

Florida Tightens Security in Wake of Killings

BY JONATHAN BARKER
STAFF WRITER

A sharp increase in the murder of foreign tourists in Florida's Miami area has prompted state officials and other national agencies to enact new precautionary measures to protect travelers from random violence.

"The government cannot make a blanket promise that murders and robberies are not going to happen," said Michael Vilafana, director of communications at the Greater Miami Conventions and Visitors Bureau. "We have worked very hard to safeguard tourists and residents as well."

Joy Mills, a spokeswoman for the Fla. Department of Commerce, said that Fla. Gov. Lawton Chiles and the Fla. Department of Commerce made a joint effort to institute tighter security measures across the state after a slew of carjackings in September left several foreign tourists dead. "Initially, we had 24-hour surveillance of all (Interstate) 76 rest areas," Mills said.

"This was done through the addition of 100 cars and phones that were donated by area motor-rental agencies and through area auxiliary and law-enforcement officers."

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MICHAEL VILAFANA

Spokesman for the Greater Miami Conventions and Visitors Bureau

The most recent violent incident involved two British tourists who stopped to sleep at a Monticello County rest area Sept. 14 and were shot when two black men attempted to rob them. Gary Colley, the driver of the vehicle, was pronounced dead at the scene.

Mills said the state had hired a private security agency, Wachenhut Security, to patrol welcome centers across the state, which have been the most vulnerable areas for foreign tourists.

Peter Bean, a spokesman for the British Embassy in Washington D.C., said the British government, while horrified at Colley's murder, did not consider the crime rate in Miami extraordinary.

"There is a travel advisory notice for British tourists in the United States, but really, it is a common-sense thing," he said. "I'm sure the police are doing all they can."

Bean also said he thought the shooting death of Colley was not related to anti-foreign sentiment. "All that I am aware of is that it was a random attempt," he said.

Mills said that after the killing, Chiles also had increased the number of state law-enforcement officers in welcome areas and had approved \$3 million in grants toward overtime pay for law-enforcement officials.

She added that tags on rental-car license plates identifying the automobiles as rental cars had been removed to keep criminals from immediately knowing a driver was from out of town.

Vilafana said tourism in Florida had taken a dip since the shootings. "European tourist trade wholesale dealers experiencing cancellations is in the 12- to 15-percent range," he said. "There is no doubt that there will certainly be some impact."

But Vilafana was quick to defend the actions state government officials had made to combat violence in general. "The government of Miami began to work on a number of initiatives three years ago to

help prevent violent crimes), including a reward program to apprehend career criminals," he said. "As time has gone by, we have fine-tuned them."

Lee Morris, managing director of communications of the Charlotte-based AAA Carolinas, said the N.C. chapter of the American Automobile Association also had made an attempt to prevent further highway crimes by publishing a brochure on highway safety.

"What we do in this brochure is take common-sense tips, like wearing seat belts, keeping doors locked and windows rolled up," he said. "If you have to travel at night, don't go into unattended rest stops. Don't stop and help people seemingly in trouble."

Morris also warned drivers against pulling over at night, even if a minor accident had occurred. "If you get bumped in the back, do not pull over immediately—go to a well-lit area and then pull over," he said.

The best protection for tourists was not to look like a tourist, Morris said.

"When traveling, try to do things that don't make you look like a traveler," he said. "For example, don't leave maps lying around the inside of your car. Basically, there are possibilities for trouble anywhere."

Government List Names Student-Loan Defaulters

BY SARA WORRELL
STAFF WRITER

A list released this summer and compiled by the federal government includes the names of 52 N.C. doctors, dentists, pharmacists and veterinarians who owe more than \$2.2 million to the government in overdue student loans.

The Aug. 30 list of over 5,000 loan defaulters was made accessible to the public in an effort to expose the defaulters' debts and retrieve part of the \$228 million owed to the federal government, said Patricia Campbell, spokeswoman for the Student Loan Insurance Fund.

The Student Loan Insurance Fund is a federally supported agency that makes payments on defaulted loans to the original lenders.

Campbell said the U.S. Congress had appropriated \$69 million in 1993 to help support the Student Loan Insurance Fund. "If there weren't any defaulters, Congress wouldn't have to be appropriating money (to the SLIF). It would go to reduce the deficit," she said.

The list has been published since 1979, when the federal Health Education Assistance Loan began lending money to health professions students, Campbell said. Since then, 128,000 students have received \$2.7 billion in financial aid.

Only students who failed to set up repayment schedules after being notified were named on the list, she said.

According to the registry, loans owed by N.C. residents ranged from \$2500 to \$219,421, which was listed for Mark Coyne of Burlington. Coyne could not be reached for comment.

Shirley A. Fifer, a restaurant cook in Durham, said personal problems had kept her from paying back her student loan. Fifer was listed as owing \$160,163.

