drama ended.

Because of the hijacking, Bodine missed an appointment with Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh at which the deadly terrorist attack on the USS Cole and increased security cooperation was expected to have been discussed. Bodine, who was accompanied by other embassy staff, flew from Djibouti back to the Yemeni capital, San'a, later Tuesday.

Clarification

Barrymore's Bar and Grill, 124 N. 13th, was closed for remodeling the first week of January, but is not open for business. In a Jan. 18 article, the Daily Nebraskan misstated the length of time the bar was closed.

Weather

TODAY	TOMORROW
Sunny	Partly cloudy
high 38, low 20	high 40, low 22

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Ask for the appropriate section editor at
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or e-mail: dn@unl.edu

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