



Newsday / Christopher Hatch

An Endangered Breed Thrives in Bronx

Although this grazing Grevy Zebra with her month-old offspring can be seen at the Bronx Zoo, the Grevy Zebra is the most endangered breed of the zebra family. But that fact doesn't seem to disturb the calm of this parent and her foal.

Charges Weighed In Racial Incident

By Scott Minerbrook

Hauppauge — The Suffolk County District Attorney's office is considering whether more serious charges should be filed against a white teenager accused of firing shots from an air-rifle at a school bus carrying about 50 black Bronx schoolchildren.

Assistant District Attorney Kerry Trainor, deputy chief of the screening bureau, said fourth-degree criminal mischief and second-degree reckless endangerment charges — both misdemeanors — were filed against Steven E. Muscat, 17, of North Babylon, after the July 23 incident.

"What we're doing right now is investigating to determine if heavier charges should be filed by our office or investigated by a grand jury in this case," Trainor said. "We must see if there were circumstances evincing depraved indifference to human life, and if he created a grave risk of death to another person here."

Such a finding could warrant upgrading the endangerment charge to a felony, he said. Police said there were no injuries in the incident.

Muscat was unavailable for comment, but his father, Jesse Hart, said: "It was only a little misdemeanor. It's not such a big deal . . . They were just checking out the scope on the rifle."

Muscat, according to a police report, was standing with a group of teenagers when he allegedly fired shots from a pump-action air-rifle at the bus as it traveled south on Commack Road in Deer Park. The bus was one of two vehicles carrying the Bronx schoolchildren home after the youngsters participated in an Afro-American unity day parade in Deer Park.

Police Officer Sal DeAngelis said Muscat admitted shooting at the bus and was taken into custody at the request of Carmelo Saez, the director of the Bronx-based Lancers marching band. According to Saez' statement to police, which was read to a reporter, Muscat allegedly shouted a racial epithet before he fired two rounds at the bus. No one else was charged in connection with the incident.

"The windows of the school bus were open," DeAngelis said. "If the round struck the glass just a fraction of an inch higher, it could have entered the window and hit one of the kids in the face. There could have been serious injury." He said the projectile left a hole in the window.

Some local and county civil rights activists charged police with being soft on Muscat, a charge denied by police. "We believe the district attorney's office and the police department have gone easy on this young man," said Jabar Abdul Karim, a Copiague, LI, civil rights leader. "These charges are minimal, and the black community here is very upset."

Kenneth Anderson, Long Island regional director of the NAACP, said his office would look into the incident.

"A group of schoolchildren should be able to travel on a public road without threat of violence," he said.

Drug Thief Ordered to Jail

By Charles T. Moses

Convicted drug dealer Virgil Alessi, former partner of murdered "French Connection" drug dealer Vincent Pappa, was ordered yesterday to surrender to federal authorities to serve 38 days of a previous federal sentence, a source close to the case said.

The U.S. Parole Commission ordered Alessi to surrender at the federal prison in Otisville, N.Y., not later than Aug. 24 after a court order to release him was overturned on appeal.

Alessi, a key figure in the theft of 398 pounds of heroin worth an estimated \$70 million from the New York City Police Department's property room, had been sentenced in the Southern District of New York on Jan. 5, 1977, on two separate indictments.

On a conviction for possession with

intent to distribute heroin, he was sentenced to 13 years in jail and 6 years' special probation.

On a conviction for failure to declare income on heroin money from the French Connection theft, Alessi was sentenced to a 2-year jail term and an additional 6 years' special probation.

He was released from jail by court order of District Judge Robert Sweet on Oct. 26, 38 days ahead of his scheduled release date. Alessi had argued that the government failed to grant him due process in the case. The U.S. Parole Commission appealed the release to the U.S. Court of Appeals, which reversed Sweet's decision. The Parole Commission then told the U.S. Probation Department's Intensive Supervision Unit — which monitors the

activities of organized crime figures and career criminals who are released from federal prison — to notify Alessi that he would have to finish his term.

Vincent Pappa, Alessi's partner in the French Connection case, was murdered while in federal prison, on what federal witnesses have said was the order of the leadership of the Joseph Colombo crime family, which apparently suspected him of being an informant for the federal Drug Enforcement Administration.

Alessi, 51, of 30-48 36th St., Astoria, has been identified by federal and police sources as a Colombo crime family associate with ties to John (Sonny) Franzese, the Colombo family underboss and Carmine Persico Jr., the family crime boss, both of whom are in federal prison in Otisville.

Wetlands Worry Prompts Tour

State Environmental Conservation Department officials, concerned about possible damage to sensitive wetlands near Willow Lake in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, yesterday toured the site of a major expansion project proposed for Transit Authority yards in that Queens area.

Department spokesman Ben Marvin said the officials are concerned that the project, at the TA's IND yard, will harm the lake.

The State Wetlands Act prohibits construction where it can be proven that land within 100 feet of marshland will be disturbed. According to Marvin, department officials say that some of the expansion work apparently falls within the 100-foot buffer zone. "It looks like there may have been an encroachment on the wetlands," he said. Marvin said the officials will meet with city representatives today to seek agreement on the project.

Queens Borough President Donald Manes, in the Orient this week, sharply

criticized the project through a spokesman, saying that the borough may go to court in an attempt to block further work. Manes also was critical of an environmental impact study made by the TA that concluded the \$6.5-million landfill

project would not adversely affect the environment. He asked that the DEC step into the fray and re-evaluate the project with an eye toward assessing the impact of the project on the local water supply.

— Moses

Strikes Cost Cops Millions

United Press International

The Police Department has spent nearly \$10 million to provide police protection during the Consolidated Edison and telephone company strikes, city officials say.

Expenses for personnel and overtime during the Con Edison strike, which began June 18, totaled \$8,497,289 through Monday, a police spokesman said Tuesday.

He said that costs for the strike by telephone workers against the American Telephone & Telegraph

Co. were \$1,457,648. That strike began on Aug. 6.

The high overtime cost has prompted City Councilman Michael DeMarco (D-Bronx) to introduce a bill in the council that would require employers and striking unions to share the cost of police protection if a strike lasts longer than five days.

"I believe that both parties would feel more of a sense of urgency if the cost of police protection came out of their pockets," DeMarco said.