"Basically the reason I hadn't done anything about it is that I am unemployed,"

Fifer said. "I'm not practicing medicine, and I'm just making enough to put a roof over my head."

Fifer said she regretted that her plans to practice osteopathic medicine had fallen through and that she was unable to pay back her student loan.

"I acknowledge that it was legitimately incurred," she said of her debt. "I know this hurts the availability of funds for other people, and I don't like that, either."

"It's almost frightening in a way," she said. "As soon as I can afford it, I'd like to start repaying it. Nothing went the way I planned."

Defaulters in Chapel Hill were Jane M. Gould and Robert C. Mayle. Each owe \$44,000 to the federal government for defaulted student loans. Gould could not be reached for comment; Mayle declined to comment.

Eleanor Morris, director of the UNC Office of Scholarships and Student Aid, said the office had only a 3-percent default rate on federal loans collected by the University. "We have a really good collection rate," she said. "We have 97 percent (of the borrowers) paying back on time."

Morris also said students at UNC had a good history of making payments on their student loans.

Campbell said there had been a "positive reaction" to the list's publication.

"Many people have been setting up repayment (schedules)," she said.

The defaulters listed in the Federal Register also were notified of the consequences of not meeting their repayment schedules, she said.

The consequences include tax-refund offsets by the IRS and exclusion from Medicare and Medicaid programs. The Department of Justice also can seek wage garnishment or attachment of property through litigation, Campbell said.

"The Department of Justice has been and will continue to sue defaulters."

Supreme Court Looks to Redefine Sexual Harassment

BY WARD CONVILLE
STAFF WRITER

The U.S. Supreme Court took on the controversial issue of sexual harassment for the second time in history Wednesday when it began reviewing a case that many groups nationwide hope will better define the boundary between sexual harassment and acceptable behavior in the workplace.

"This case is about whether women are entitled to fair treatment in the workplace, or whether employers have a free fire zone to sexually harass women workers up until they suffer serious psychological injury," said Debbie Brake, staff attorney with the National Women's Law Center.

The court began reviewing a decision handed down by the 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals that concerns a definition of sexual harassment.

Brake said the case was significant because it was the first case concerning sexual harassment the Supreme Court had heard since 1986, and because it sought to define exactly what type of conduct would be considered legal.

The case, Harris vs. Forklift Systems Inc., originated when a former employee of the Nashville, Tenn.-based company brought suit against the company's president for using demeaning sexual statements and displaying inappropriate sexually oriented behavior toward female employees, according to a press release from the Na-

tional Organization of Women.

Teresa Harris claimed company president Charles Hardy sexually harassed her, the press release states.

"Hardy repeatedly told Harris that she had a 'racehorse ass,' and Hardy threw objects on the ground in front of Harris and other female employees and asked them to pick the objects up, thereafter making comments about how they should dress to expose their breasts," the press release says.

Irwin Venick, Harris' attorney, said a decision on the case was expected sometime in January.

Martha Davis, acting director of NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, said the 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals required that a person prove that he or she had experienced psychological injury as a result of the harassment.

"We hope that the court will reaffirm emphasis on employers' conduct instead of the responses of victims," Davis said.

Stanley Chernau, attorney for Forklift Systems Inc., said the current definition and precedent relating to sexual harassment was unclear due to conflicting decisions in circuit courts.

Chernau said he hoped the Supreme Court would clarify or elaborate on the question of sexual harassment in the workplace.

"If you are going to tell employers that they need to comply with the law, they need to know what the law is," Chernau

said. Judith Scott, a UNC sexual harassment officer, said the current definition of sexual harassment was applicable for both sexes.

"The law is there for both women and men," she said. "It cuts both ways."

Scott also said the allegations of sexual harassment brought by Anita Hill against Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas in October 1991 during congressional hearings were the primary reason for the uproar concerning sexual harassment.

"A very old problem in our society was catapulted to the front of our society," Scott said. "It dynamited public awareness of the issue. It's one of those things that makes people unable to be unaware anymore. It broke through the denial systems of women and men."

Venick said he was encouraged by the recent addition to the Supreme Court of

Ruth Bader Ginsberg, the second female Supreme Court justice in history.

"My assumption would be that (Ginsberg and Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor) would be more sensitive to the problems women face in the work place," Venick said.

Ken Pangborn, president of Defending the Male Gender, said the Harris vs. Forklift Systems Inc. case could place the burden of proof on the defense instead of the prosecution in sexual harassment cases.

Defending the Male Gender is a Palm Harbor, Fla.-based organization that provides legal assistance for males accused of crimes of a sexual nature.

"Basically the case is about defining what is and what is not sexual harassment," Pangborn said. "There's a fine line to be drawn between free speech and injuring another person's rights."

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