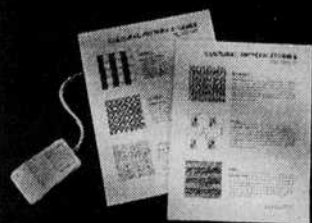


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Escaped bird 'looks like any other emu'

1 MEDFORD — The 6-foot-tall fugitive was no jail bird.

The adult male emu escaped over the weekend when the door flew open on the horse trailer Fred and Gina Fraser were using to transport four of the big birds. They had bought the birds at the nearby Emerald Egg Emu Ranch.

The Frasers managed to round up three of the flightless birds, but the fourth flew the coop.

"He looks like any other emu — tall, long thin neck," said Gina Fraser. "He's going to be scared, but he likes people."

The bird has a red leg band with the number '5' on it, Gina Fraser said.

The male is one of a mated pair of breeders. Emus in captivity mate for life, and Gina Fraser said the female has been pacing the fence.

Clinton ready to send ground troops to Zaire

2 WASHINGTON — President Clinton is prepared to send about 1,000 ground troops and several thousand more support forces to Central Africa for a proposed multinational operation to feed and protect more than a million destitute refugees in Zaire.

Presidential spokesman Mike McCurry said Wednesday Clinton made the decision after consultations with Prime Minister Jean Chretien of Canada, which will play the lead role in the international force. About a dozen other countries are expected to participate.

The U.S. forces, numbering between 3,000 and 4,000 total, would remain about four months and serve at all times under U.S. command. The thousand ground troops are red-bereted airborne assault troops based in Vincenza, Italy.

Bomb under car leads to bracelets for boys

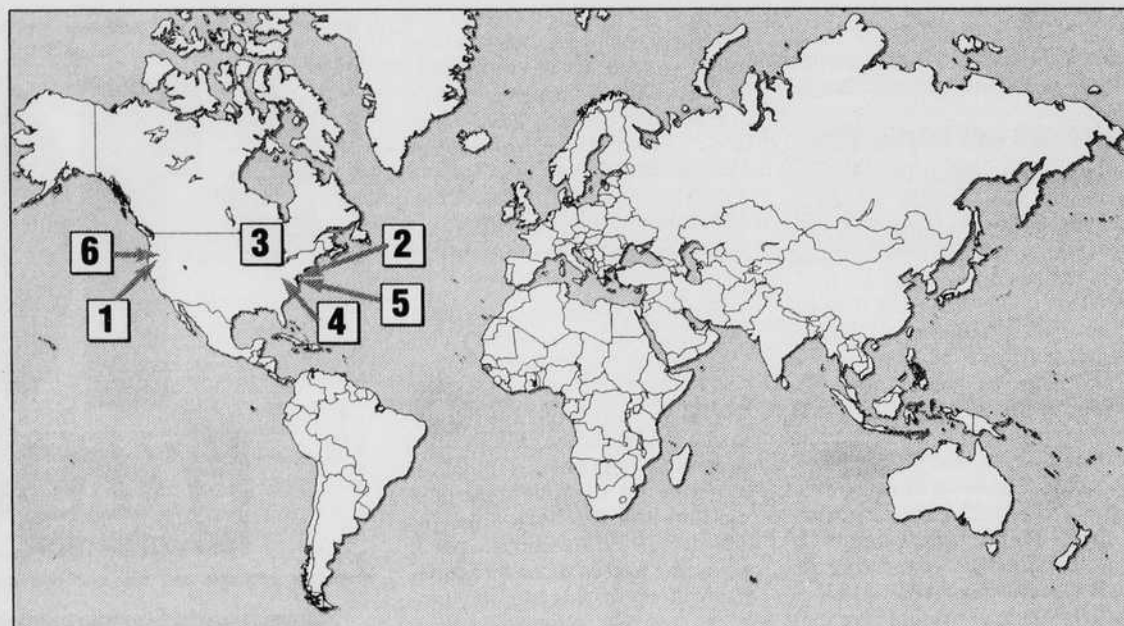
3 HARRISVILLE, Mich. — Two 13-year-olds charged with placing a bomb under a teacher's car will be allowed to stay at home while they await trial, but must wear electronic monitoring bracelets, a judge ruled Wednesday.

The boys were arrested Nov. 5 after a witness reported hearing them talking about setting the device, which was found on Oct. 31, said Alcona County Prosecutor Thomas Weichel.

"When we confronted them, initially they denied it. But we are slowly getting the truth out of them," Weichel said before Wednesday's hearing.

Authorities won't disclose a motive, although Weichel said police believe one of the boys was upset with the teacher.

Prosecutors think whoever set the bomb intended only to scare the teacher without setting it off.



Ohio gets brief break from heavy snowfall

4 OHIO — It finally stopped snowing in northeast Ohio on Wednesday and residents started digging out from under as much as 4 feet of snow. Freezing rain and light snow fell across the Plains and record-low temperatures were set in the East.

"It quit this morning, and finally we've seen a little bit of sunshine — the first time since Sunday afternoon," said Doug Anderson, who owns a sporting goods store in Chardon, about 20 miles east of Cleveland.

Chardon got 6 inches of snow Wednesday, which pales in comparison to the 4-foot pileup since Sunday.

The respite may be brief, however. The forecast called for another 4 to 10 inches in some places by Thursday night.

The culprit is lake-effect snow, which happens when cold air comes in from Canada in a southeasterly direction over the relatively warm water of Lake Erie. Clouds gather up moisture and deposit snow over an area from Cleveland to northwest Pennsylvania.

Meanwhile, a band of freezing rain charged across Nebraska, closing a 10-mile stretch of highway for two hours.

First known drop in cancer rates recorded

5 WASHINGTON — For the first time in at least 60 years, deaths from cancer are dropping steadily — a five-year trend that has led experts to shed their usual caution and declare true progress in the war on cancer.

"One of the most intractable diseases of the 20th century is now in decline," declared Brad Rodu, who with colleague Dr. Philip Cole uncovered the trend.

The government validated the findings of the University of Alabama at Birmingham investigators Wednesday, saying overall cancer mortality dropped 3 percent between 1990 and 1995.

That's not a big decline, but it was the first sustained drop since national record-keeping began in the 1930s — and possibly the first since 1900.

And it was fueled by declines in fatal lung cancer that doctors have anxiously awaited for decades.

Claimed National Cancer Institute Director Richard Klausner: "The 1990s will be remembered as the decade when we measurably turned the tide against cancer."

Forest Service chief visits ruins of station

6 OAKRIDGE — U.S. Forest Service Chief Jack Ward Thomas said Wednesday he didn't know whether he was mad or sick to his stomach to see the ruins of a ranger station destroyed by arson.

"This is not acceptable," said Thomas. "This is what people do who don't understand how to operate in a democracy."

Thomas came from Washington, D.C., to be with 70 Forest Service employees who worked in the Oakridge Ranger Station before it burned to the ground last month in a fire federal investigators have said was deliberately started.

Authorities haven't reported any suspects in the case, but investigators have raised the possibility it could have been eco-terrorism.

The Oakridge Ranger District on the Willamette National Forest has been the site of bitter protests over logging in old growth forests. Three days before the Oakridge Ranger station burned, a truck was set on fire and anti-logging graffiti left behind at the Detroit Ranger Station 70 miles away. Thomas also visited the Detroit Ranger Station.

—The Associated Press



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